

# HSNT Newsletter

No.28/July-August 2009

Historical Society of the Northern Territory

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Patron: The Hon Austin Asche AC, QC

## DATES TO REMEMBER

22 JULY, Wednesday: NT Library lecture: *Capturing the Northern Territory* by Paul Arnold, Photographer. 5.15pm

22 JULY-6 SEPT: Exhibition *Parasites in Focus* from the University of Technology, Sydney at the NT Library

23 JULY, Thursday, NT Library lecture: Microbiologist Paul Southwell will talk on the *Parasites in Focus* exhibition

24-27 JULY: HSNT weekend at Fort Wellington, Cobourg Peninsula

29 JULY: NARU public seminar: *Ethn classification and the Environment in Northern Australia*: by Brett Baker, UNE

1-9 AUGUST: National Family History week: [www.familyhistoryweek.org.au](http://www.familyhistoryweek.org.au)

5 AUGUST: HSNT Committee meeting, 7.30pm, 55 Ross Smith Avenue, Parap

14-15 August, Friday/Saturday: HSNT book stall at Government House open day

14-17 August, Friday/Monday: HSNT trip to Bradshaw Training area [see page 3]

26 SEPTEMBER: Saturday, boat trip around Darwin Harbour to celebrate Darwin200. Cost \$10pp. Bookings [janie.mason@cdu.edu.au](mailto:janie.mason@cdu.edu.au)

30 SEPTEMBER: HSNT Patron's Dinner: Speaker: Earl James, venue to be decided.

28 OCTOBER: HSNT lecture: Speaker Richard Luxton

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Our President is away at the moment and I am unable to get a report from him so thought that I would let you know what Wendy Carter, a member who lives in Kununurra has been doing.*

Wendy has recently visited her parents in the UK and took advantage of attending two Devon history lectures, one on Sir Samuel and Lady Florence Baker who spent most of their married lives in Newton Abbot after they returned from their first trip to Africa searching for the source of the Nile - the second lecture on Captain Fitzroy, captain of the *Beagle* who sought a companion interested in matters such as nature and geology to travel with him as the previous Captain of the *Beagle* had committed suicide on board ship due to loneliness. And he ended up with Charles Darwin! Fitzroy was 26 and Darwin 22 at the time. Fitzroy went on to found the UK Meteorological Office and invent the weather forecast following his vision of saving lives of fellow sailors.

Wendy has always had an interest in mines and mining and visited coal mines, gold mines, wolfram and lead mines, tin and copper mines, gunpowder mills and water wheels, foundries and forges, from Roman to Medieval to Victorian times. This year Coalbrookdale is celebrating the 300th anniversary of Darby's smelting of iron with coke instead of charcoal which is said to have really started the industrial revolution which in turn, started the agricultural revolution and all that we learnt about at school in British History.

I think that we really need to ask her to lead us on an expedition!

## EDITORIAL

*Progenitor*, the journal of the Genealogical Society of the NT has some interesting articles in its latest edition (vol.28,no.2, June 2009). Darwin High has been working with students to develop their creativity and this has resulted in three reports on families: *My 9 Times Great Grandma* by Stephanie Ison (Year 9 History) - her relation was Mary Reibey on the \$20 note; Alana Brown has written about *Victor Voules Brown* and Jack Reeves (Year 9 History) on *Philip Gidley King*. This edition also notes the death in Alice Springs of Doreen Braitling in 1979

Still on genealogical issues, the Genealogical Society of Queensland has been given funding to record people present in the colony between Separation in 1859 and Federation in 1901. For more information contact them at PO Box 8423, Woollongabba, Q, 4102.

We had an excellent response to Bev Phelst's latest book on the History of St Mary's school. Cardinal Pell came from Sydney to launch the book at Parliament House and speeches were also made by Bev and Josephine Stone who had originally commissioned the book. Many of the 'old' students and staff of St Mary's were present.

The lecture at the North Australia Research Unit (just near the university) on 29 July will be given by Brett Baker. He has worked with people from the middle and lower Roper River Valley since 1994 and more recently with people at Numbulwar on a range of linguistic and ethnographic topics. The seminar is from 12.15pm so bring your lunch.

Reg Wilson is after a copy of Tim Jones' *Pegging the Northern Territory* which relates to mining—can anyone assist him? If so could they contact the office at [historicalso-cietynt@bigpond.com](mailto:historicalso-cietynt@bigpond.com).

I am told that the Northern Territory Times and Gazette has recently been digitized and can be searched using key words at <http://ndpbeta.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home>. David Carment says that now, a search that would have taken a year or more can be done in a few minutes—you can download the articles from the paper.

David has also sent a copy of *Historical Thinking in Higher Education: an ALTC Discipline-based Initiative, final report [dated] June 2009* by Marnie Hughes-Warrington and others. For those that want a copy or would like to read it, it is available at the Office.

Please also note that the Office will be closed on Tuesday, 21 and 28 July and Thursday 23 July as I shall be interstate. But please go and see Judy Richardson on Monday or Jo Parish on Fridays, they would welcome you.

Please note the new opening hours of the NT Library at Parliament House—Monday-Friday, 10am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday 1pm-5pm. They are closed on Public Holidays

Welcome to new members Karin Martin-Stone and Charlotte Taylor. We also welcome our first members from Mataranka, Eddie Webber and Janet Leather—we look forward to meeting you both. And James Goulding from Alice Springs has renewed his membership also.

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland is looking for a part time manager for the Commissariat Stores Museum in Brisbane. This is a paid position and more information is available from [info@queenslandhistory.org.au](mailto:info@queenslandhistory.org.au). I wonder how many watched the ABC TV programme with Tony Robertson on the 'digging' for Ned Kelly—most interesting but perhaps we should ask him to come to Fort Wellington with us!

I had thought that I had put this in the newsletter but seems no! A question from the public asked about the ghost of a child in the Maranboy old hospital and police station. A reply from Sue Harlow is as follows: *There is lots of talk about the old hospital being haunted. A policeman's wife (when the old hospital was a police home) told me she had often heard a child crying and that she could not account for this. I have heard others talk about a child ghost. In August 1914 a malaria outbreak caused havoc at the newly built Government battery at Maranboy and, as well as several miners, two little girls died. Audrey Studderd, daughter of the battery manager died aged 4 years and 10 months and is buried in the Maranboy cemetery. There is a headstone above her grave. Thirza Clayson aged 5 also died but she is not buried at Maranboy.*

*The ghost is believed to be little Audrey.*

## AAAA ROAD—THAT'S A WEIRD NAME FOR A STREET

Early in 2009, a reporter on the *Northern Territory News*, Alyssa Betts (no doubt a new arrival in the Territory who would not be aware we do some things differently here) discovered a street sign on Howard Springs Road with the unlikely name of AAAA Road. She had her photographer take a photo of the sign and pondered in the *NT News* of 9 February 2009 (p.3) how such a weird name could have been allocated. Of course in the Territory, all such weird things have a very good reason for being—even if the logic behind them may seem a little odd.

But the tale behind the street name has a lot to do with the history of the Darwin rural area and the advent of the Litchfield Shire. Those who were here during the 1980's may recall that, at that time the rural area was developing apace. As it was, many newcomers during the previous decade had the option of paying the same reasonable amount for a serviced urban block in Karama or in the first stages of Palmerston or a 5 acre (2 hectare) block in the Virginia-Bees Creek-Howard Springs-Humpty Doo area. Many new arrivals elected to go bush even though the quality of access to the rural blocks was sometimes 'rudimentary'.

During the early 1980's, with the new Northern Territory Government in place, strong representations were made by many rural dwellers that the new government should quickly get its act together and 'clean up' the messes which had been left behind by the former Commonwealth Government. The problem was simply that the Commonwealth's interest in developing or having anything to do with Darwin's rural area during its tenure, for its own reasons, was virtually nil. Although some main roads had been constructed, the quality of construction and drainage of roads generally left a lot to be desired. As a consequence, many landowners at that time found great difficulty getting to and from their homes - especially during the wet season. There was no reticulated electricity in the rural area (you had to have your own generator), water came from bores and septic tanks for sewerage disposal was the go. But a big plus for the landowners was that they did not have to pay any rates. As well they were left to their own devices, with no-one interfering or telling them what they could or could not do. Many reckoned that was just wonderful.

But on the whole the majority of rural dwellers considered that that style of living was straight out of the Dark Ages and demanded better. It did not matter that the land had cost them next to nothing to acquire and all they for their money was four pegs in the ground and perhaps a track to the block. The complainants still demanded they be treated like 'normal human beings'...

So there was nothing else for it. In its wisdom, the Territory Government created the Litchfield Shire by notice in the *Northern Territory Gazette* of 6 September 1985. The Shire covered that part of Darwin's rural area extending from the Knuckey Lagoon-Palmerston area, east to the Adelaide River at Middle Point and south from Gunn Point to Darwin River Dam-Manton Dam. Elections were held and the government hand-balled all the rural areas' problems over to the new Council. Among other things the Council could decide what it would do with the various Territory and Commonwealth grants it was allocated each year. As well the Coun-

cil could demand rates from the landowners to allow the Council to function.

Litchfield Council started off with virtually nothing. To get the Council administration under way the NT Government came up with an 'establishment package'. One of the features of the package had to do with street numbers being allocated to every parcel of land in the Shire. A big concern in the rural area at that time was that the block numbering system used by the Lands Department and the Lands Title Office did not help anyone - especially service people, ambulance and firemen - locate a block quickly, or at all! This was dangerous and lives could be lost and may well have been. A sensible street numbering system had to be implemented.

As it turned out, the Lands Department Chief Draftsman at the time, Ron Sully, requested me to look into the matter, come up with an appropriate street numbering system for the Litchfield Shire and implement it by entering the allocations into the new NT's computerized Land Information System database.

Fortuitously the Corio Shire Council in Victoria had just implemented its own rural street numbering system. In a Local Government journal which was issued about the same time as I received the request, the Corio CEO boasted about how clever his Council had been in setting up their system and how successful it was. As the Council had produced a booklet setting out how it was all done, a telephone call to the CEO resulted in a number of copies of this document being sent north.

Their system was quite simple. The street number allocated to each block was simply the kilometer distance a landowner's driveway was along the frontage road from the main intersecting road, multiplied by 100. That is, if the driveway of a property was 1.25 km from the main road, the number allocated would be 125 with odds on the left, evens on the right. How easy is that! The Corio Council model was adopted.

1:100,000 cadastral maps of all the Litchfield Shire (which showed every surveyed block of land and public road in the Shire) were produced by the Land Department's computerized Mapnet mapping system. Decisions were made to commence the rural street numbering along the Stuart Highway at the eastern limit of the City of Palmerston (at the Howard Springs Road intersection) and adopt the Stuart and Arnhem Highways and Cox Peninsula road as the major roads where all street numbering would commence. Although the Surveyor-General (Peter Wellis) was quite enthusiastic about the project, he was not interested when I approached him for petrol money to allow me to check my allocations. He said that, if there were any errors in my scaling off the maps and in number allocations, these would be minimal. When the numbers were displayed by everyone on their road frontage there would not be a problem. Of course he was quite right and I am unaware of any problems which may have occurred with the numbering.

However the fact is that the numbers I allocated relate to a

point midway along the road boundary of a block and not the driveway location. This sometimes led to situations where numbers displayed on adjoining driveways along a boundary fence seemed somewhat strange. A case in point was on Strawberry Road, Girraween, where Colin Mason shows No.25 on his side of the fence and his next-door neighbor shows No.41.

The street numbering exercise, as such, was completed in May 1989 and Litchfield Council was supplied with maps and details for it to update its records. Since then the street numbers for all blocks in new subdivisions are routinely allocated and entered into the Land Information System by Lands Department staff. This is carried out as part of the survey plan checking process prior to the issue of new titles. Of interest, the Corio Council model has now been adopted for rural street numbering systems throughout Australia and New Zealand.

But before the original numbering exercise could be considered finalized, two other administrative matters had to be attended to.

At that time rural dwellers had adopted their own names for some areas of the Shire. Everyone knew where the Howard Springs and Humpty Doo areas were even though the actual Humpty Doo homestead is located some 20 km east of the present Humpty Doo District Centre. The Virginia-Bees Creek area was known as '17 Mile' (the distance Virginia Road is along the Stuart Highway from the then Darwin Post Office). Noonamah was where the Pub was located and Berry Springs was—and still is—a popular recreation area. But most of the Shire area was unnamed. Consequently the matter of appropriate locality names and appropriate locality boundaries was referred to the Place Names Committee to sort out. Final names and boundaries were subsequently notified in *NT Government Gazettes* in November 1997 and July 1998. All Government and Council records were amended accordingly.

The other matter had to do with the naming of those public roads and accesses which did not have a name, approved or otherwise. The Land Information computer program would only accept a street number if the street had a name (the locality did not matter) and there were some nine of these unnamed thoroughfares in the Shire. I decided, in order to satisfy the computer's requirements, these roads and accesses would be allocated temporary road names of AAAA Road, BBBB Road etc. This would alert everyone to the fact that the road had not been officially named and that a 'proper' name would eventually be gazette.

Although most of these roads and accesses have now been formally named, there are still some where the Place Names Committee is unable, under the *Place Names Act* to formalize a name. In these cases the accesses are either private access easements (rights-of-way) or private access strips. Nothing can be done about them until either the owners of the affected land request the Committee to allot an appropriate name or, one way or another, the right-of-way or access strips become public roads vested in either the Government or the Council. So this is the case with AAAA Road which, according to Alyssa is also known locally as 'Chicken Lane'. As I said at the start of this paper there is a reason for everything. All this was explained to

Alyssa. Her follow up article about the bizarre road names and my part in it was published in the *NT News* on 3 March 2009

And then there are those other weird road names which crop up at various places in the Shire. Roads known and signposted as 'Notta Road' (off Old Bynoe Road, Fly Creek) and even 'No Name Road (in Humpty Doo)! Although some of these roads are properly constructed bitumen roads, with drains and powerlines (paid for by the adjoining landowners) they are still private access strips or Access Easements. Consequently the landowners become their own street namers...

Carl Cossill, June 2009



Roger Heapy at the crusher at the entrance to Cosmo Mine.



Bev Phelts and Cardinal Pell at the St. Mary's book launch.