



Historical Society of the Northern Territory

Patron: The Hon Austin Asche AC

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President's Report by Dr Brian Reid

The Historical Society's field trip this year was, by arrangement, to Victoria River Downs Station. There the visiting group of members was exposed not only to the cold at night but, courtesy of the station manager's wife, Julie Richter, a tour of some of the stations old buildings. It was a delight to be there and to share the local enthusiasm. A highlight was a tour of the old Australian Inland Mission hospital, Wimmera House. The Society is grateful for the interest and hospitality of the Station management. Snippets from our trip are at the end of the newsletter.

The annual field trip has become somewhat of an institution. Not only is it an excuse to go bush and camp at a delightful time of the year but also to examine some of the rich historical sites we are fortunate to have. As well, sometimes the Society is able to stimulate some local interest in the history and preservation of significant material remains. Over the past few years this has been possible at Fort Wellington on the Cobourg Peninsula and Bradshaw Station in the Department of Defence's Field Training Area. We are hopeful that moves in this direction will also take place at the Powell Creek Telegraph Station and Victoria River Downs Station. It is interesting that activities such as these dominated the Society when it first formed nearly fifty years ago.

You will notice that this newsletter is a double bumper issue. That's because Bev Phelts, our newsletter editor, will soon be leaving for England to research her family history.

HSNT talk – Wednesday 24 August

At the Museum and Art Gallery NT Theatrette, Conacher Street, Fannie Bay – 7.20pm for 7.30pm start

The theme for 2011 is to mark the centenary of the transfer of the Northern Territory from South Australia to the Commonwealth Government.

Kathy de la Rue who is undertaking her doctorate at CDU will speak about Administrator Gilruth who was run out of Darwin by militants. Her talk titled "Gilruth: Victim or Villain" will cover the turbulent years leading up to Gilruth's demise.

Stay for refreshments after the talk

Patron's Dinner – Wednesday 28 September

Our speaker will be Judy Boland on her trip to the Antarctica. Judy will present a photographic powerpoint presentation and talk about her wonderful experience – the travel involved just getting there, visiting the-frozen-in-time Mawson Huts and the wildlife.

Sir Douglas Mawson established Australia's first base for scientific and geographical discovery in Antarctica at Cape Denison on the continent's northern coast, 3000 kilometres south of Hobart. He and his team designed and built five simple huts. Between 1912 and 1913, Mawson's huts provided the base for his team's heroic exploration of the Antarctic landscape. The expedition studied the weather, geology and magnetics, and pioneered the use of wireless communication on the Antarctic Continent. They battled intense winds, icy conditions and long periods of isolation to gather this material.



Mawson's huts



The Patron's Dinner will be held at Christo's Restaurant on the Tipperary Waters Marina. For those who haven't indulged at Christo's new restaurant, here's your chance to view the sunset and stars over the yachts and water of the marina.

The set dinner will consist of an entrée of dips, a buffet selection of calamari, fish, prawns, moussaka and an assortment of Greek deserts.
Cost \$45 p/p. The venue is licenced and coffee and drinks are extra.

If members wish to attend, please send your cheque made out to the HSNT along with your details by 23 September.

What's on at the Northern Territory Library?

Tuesday 9 August 5:15pm - What exactly is that great Territory lifestyle? by Dr Mickey Dewar

We're Territorians. We fish, we vote, we drink and we let off firecrackers once a year to celebrate getting rid of Canberra. Wouldn't live anywhere else... except when we've got to get out of here. We love the climate - nearly as much as our air-conditioning! We take it easy and are informal - except if you are trying to get a drink at the Casino in thongs and stubbies after a hard day's work. Let's face it. There's lots of contradictions about being a Territorian. Has it always been this way? What exactly is that great Territory lifestyle?

Winner of the 2011 Chief Minister's NT History Book Award for Darwin – No Place Like Home, long-time Territory resident, historian and author, Mickey Dewar takes a light-hearted (and iconoclastic) look at the last hundred years of our Territory lifestyle, particularly in Darwin, and comes to some surprising conclusions.

Book sales and signing will be available.

Thursday 11 August 5:15pm - The Protectors; A journey through whitefella past by Stephen Gray

Winner of the *John Iremonger Award*, this book challenges how we judge the past and asks what exactly it was that the Australian nation said sorry for. Stephen Gray's book is a very personal exploration of the role and motivations of the administrators and patrol officers who carried out protection policies. The questions he raises about guilt, judgement and good intentions apply as readily today as they did one hundred years ago.

Book sales and signing will be available.

Thursday 18 August 5:15pm - The Men Who Came Out of the Ground by Paul Cleary

The stirring but little-known story of a small force of Australian Special Forces commandos in Timor, who tied down a far superior Japanese force for lost of the critical year of 1942. Paul Cleary is a senior writer with The Australian newspaper and a researcher in Indigenous development at the Australian National University. In a career spanning 20 years, he has reported on politics and economics for over a decade. His first non-fiction book, *Shakedown—Australia's grab for Timor oil* introduced him to the Timor veterans whom he met while based in East Timor who inspired this latest book.

Book sales and signing will be available.

Sunday 14 August 12:00pm - The Renaissance of the Poet

Poetry in its many forms takes centre stage at the Festival, from Jack Thompson's readings of Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson to the beat boxers and BBoys battling it out. Join Darwin's own National Poet in Residence Sandra Thibodeaux, Jack Thompson and Nick Power .

Open Days in Darwin

Friday 19 and Saturday 20 August, 3pm to 7pm – Government House

Explore the Territory's oldest European house; stroll through the beautiful gardens; Listen to live music on the lawn and enjoy a devonshire tea by the National Trust

Friday 19 August, 9am to 5pm – Parliament House

Free guided tours; open Chamber with scheduled talks by the Speaker; informative and historical displays; and information about parliamentary procedures and the NT Constitutional Convention on becoming a state.

Saturday 20 August, 10am to 3pm – Supreme Court

Join Chief Justice Trevor Riley in a sentencing forum; participate in a mock trial presented by NT barristers; guided tour of the remarkable art collection, tour the cells, courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms; read judges' sentencing remarks and judgments; and see informative displays by police forensics.

Interstate Events

5-7 December 2011 - ***The Pacific War, 1941-5: Heritage, Legacies and Culture*** – call for papers - Monash University (Caulfield Campus) Melbourne

In anticipation of the seventieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbour, this conference will explore the heritage, legacy and cultural impact of war between Japan and the Allied Powers. The Pacific War was a conflict played out, for the most part, in the colonial territories of Britain, the Netherlands, the United States, Australia, Thailand and China. Hailed as the death knell of European colonial power in the region, the age-old European fears of Asian power, the rise of nationalist and independence movements in the Asia-Pacific, Japanese imperialism and the dawn of the nuclear age, the Pacific War was a pivot point in the twentieth-century history of the region. This conference aims to bring together scholars working on the cultural, social and political implications of the Pacific War, and to stimulate debate about the war's impact, legacies and continuing resonances.

For more information see www.arts.monash.edu.au/history/conferences/the-pacific-war

The Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology internet site

A fabulous internet site for intrepid archeologists is the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology site. Newsletters dating back to 1970 can be viewed at www.asha.org.au/newsletters

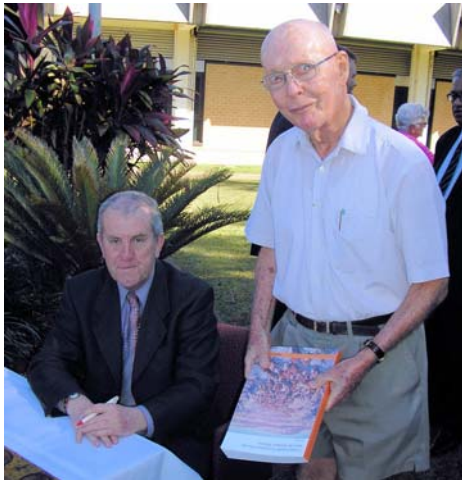
Dr Ted Ling's Book launch – 1 July



John Bannon launching Ted's book

On the anniversary of Territory Self Government, Ted's new publication titled *Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory: Research Guide* to the National Archives at the Nightcliff National Archives. NT Administrator Tom Pauling and former South Australian Premier, John Bannon in his capacity as Chair of the National Archives Board launched the book.

Dr Ling, a former employee of the National Archives, was commissioned to write a research guide to the Commonwealth's administration of the Northern Territory. This involved documenting all records held in the Darwin office and other Archive offices'. The guide is a valuable reference for all researchers who are interested in Northern Territory history and it is available in both hard copy and electronically.



Ted and Vern O'Brien



From left: NT Administrator, Tom Pauling, Ted & Brendan O'Connor, MP Minister for Justice, Home Affairs, Privacy & Freedom of Information.



From left: Col Beard, Ted Ling and Katherine Hamilton, NT Archives



From left: Phyllis Williams, Director of NT National Archives, Darwin Mayor, Graeme Sawyer, former Chief Minister, Clare Martin & John Wesley-Smith

Online writing course information from Queensland Writers Centre and The Australian Writer's Marketplace

New courses are coming up in the Australian Writer's Marketplace Online Learning Centre (OLC) Learn the art and business of writing with The Australian Writer's Marketplace's Online Learning Centre. Discover inspiring, flexible online courses and learn at your own pace, wherever you are. Interact with fellow writers and get one-on-one feedback from our tutors, who are all published authors and industry professionals. Check out the [AWM Online Learning Centre website](#) for course details or give Queensland Writers Centre a call on (07) 3842 9922.

Pitching to Publishers with Tiana Templeman

A four-week course. Commencing 10 October 2011 Cost \$150
This four-week course, starting 9 May, will show you how to push all the right buttons to attract a publisher's eye. Discover what commissioning editors love and what they loathe. From writing a captivating synopsis to deciding where to send it, learn about all facets of the proposal process for a range of writing including non-fiction, fiction, and children's.

Introduction to Creative Writing

Six-week courses Commencing 15 August and 17 October 2011. Cost \$130
There are a lot of us out there who write, scribbling ideas on bus tickets, boarding passes and coffee shop serviettes, but who never seem to turn these notes into anything. If you have been scribbling away quietly but have never taken the leap to finish anything or call yourself a writer, clear a few hours a week in your schedule to sit down and rediscover the art of creative writing in this practice-based series of online activities and resources.

Kim Wilkins' Year of the Novel

Year-long courses Commencing August 2011 Cost \$445
Challenge yourself to complete the ultimate writing journey in Kim Wilkins' Year of the Novel under the tutelage of author of *Dust*, Christine Bongers. Christine will guide you through this course created by Kim Wilkins and help you get that manuscript finished in a year!

www.awmonlinelearn.com.au for more information.
Emails: ntwriters@bigpond.com, info@ntwriters.com.au or
Caroline Reid caroline.reid2011@gmail.com

Ken Dupe – Life Member of the Historical Society

by David Carment

It is with regret that we hear of Ken's death. Ken was on the HSNT Council when I first joined in 1982 and we made him an Honorary Life Member when he moved to Victoria approximately two years later. During the late 1970s, Ken was also on the National Trust Council. He worked hard for the HSNT in the immediate post-Cyclone Tracy period in helping to get the Society re-established and rescuing what was left of its collections after Holtze Cottage, where they were housed, was destroyed.

Council members of the Historical Society have relayed their condolences to Ken's family.

Death of Tom Kruse – Birdsville Track Mailman

Legendary outback mailman Tom Kruse died in Adelaide on 30 June 2011 aged 96. He worked the Birdsville Track mail run from 1936 to 1957 driving his Leyland Badger truck. He delivered mail and other supplies including stores, fuel and medicine to remote stations. Kruse abandoned the Badger truck near Birdsville in 1957 and found it in the desert in 1986 during the Jubilee Mail Run re-enactment and retrieved it in 1993. A group of enthusiasts with the help of Tom fully restored the truck and it is now on display at the Birdwood National Motor Museum in the Adelaide Hills. Tom's funeral was held on 7 July at the Adelaide Morphettville Racecourse.

Information from the Coober Pedy Regional Times dated 7 July 2011.

Death of Glenville Pike, OAM

Glenville died on 4 May 2011 aged 85 years. He had written many publications on the Northern Territory and Northern Queensland. He was born in New Zealand and arrived in Australia as a youngster. Prior to moving to the Darwin area, the family lived in Cooktown. After Cyclone Tracy, Glenville returned to Queensland and continued to travel around northern Queensland. Dr Ruth Kerr of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland writes "Glen's enormous achievement was in collecting and publishing the oral histories of miners and stockmen, pastoralists, storekeepers, women, drovers, railway men, teachers and all who were writing their reminiscences and were willing to have them published. Glen had no formal education and was taught at home by his mother." In 2007, he published his autobiography, *My Yesterdays*.

Information from the Royal Historical Society of Queensland Newsletter dated June 2011.

The Oodnadatta Track

By Bev Phelts

In July, I took a trip along the Track and was amazed to see the amount of heritage that followed the old Ghan Line. The trip also included a Cessna flight over Lake Eyre which has almost peaked and is brimming with birdlife, in particular, pelicans. The Track was a very good road and we comfortably sat on 90km for most of the journey. Facilities are limited with petrol and basic accommodation only at William Creek and Oodnadatta.



Beresford Railway Siding on Anna Creek Station



Beresford Railway Siding elevated water tank



Original wooden & Oppenheimer OHL poles near William Creek



The Breakfast Time Creek Railway Bridge, William Creek



Warrina Railway Siding

High above the salt plains and 20km (30 mins travel one way) off the Track is the Peake Overland Telegraph Station which began operation in 1872. John McDouall Stuart had passed through the area during the 1850s and considered that gold could be found in the area. However it was to be copper that was mined. The mine and excavation are still very evident. Other remnants consist of outdoor toilet, smithy's workshop, wagon wheels, tools, an iron wrought bed, iron square water tanks and tin buckets.



The telegraph station.



The Peake OLT station, mess and mens quarters



Oodnadatta railway museum



The end of the Oodnadatta railway line

The Historical Society's Field Trip to Victoria River Downs Station

VRD Station was first established by Charles Fisher and Maurice Lyons in 1880. The original cattle, 20,000 of them, were overlanded by Nat Buchanan in 1881 from Wilmot. Since then, the station has had several owners including Goldsbrough Mort & Company, Sidney Kidman and Bovril Australian Estates Ltd. The current owner is Janet Holmes a'Court.

During the early years, the Station received renowned visitors such as Sir George Le Hunte, Mick Madrill who initiated the first mail run and Harry Peckham – "The Fizzer" from the book *We of the Never Never*. Station size is 12,359 square kilometres, carrying 10,000 cattle and is 730km south west of Darwin.

It can boast of its historical past with its old buildings dating back to WW2 and beyond. The Station had previously operated a hospital/nursing home (one of the earliest Australian Inland Mission Hospitals), a school, medical clinic, a post office with its very own postcode, a supply store, stables, a cemetery (still in use) and ownership of two WW2 bomb shelters.

The infrastructure of the Station is very impressive with its helicopter pad (we counted 4 helicopters at one time), a light aircraft landing strip, power station and a weather station.

Historical Society members were the guests of the managers, Julie and Russell Richter for the weekend. Russell was away and Julie, who was suffering from broken arm and juggling two young children, remarkably - managed to spend a morning with us showing us around.

It was good to arrive home safe, have a much needed shower after rolling around in red dust for four days.

Thanks to Col Beard and Earl James for organising it, and for Earl and Wendy doing a recci so we knew what to expect.

We thank Julie Richter and her marvelous staff at VRD Station for being great hosts and making our stay so enjoyable.

The following are some photos from our trip.



Dashwood Xing at the Victoria River.
Lyn and Brian Reid's 4WD coming through



Setting up camp - Penny Baird & Julie Mastin
pumping up the mattress



At camp - Sheryl Keat, Lyn Reid, Arthur Keat & Brian Reid



At camp - Judy Boland, Jane Farr & Bev Phelts



At camp - Julie Mastin cooking breakfast with Janie Mason & Ruth Kerr



At camp - Ruth Kerr & Janie Mason



Our camp was at the stunning Wickham River. Tempting but much too cold for a swim



The weather station. Note the old iron water tank



Tour around VRD Station. Manager, Julie Richter showing us one WW2 bomb shelter



WW2 bomb shelter



VRD post office – post code 0852



Front of the post office



VRD cemetery



VRD social club bar. We had a drink with some of the ringers.



The beautiful old homestead completely renovated inside and extended. C.1910



Some of the stunning woodwork inside the homestead



VRD power station



The old Stores building which closed in 2006. Contains a bomb shelter and now partly used as a weather station.



Inside the old Stores building



The old hospital – Wimmera House



Inside the old hospital. Bev Phelts, Brian Reid & Julie Richter



Inside the old hospital. Lyn & Brian Reid, Julie Richter & Ruth Kerr



Inside the old hospital. Penny Baird & Judy Boland



The cookhouse and dining room



Inside the cookhouse. The cook, Elaine Chisholm & Julie Richter. We were treated to a delicious homemade morning tea by Elaine



Great scenery in the Victoria River region