

Planning Day of great value

New manager brings wealth of experience

By Anne Murray, President

THE Committee of Management held a Planning Day on 22 November with Graham Hellyer and Alan Hodges taking the committee and members of sub-committees through issues associated with the Strategic Plan.

In addition, Graham conducted "group-profiling". This was interesting, and some participants were somewhat surprised to find out what sort of person they appeared to be!

The participants formed into small groups to consider implications of the Strategic Plan's vision, values and purpose, which resulted in them making the following 13 points:

1 There is a need to promote interaction with community outreach programs that benefit our members and age cohort.

Continued page 3

From 4 January the club will have a new manager, George Heron, who will bring to the appointment a wealth of managerial experience.

Since retiring from the Royal Australian Navy in 1990, after serving for 20 years, George has served in humanitarian aid in many parts of the world, including Tanzania, Cambodia, Tajikistan, Albania and Turkey.

George and wife Sally first lived in Canberra between 1972-74, when George held a Naval staff appointment, and they have lived here permanently since 1978. They have four grown-up children - three living in Canberra and a daughter living in England.

George, whose father was in the Army, was born in Bristol. He spent much of his childhood in Germany, where his father served,



George Heron

and, when the family returned to England, was educated at Northampton Grammar School.

At 16 he became a sea apprentice in the merchant navy, and it was in those early years that he first visited Australia. Subsequently he joined the Royal Navy and in 1970 transferred to the Australian Navy, serving as both a seaman officer and naval aviator. His final eight years in the Navy were spent as a staff officer in Canberra, and he rose to the rank of commodore.

George's work in many of the world's troubled areas on behalf of the Red Cross and Care Australia were followed by an appointment as manager at the Griffin Centre - an experience that should stand him in good stead here at the WSCC.

George says he likes to keep busy about the home and garden, and particularly enjoys music. He also enjoys watching cricket.

Meridian welcomes George to the club, and wishes him a successful and happy time with us. - DB.



A group of the club's water colourists spent three enjoyable days at Thredbo recently, staying at the Brindabella Ski Resort. The trip was organised by Norma Donaldson (second from right). The day the group went up the mountain on the chairlift was fine, but the wind was gusting to 80 km/h! Pictured, a group at work at the lodge.

Editor's comments

Upside for witnesses at the Coronial Inquiry into Canberra's bushfires is the potential dismissal of a coroner who appeared incredulous that important conversations and telephone messages had not been recorded and could not be remembered. Downside is that any outcome without Maria Doogan will lack credibility in the eyes of many people. Most, I suspect.

WE'LL NEVER KNOW

If the Liberals had won the ACT election would they have provided "an equitable concessions scheme for all low income seniors by taking up the Commonwealth's offer to extend the concessions currently given to aged pensioners to low-income self funded retirees", as set out in their policy statement? We will never know.

WHITE FELLAH

In the October issue of Meridian I wrote that Tonto's horse was called Scout. So it was, but only after 1938. Before then it was called White Fellah.

I GIVE UP

Readers may remember that I asked Traffic Infringement whether cycle paths are one-way, or two. This followed meeting a cyclist pedalling towards me as I crossed a green lane. I was assured that I would receive an answer in "due course". That was over six months ago. I give up.

BLACK OR WHITE?

Little girl goes into pet shop. "I'd like a rabbit, please", she coos. Shopkeeper, quite won over, says, "Of course, sweetie. Long hair or short hair?" No response from the little girl. Shopkeeper tries again, "Would you like a bwack wabbit or a white wabbit?" he lisps. Little girl, becoming impatient, says, "Look, whatever! My python doesn't give two hisses either way!"

TRUE LOVE (1)

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance. - Oscar Wilde's Lord Goring (An Ideal Husband).

TRUE LOVE (2)

He that falls in love with himself will have no rival. - Benjamin Franklin.

THE BIG GAME

Two flies playing football in a saucer. One says to the other, "Come on, you've got to do better than that - we're playing in the cup next week".

Positions Vacant

The club needs volunteers to help with its computers. The amount of training that the club can provide to members will depend upon more volunteers. No great depth of knowledge is required. Anyone who has used computers for some time can learn what to do. The training positions do not require a long term commitment. If you can just volunteer to run one or two courses, it would help.

Assistant System Administrator (only required to help when Dennis Glanville is unable to attend the club).

Windows Trainer

MS Word Trainer

(basic knowledge only required; lesson notes provided).

Coffee and Computers Convenor

(if someone would volunteer as coordinator, a group could meet once a week to discuss computer issues over a cup of coffee. The convenor can nominate the day and time!)

Web Master

(to supervise the Club's web site. This does not require much time and can be done from home).

Telling it like it was

We know all the answers but no one asks the questions. Style (Seniors Tell Youth Life Experiences) is a project to help bring together the youth of Australia and older people for mutual benefit of learning. Youth will meet people who have witnessed events over the past years having "been there".

The goal of Style is to encourage schools and colleges to ask for "Stylers" who meet specific needs of information on a topic they are studying. Two Stylers would be accompanied by an Education Department representative to speak to class size or smaller groups on a relevant topic - for example the Vietnam War or the Great Depression. Stylers are volunteers getting the opportunity to meet young people and break the barriers of perception between the generations in Australia.

If you would like to be a Styler or you would like Style to come to your school, phone Phil Dodd (Education) on 02 62059449 or me, 02 62861495.

Frank Millburn

Anyone who has an interest in computers should contact one of the IT Committee:

Grahame Hellyer 62302480 (re courses); David Griffiths 62861141 (re web master and convenor); Dennis Glanville 62812607 (re assistant system administrator).

Library news

The changes to the library earlier this year have obviously been successful with a large number of the books now taken out on loan.

Unfortunately a number of the books borrowed have not been returned so I would like to remind members to return their WSCC library books so the library can remain viable. The library operates on an "honesty system", so it is up to members to return books they borrow.

Many thanks to those members who have donated books to the library.

The most popular categories of books borrowed are General fiction, Romance and Adventure.

Sue Marks

(Management Committee Member)

Miller's top three

When charismatic Australian cricketer Keith Miller, who died recently, was asked to name the most wonderful sights in England, he replied, "The hills of Derbyshire, Denis Compton's leg sweep, and Princess Margaret."



Top-three finish for Margaret

Planning Day

From page 1

2 We should promote the status of seniors (i.e., appreciation of values and abilities) with other cohorts.

3 The club must accept responsibility for the expanding aged sector and exert its best effort to meet reasonable needs.

4 We should promote interaction through activity groups to enhance a "club" environment, possibly through more club-wide events.

5 Within activity groups we need to promote a feeling of responsibility, friendship and caring for each other.

6 The club should develop a formal marketing program to draw in more members.

7 We need to be more active in promoting to the general public the activities we conduct .

8 The present facilities are assessed as being adequate to cope with an increase to 800 members. Any subsequent increase in activity participation or numbers of activities would need careful management to prevent their encroaching on each other.

9 The club entrance needs to be improved to make it more welcoming and cheerful.

10 The social worker should be more visible.

11 Introduce a new activity - Coffee and Chat - for perhaps one day a week.

12 Foster closer relations with other seniors groups - e.g. send them the Meridian, invite them to activities and events.

13 Update our image and status in the community. Consider changing the name of the club (a Strategic Plan recommendation).

Other points raised during discussion included the need for groups to show greater tolerance of other groups, the need for a publicity officer, consolidation of notices to one notice board, a list of forward dates of committee meetings to be displayed, and a summary of the minutes to be displayed as well as the minutes themselves.

Alan Hodges summarised key achievements to date in implementing the Strategic Plan:

1 The governance structure has been extensively revised with formation of sub-committees for Finance (4 meetings), Hiring (2 meetings), Activities and Events (1 meeting), Facilities (10 meetings) and Information Technology (5 meetings). These groups are involving an increasing number of members in the management of the club.

2 Policy statements have been developed: Financial Management, Hiring of facilities and parking, Organisational arrangements. New contracts have been developed for facilities and car park hiring.

3 Financial records have been converted to electronic format and the budgeting process reformed. An internal auditing policy has been developed and is being implemented.

4 Specialist software has been purchased to manage activity scheduling and facility bookings. Activities and club bookings are being progressively loaded on to the computer.

5 Networked new computers and accessories have been purchased for office use and a training room of four older computers have been networked for member use. Broadband access is available for member use. A course has been run on introduction to computers and further courses are in hand for using the computers and various software programs.

6 A consultancy was let to review the club's administration. As a result many actions are in hand, including (following advertising of the position) appointing a club manager (30 hours a week) to replace the administrative officer (25 hours a week).

Activity fees in 2005

Activity fees in 2005 will be \$3 per person for a first session.

Members participating in a second session on the same day will pay an additional \$1-50 for the second session.

Club reopens 4 January

The club will reopen for activities after Christmas on Tuesday 4 January.

There will be no activities between Christmas and that date.

7 Submissions have been made for the current grant round from the Community Inclusion Fund (\$280,000 over three years to assist in implementing the Strategic Plan), the Canberra Community Grants Program (\$8000 to run a pilot program for seniors at Outward Bound at Tharwa), and the Review Community Infrastructure and Facilities Program (\$30,000 for various improvements to the club).

8 A submission has been prepared to the Chief Minister, in co-operation with the Office for Ageing in the Chief Minister's Office, seeking continuing support from the ACT Government for the operation of the club to consider the possibility of being part of a facilities development.

ALAN HODGES

The Planning Day was a great success, and I thank all who participated. In particular I thank Alan Hodges for masterminding the day. Alan has done an enormous amount of work for the club, giving up countless hours of his own time, and bringing professionalism and dedication to all he has done for us.

UMAR BOURKE

I also thank our departing administrative officer, Umar Bourke, for his considerable efforts on our behalf, voluntarily spending far more hours at the club than he was employed to do so. Umar is leaving us before Christmas. We wish him well in the future.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Finally, I wish all members a very happy Christmas, and a fruitful New Year. May our club go from strength to strength in 2005, and beyond!



COURSES AT CLUB Taking mystery out of computers

BY the time you read this issue we will have run the first Introduction to Computers course and started the first two Introduction to Windows and the Internet courses.

Introduction to Computers

This is a 2 hour lecture/discussion with demonstrations. The 18 members who attended the first one said they had an enjoyable morning and a much better understanding of what computers were all about. The aim of the course is to take the mystery out of computers and show some of the things we can use them for.

Introduction to Windows and the Internet

This is a hands-on course consisting of two 2hour sessions from 10 to 12 noon. These will normally be run on the same day in two successive weeks. We know most people only have certain mornings free each week (they are so busy with other club activities!)

The first two will have been run by the time this Meridian is

received but more will be run in the new year. As the courses can only be run when a trainer is available, keep an eye on the notice board for dates. Registration lists will be put on the board.

Unfortunately, with only four computers, we can only take four students at a time for the hands-on courses. If you know anyone who is familiar with computers, show them the advertisement for more trainers on page 2 and we may be able to run more courses.

This course is very basic and for complete beginners – please do not take a place if you have used computers before. It may be possible to run a more advanced course for those who have a basic knowledge next year.

STOP PRESS

More Beginners' Courses

Three more hands-on courses for complete beginners start 17, 18 and 24 January. These are for small groups of four at a time. If you haven't used a computer before, come along and see what is involved. They only involve two mornings of your time. Sign up on the notice board.

At the club's Planning Day Chris Peters, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Chamber of Commerce and Industry, speaks on how the club can engage with business.

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Val on 62816914

Tai Chi - Soft or hard sport?

WHAT has the "soft" practice of Chinese Tai Chi to do with competitive skating? The two would seem to be worlds apart!

About 18 months ago, my son, who was recovering from a mental illness, had moved from Sydney to live with me in Canberra, and had for some time refused to leave the house. It seemed that nothing would draw him out, nothing would hold his interest for long. Then his mental health case-worker suggested that he try Tai Chi.

Our teacher, Elizabeth Halfnights, was kind and encouraging. Tai Chi proved to be the answer.

My son and I found ourselves attending regularly. Elizabeth's classes made the breakthrough in my son's rehabilitation. He is now well settled in Canberra and goes out and about without hesitation. The Mental Health Service count his progress as one of their "good outcomes", so we are both very grateful to Elizabeth.

There is also a curious side to this success story. My son and I found the Tai Chi moves somehow familiar. Elizabeth was most particular about the proper placing

Tai Chi classes at the club

Elizabeth Halfnights' classes are held at the Woden Senior Citizens Club during the school terms, on Wednesday mornings at 7.30-8.30 am and on Thursday afternoons at 2.15-3.15 pm.

Beginners are always welcome, and classes are ongoing so you can join at any stage.

Participants must be members of the club.



Elizabeth Halfnights (centre, front) leads her class at the club.

of the feet on opposite corners of an imaginary square traced on the ground, so as not to hurt the knees when we bent and stepped. She even pinned up diagrams of the feet positions to remind us. Some people have to pay special attention to this principle at first.

As we practised, however, my son and I found that our feet were never out of place. Our knees never strained. Why? we wondered.

The explanation is unusual. Some 25 years ago we had trained for about 10 years as ice skaters. My son had become a champion, while I was just a participating mum. On reflection, we realised that skating and Tai Chi operate in very similar ways. They call upon the same muscles and body co-ordination. The oppositional placing of the feet is the same, while the use of bent knees, the holding on one leg after the other and even a large number of body postures are also those of skating.

The major practical difference is that in Tai Chi I have never seen anyone fall over or get hurt, whereas in skating falls happen all the time. In Tai Chi, Elizabeth says, we learn to "tread the earth as softly as tigers" but for me, Tai Chi is simply safe skating on dry ground.

Those who practise Tai Chi regularly report many benefits.

Among these are a greater sense of well-being, better balance and flexibility, stronger muscles, weight loss and improved concentration. Tai Chi has also been found to lower the blood pressure and to raise the immune system, meaning fewer infections.

Within its combination of movement and meditation, Tai Chi practitioners report sensations of flying or of swimming in the ocean. This is no surprise, since the moves are based on those of birds, animals and the phenomena of the natural world. What is more, once we progress beyond the basics, we can move into the martial arts to perform the sword, the sabre and the fighting fan - activities not commonly associated with the "soft" sport of Tai Chi.

Elizabeth tells us the correct Chinese term is to "play" Tai Chi. You can play it soft, or play it hard. I personally prefer hard. Play it soft and you will reap the health rewards listed above. Play it hard and expect . . . lift off!

Wendy Mukherjee

Meridian on club's website

If you want to see this or recent issues of Meridian on the club's website, the address is www.wodenseniors.org.au

Making money

NO. This is not an article of financial advice. Its title is meant quite literally. But before I deal with the method, there is quite a bit of background information for you to digest.

After the First World War the German colony Kamerun was taken from them and most of it handed over by the League of Nations as a trust territory to the French. But a relatively small area that ran as a long narrow strip along the Northern Nigerian border was named the Northern Cameroons Trusteeship Territory to be administered as part of Northern Nigeria by the British.

The United Nations succeeded the League and had a Trusteeship Council which was supposed to keep an eye on the various trust territories around the world. This council announced in 1948 that it proposed to send a delegation to the Northern Cameroons in 1953.

As nothing much had happened in the trust territory in the past 30 years the Government of Northern Nigeria was faced with the prospect of showing the visiting delegation a few primary schools and two village dispensaries as the only evidence of progress. That would not do. So it was decided to build in Mubi, the largest town and chief market of the area, a teachers college and a hospital.

By 1951 enough of the new college had been built to begin taking in students. Staff and a principal were appointed. I was the principal.

Mubi had nothing of what we today call infrastructure. There was no electricity, telephone, running water, postal services, banks or shops. All it had was a flourishing local produce market, a police station and three trade stores that sold hardware, basic food staples, and petrol. A dirt road of 126 miles linked Mubi to

Yola, the provincial capital.

The college was a boarding institution and students were provided with everything, including uniforms and pocket money. Staff fell into three categories. Senior staff were education officers, all Europeans with degrees, whose salaries were paid into a Yola bank. Consequently they had to have three days off duty every month to drive to Yola, do their banking and shopping and drive back again.

The junior staff were Nigerians with teaching qualifications and experience but without degrees, a clerk, a driver/mechanic and a head cook. They were paid in cash every two weeks, as were the so-called subordinate staff - kitchen hands, groundsmen and so on.

All in all it needed quite a lot of money to keep the place going, and the only source of money was the bank in far-away Yola. I was given an advance, called an "imprest", of two thousand pounds - a fortune in those days.

All the money I spent had to be validated by receipts carefully attached to claim vouchers, each representing a separate "vote of charge" such as food, transport, equipment and salaries. Under each vote I had an annual allocation which could not be exceeded without special authorisation. Every three or four weeks I had to drive to Yola to "replenish" the imprest by presenting my claim vouchers to the sub-treasurer.

He went through them item by item. If he found one that was not properly receipted - where the recipient was illiterate his mark had to have two witnesses - or, where a payment was a single penny above what financial regulations allowed for it, the voucher would be rejected and had to be resubmitted. For the vouchers that passed scrutiny I

received a cheque. Once that was cashed I could make my way back to Mubi.

There must have been quite a number of people who knew exactly why I had gone to Yola, what I was bringing back with me, and that I was unarmed. It would have been quite a simple matter to put a log across the road at some lonely spot and rob me of the cash I was carrying. Thanks to the effective "pax Britannica" that prevailed this never happened. In present-day Nigeria a similar journey without an armed guard would be unthinkable.

Northern Nigeria has a rainy season that begins in early March, becomes heavy in April and peters out at the end of May. In 1952 there were heavy rains earlier than usual and in the third week of March one of the wooden bridges across a normally placid stream on the Yola road was swept away and it was clear that the road would be closed until the end of the rains. I had replenished my imprest at the end of February and, by the end of March, was running short of money.

Tentative enquiries at the trade stores showed that yes they would give the college credit provided there was something in writing to substantiate the debt, but individual members of staff . . . well, they couldn't commit themselves; and from stallholders in the market a definite no. What to do?

We simply had to get more money, which meant getting through to Yola. It was possible to arrange a rendezvous with another vehicle on opposite banks of the Yedseram. The crossing would be no problem since flash floods were rare and quickly subsided. The difficulty was getting a message to Yola and confirmation back.

Then I had quite a different idea. I could be almost certain that the road would be open again

my mid-June. Allow two weeks margin to be quite certain. With the help of the senior teacher to ensure that the Hausa wording was clear and unambiguous we devised a draft note: "Upon presentation of this note at the college office during office hours on any day in July 1952 I promise to pay the bearer the sum of five shillings".

In our store we had coloured sheets of thin cardboard and in the office a Gestetner duplicator. We were able to produce 12 notes at a time, and on green cardboard I signed each note above a rubber stamp which gave my full official designation. I also numbered each note so as to be able to keep a record of the date of issue and, eventually, the redemption date.

Five shillings was a useful denomination because it was the weekly allowance the students received, but something of a higher value was also desirable. So I used pink cardboard to make pound notes.

Staff and students were dubious about accepting and signing for my promissory notes, but it was that or nothing. The acid test came when the head cook took them to market. He reported that things were very difficult at first. He had a lot of explaining to do and some stall holders at first insisted on a discount. The cook countered this by threatening to buy from other stall holders, and fortunately there was enough competition to make the threat effective. There was also reluctance to give "good" coins as change, but this too was overcome, and after a couple of weeks my cardboard notes were circulating side-by-side with regular notes and coins.

By mid-June the road to Yola was reopened and I took my pile of claim vouchers to the Yola sub-treasurer, who pointed out that my claims were more than twice the amount of my imprest. I replied truthfully, that I had used some of "my own money" to tide us over.

In July my notes were duly presented for redemption and after marking them off in the record I carefully destroyed them. By the end of the month only one pink pound note and three green five shillings notes remained unaccounted for. They never did turn up, which meant I had made a profit of 35 shillings, for which I sent a cheque to the Red Cross.

Some weeks later I was chatting to a senior officer in the administration who asked how we had managed while we were cut off. When I told him he gave it some thought and then said, "Although that was a clever way to get you over your difficulties, and though I can't see anything morally wrong with it, I'm almost sure it was highly illegal, and could get you into trouble. If I were you, I wouldn't mention it to anybody".

I took his advice. Until now. So, you are the first to know!

Ralph Wingfield

Good Times

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Green Island and Cairns - in 2004, and in 1949

"What's Green Island like?" Jean Paget asked in Shute's A Town Like Alice. "How would we get there?"

"It's just a coral island on the reef", Joe Hampton answered. "Ernie's got a boat - take about three hours".

I thought about Jean and Joe, "finding each other" on Green Island, as we sped there recently from Cairns on a catamaran.

When Jean and Joe arrived at the island "there were no other visitors staying on the island and they got two of the little bedroom huts among the trees".

When we got there it was to find holidaymakers snorkelling, boarding the glass-bottomed boats and "submarines", and availing themselves of the island's busy restaurants and shops.

Jean thought Cairns itself not unlike England. There were Vauxhalls and Austins parked in its streets, "and politicians telling people to buy British", and people listening to Itma, and newsboys selling papers in the streets. That was in 1949.

I first went to Cairns in the '80s. The population was about 35,000. Nowadays it is about 135,000. And that's the "permanent" population. It is a city dedicated to tourism. And how well it does it!

The Great Barrier Reef is the major attraction, of course. Iris and I sailed over it, choppered over it in a helicopter, viewed it from boat and submarine, and - best of all - snorkelled over the coral, among the fish. Millions of them; almost as plentiful as Japanese tourists (what would Joe Harman have made of that?).

Since leaving tourists on a reef a couple of years ago, operators are ultra-cautious. They are at

pains to ensure everyone is returned to the mainland safely. Iris and I were part of a group of six taken to an outer reef who were required to sign our names before going into the water, and on returning.

Where else in the world could one swim with reef sharks one day, and get close enough to crocodiles, pythons and platypus to film them the next?

The primeval Daintree is memorable; the Atherton Tablelands a delight; Cairns itself is no longer just another tropical town. The casino is an attraction, of course. And so are the night markets, and there are excellent

restaurants and shops.

Nearby Port Douglas is a must. What would Joe have made of the opulent resorts there? And what would James Cook, the Whitby boy, have made of them as he cruised offshore 200 years or so ago?

How air-conditioning has changed Australia! Today, whether it is southern Tasmania or northern Queensland, one sleeps and dines in air-conditioned comfort; travels in air-conditioned comfort; shops in air-conditioned comfort.

Comfort, and convenience. They're important, as one grows older.

A most enjoyable holiday. Must go again. Soon.

Dennis Blewett

Regular activities

Group leaders should inform Meridian of changes to their programs

Monday	Solo	10-11.45am
	Mahjong	10-12 noon
	Choir practice (Woden Senior Singers)	10.30-12 noon
	Singalong - songs around the piano	12.30-1.30pm
	Computer interest group (2nd Monday)	1.30-4.30pm
Tuesday	Table tennis	2-4pm
	Gentle exercise (YMCA instructor)	10.30-11am
	Australian history (WSCC/U3A)	10-12 noon
	Duplicate bridge	10-12.45pm
	New Vogue dancing	1-4pm
Wednesday	New Vogue and modern sequence dancing	7.30-10.30pm
	Tai chi and gentle exercise	7.30-8.30am
	Water colour painting group (WSCC/U3A)	9-12.30pm
	Table tennis	9.30-12.45pm
	Carpet bowls	12-1.30pm
Thursday	Recorder classes (WSCC/U3A)	12.30-1pm
	Recorder orchestra (WSCC/U3A)	1.30-4pm
	Sequence dancing	7.30-10.30pm
	Play reading group (WSCC/U3A)	9.30-11.30am
	Craft group	10-12.30pm
Friday	500 (card game)	10.30-3pm
	International folk dancing	12.30-2pm
	Duplicate bridge	12.30-4pm
	Tai chi and gentle exercise	2-3.30pm
	Table tennis	9.30-12.45pm
Saturday	Carpet bowls	12-1.30pm
	Round dancing (intermediate)*	6.30pm
	Round dancing (advanced)*	7.45pm
Sunday	Hydrotherapy (Canberra Hospital pool)	10-11am
	Duplicate bridge	1-4.30pm
	Round dancing (beginners)*	2.30-5.30pm
	(most Fridays and Sundays, but ring Santo Giuliano 6288 1911)	