



*This is an occasional newsletter from **Engineering Heritage Victoria** sent to all members on our mail list. Enquiries, discussion or correspondence should be directed to ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au If necessary, contact can be made through the Victorian Divisional Office of Engineers Australia at 21 Bedford Street North Melbourne.*

Please address all postal correspondence to the Chairman, Engineering Heritage Victoria, Engineers House, 21 Bedford Street, North Melbourne, Victoria, 3051.

Melbourne has a superb range of world class sporting attractions. They include a Grand Slam Tennis tournament, Formula 1 Grand Prix, the Melbourne Cup, Motor Cycle Grand Prix (albeit in Regional Victoria), the Boxing Day Test match and the AFL Grand Final. Choices everywhere – and too little time. On this occasion, please blame the tennis for the fact that this newsletter is going out quite a bit later than I would have liked!

Upcoming Talks

The following talks form part of our Guest Speakers' Series for 2008. These talks are usually held every two months at Engineers House (21 Bedford St, North Melbourne). They start at 6.00 PM sharp (light refreshments from 5.30 PM) and last for about one hour. Unless otherwise advised, admission is free and open to the public. Full details relating to each talk are provided in an email flyer - circulated about a fortnight ahead of the event.

Next Talk

Thursday 21 February 2008 : “**Producer Gas & the Australian Motorist**” – *an alternative fuel during the 1939-45 fuel crisis*”. The “Guest” Speaker is Don Bartlett. This talk will cover the history, development, construction, operation and performance of the WW2 gas producer units as a source of “energy” to power cars, trucks, buses, trains – and to heat meat pies - during the uncertainties of wartime Australia. The talk will also cover the production and distribution of the fuel for the gas generator (charcoal, coke, wheat and wood) etc.

Don Bartlett is a practicing Consulting Engineer in private practice and Chairman of Engineering Heritage Victoria. His special interest in this topic is part of a project to put on record a selection of available information about how things were done in the past while there are still people around with first hand knowledge.

Other talks

Thursday 17 April 2008 : “**John Grainger – Distinguished Colonial Engineer & Architect**”. Our Guest Speaker will be George Tibbits.

Grainger is perhaps best known as the father of the famous Australian pianist and composer Percy Grainger. John was an engineer and architect of distinction. Born in London, he arrived in

Adelaide in 1877 where he subsequently practised as an engineer. Later he moved to Melbourne and Perth. During this time, was involved in a number of interesting professional partnerships. The talk will outline his unusual life and discuss the heritage merits of the bridges and buildings with which he was associated. Examples of his work are spread around Australia and New Zealand. He is best remembered as the designer of the Princes Bridge in Melbourne.

George Tibbits is an architectural historian who has written a detailed history of the design and construction of the Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne, a project that stimulated his interest in the work of John Grainger. He is a Senior Fellow in the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne.

- ✚ The August Guest Speaker is Alan Holgate speaking on the *Engineering of John Monash*. This is part of our contribution to Engineers Week 2008.
- ✚ A talk on the “*History is Bio-mechanical Engineering*“ is planned for June but further information will be provided later.

Upcoming Events

The following events are scheduled for EHV during the coming months.

Next Special Event

On Thursday 22 May 2008, Robert Green (Heritage Victoria) will give be our Special Guest and will give a talk on the “*Cable Trams of Melbourne*”. This session will be in the Auditorium at 21 Bedford St North Melbourne and will be a prelude to the Engineering Heritage Australia Board meeting to be held the following day. Robert’s talk is open to any interested person. Timing will be in the late afternoon or early evening and further details will be provided nearer to the date..

Other Events

The Plaquing Committee of Engineering Heritage Australia have advised that a Heritage Engineering Marker (HEM – a bronze plaque) has been awarded to the *Cassilis Hydro Power scheme* (near Omeo). Over the past 30 years, John McCutchan has collected, researched and documented the operation of this early Australian “experiment” in the field of renewable energy. A ceremony for the unveiling of the plaque is being planned for later this year – which is the Centenary of the commencement of operation of the plant. Further details will be provided by event flyer and the webpage.

South Gippsland Regional Tour (November). The date selected for this event is the weekend of 15/16 November 2008. An interim itinerary includes a visit to the State Coal Mine at Wonthaggi, a look at the remnant heritage of Leongatha and Korumburra, the Black Swamp sea-wall near Foster and a close look at the old lime-kilns at Walkerville. With a bit of luck we will also be able to see a set of Lassiter’s early conceptual drawings submitted as part of the competition for the design of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Suggestions and or offers of assistance in relation to this proposal will be welcome. Send email to ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au and put “South Gippsland Regional Tour” in the Subject Line. And finally, yes – I know it rains constantly in S Gippsland during November but this year will be an exception.

Other Matters

Please forward any correspondence on any of the following to ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au It would be helpful if you put the topic in the email subject line.

Committee Changes

Brian Harper has stepped down from the Executive of EHV and Bruce Sandie has taken his place. David Brown has joined the Committee. Sincere thanks to Brian for his long service as Chairman followed in recent years as a member of the Executive. Brian remains on the Committee – and retains his position as “Immediate Past Chairman”.

I take this opportunity to welcome David to the Committee. He is a Civil and Structural Engineer in local government. Over the past two or three years, David has flagged a number of matters for attention and is always keen to contribute material and ideas. He is a regular supporter of our special events and the Guest Speakers’ series.

Cable Tram Video

About 20 years ago, Robert Green (Heritage Victoria) edited a short series of film clips covering the early days of the Melbourne Cable Trams. The clip is available for download at <http://video.google.com.au/videoplay?docid=1530173140708137073> Robert will give a talk to EHV on the Cable Tram System in May (see Coming Events above for further details).

Neville Shute Norway

The answer to the question posed in the September edition of the Newsletter was the Author – Neville Shute (Norway). Shute was born and educated in the UK and worked as an Aeronautical Engineer. He worked with Barnes Wallis on the design of the R100 Airship (not the ill-fated R101 Government sponsored model) and subsequently formed his own aircraft construction business (Airspeed Ltd). Airspeed developed into a very large business and eventually he left to concentrate on his writing. The quote - “*messing about in aeroplanes*” - came from the last paragraph of his autobiography - “Slide Rule”. In 1950 he emigrated to Australia and lived at Langwarrin on the Dandenong Hastings Road until his death in 1960. Perhaps he is best known as the author of “On the Beach” – a novel about the unpleasant outcome of a world wide nuclear war - later made into a movie starring Ava Gardiner and Gregory Peck. During the filming of the Melbourne scenes, Ava was reported as saying (words to the effect) “... if you are going to make a movie about the end of the earth, Melbourne was a very good place in which to make it!”

David Beauchamp was the first to get in with the correct answer although I seriously suspect it was a guess. It looks like being a cheap shout as he still has not told me if he prefers red or white wine.

Maroondah Aqueduct

One of our members (Perry Crosswhite) is seeking assistance with information relating to the history of the Maroondah Aqueduct - both the original aqueduct design and construction project (1890s) as well as the enlargement of the aqueduct in conjunction with the construction of the Maroondah Dam (1920's). He has offered to share his findings with us as part of the EHV Guest

Speakers' Series and would welcome any leads, suggestions, comments etc on where to look and with whom he could speak. Anyone willing or able to contribute is asked to make initial contact through ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au and place the word "Maroondah" in the subject line.

Acetylene Lamps

In 1912, the Acetylene Company Pty Ltd of Melbourne wrote to the Victorian Railways recommending the use of Acetylene lighting to illuminate the Healesville Railway Station. In the letter, the Company referred to a test of their lighting equipment at **Footscray West** (probably at the railway station). Arthur Brooke is seeking further information about the test or the equipment. If you can assist, please email ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au and put "Acetylene" in the Subject Line.

Thompson Dam Material

Over the past year or two, we have received several enquiries about the construction of the Thompson Dam. These enquiries suggest that this is perhaps a topic well worth some research – and possibly a Speakers' Series presentation. Suggestions, contacts or contributions to ehv@engineersaustralia.org.au and please put "Thompson Dam" in the subject line.

Colonial Engineers & Projects List etc

Progress towards listing Colonial Engineers and Current Research Projects on the webpage has slowed. Likewise, uploading scanned copies of engineering heritage papers has hit the same bottleneck. The situation has not been helped by my biennial computer network crash (and the tennis). Thanks to Arthur Mann, we are now back up and running but the past six weeks have been very frustrating. Anyone who runs an Apple system would know exactly what I mean!

Book Launch : "Five Fighting Shires" by Ray Walls

Former Korumburra Shire Engineer Ray Walls has written the history of that Shire in a book to be published in April. It is a political, social and economic history of a community through the story of the shire council. The Shire is of particular interest to engineers because of its unusually close relationship with the Victorian Country Roads Board. A cost / benefit study by FE Fricke at the State Treasury in 1908 established that the best economic return for the state by expenditure on roads would come from development of a road network in the uniquely productive land of what was then the Shire of Poowong & Jeetho (Shire of Korumburra from 1922). The Shire Engineer, Bill McCormack was attracted to government service and along with Fricke and Calder, was appointed as an inaugural member of the Country Roads Board (CRB).

Shire Engineers at Korumburra served a community that was particularly disputatious, partly because of conflicts between the farming and coal mining interests. There were eighteen Shire Engineers in the one-hundred and three years of the municipality. Frank Horsfall and Ray Walls between them served for forty-two of those years, and it can be seen that many found the parochialism and spite of the council proceedings too much to bear, regardless of the active CRB programs. Emotional and verbal abuse was common and there were some physical conflicts, particularly involving the Irish-born and enigmatic farmer Councillor Ed Fitzgerald and the bullying coal-mine owner Peter Hudson. The Shire became known to Gippsland engineers as the 'Five Fighting Shires' – a reference to the separate "ridings" of which it was composed.

The book will be launched on the afternoon of Sunday 13th April 2008 at Radovicks' Historic Korumburra Hotel and will be on sale for \$25 (\$30 posted – contact the author on 03 5655 1298 or email wallskor@tpg.com.au).

Don Bartlett
Chairman
Engineering Heritage Victoria

MEETINGS & NOTICES

EHV tries to limit the number of times we contact you by email. Speakers' Program notices are usually issued about a fortnight ahead of each session. However, availability of speakers, venues and unspecified emergencies often complicate this schedule. In general, the EHV Newsletter is issued every two months (in the odd numbered month). Event Flyers are circulated "as required".

DISCLAIMER

This newsletter has been prepared on behalf of Engineering Heritage Victoria which is a Special Interest Group of the Victorian Division of Engineers Australia and the Institution of Engineers (Australia). Any "historical" content is given in a topical sense and is not the result of exhaustive research on the part of the Editor. Where deemed to be relevant, references are quoted - if they exist. From time to time, there will be errors or misleading claims. However, the newsletter is also intended to promote discussion. Although mistakes are regrettable, the Editor (presently the Chairman EHV) is ready and willing to retract, clarify or argue the case - as appropriate - should anyone care to point out the alleged blemishes.

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