

## Car park opening ceremony

Managing Director of Waldren Constructions, Stan Waldren, opened the club's extended car park at the club on 7 May.

Waldren Constructions had undertaken the work, at no cost to the club, thereby continuing its support over the past three years, which has included considerable interior painting.

Stan was welcomed by retiring President Roy Parekh, who also thanked the Facilities Committee for its part in the project. He particularly drew attention to the work of Sue Allen and Robin Brinton.

Leader of the Opposition Zed Seselja, assisted Stan in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, and afternoon tea was served in the Anne Murray Room.

Afterwards Stan and Zed took the opportunity to discuss current development proposals for the area



Stan Waldren (left) and Zed Seselja cut the ribbon

which will impact on Woden Seniors. Some time ago Waldren Constructions submitted alternative plans that the company had discussed with Woden Seniors.

*See development plans concerns, page 3.*

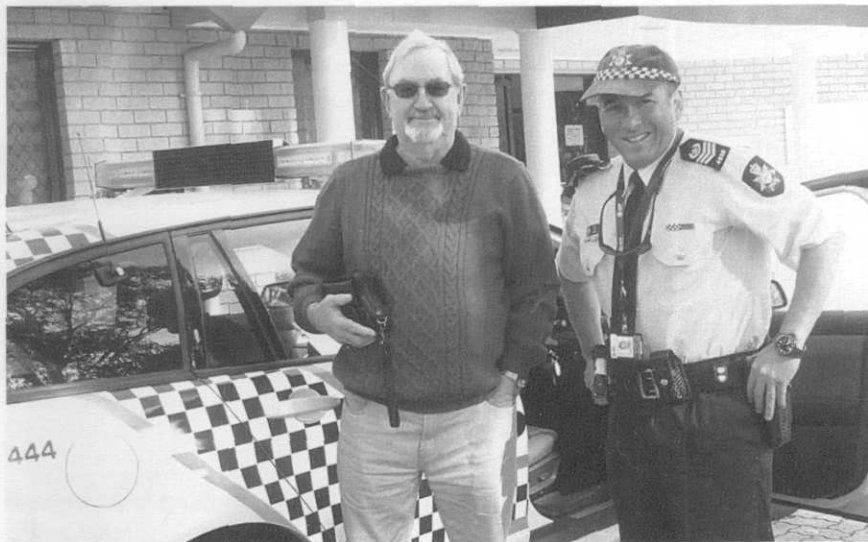
## Autumn Fete raises \$3000 for the club

This year's Autumn Fete, opened by Vice Chair of the ACT Ministerial Council on Ageing Viola Kalokerinos, attracted a constant stream of visitors, and raised \$3000.

Once again, thanks to our hard-working Activities Committee and the many willing volunteers. Perhaps a

special mention of our kitchen staff, who toiled ceaselessly throughout the morning. And a special mention, too, of those who worked so hard "behind the scenes", setting-up and clearing-up afterwards, tasks that involve considerable physical work.

*See photo images, page 8.*



"It's a fair cop. You got me bang to rights". Former President Neil Stevenson and a police officer, who attended the Fete as part of the Force's public relations activities.

## Thanks and farewell to Roy Parekh

*By Sue Allen (Acting President)*

It is with sadness that we say goodbye to our President who has presided over the club since last September. Roy has decided to resign for family and health reasons and he will be missed. We wish him all the best and know we will see him often at the club playing bridge and catching up with us all.

Since September Roy has worked hard, coming in most days, talking to members about their activities and building a team that works together. He has always been accessible to members to answer queries and address problems. It is a time-consuming job, as previous Presidents can attest.

While not having expected to take over from Roy, as Vice President I am happy to step up and take on the role of Acting President until the next AGM.

It was exciting to see how many people worked together to make something like the Autumn Fair so successful. Thank you to everybody who has offered to support me in this role over the next few months

## Last word from Roy

This is my last message as the president of Woden Seniors - as a good politician says, "I am going to spend more time with my family". I decided to resign from 17 May - my birthday. I am also resigning from my other volunteering commitments.

I leave you in the very capable hands of our Vice President and Chair of the Facilities Committee Sue Allen, a hard working, knowledgeable and dedicated office bearer, together with Gail and Heike, and all members of what is an excellent Management Committee. I enjoyed working with them all. My grateful thanks to Polly, who is worth her weight in gold, not only to the executive but to all club members.

I am sure you will continue to support the team. Thanks to everyone.

## Productive seniors' clubs forum

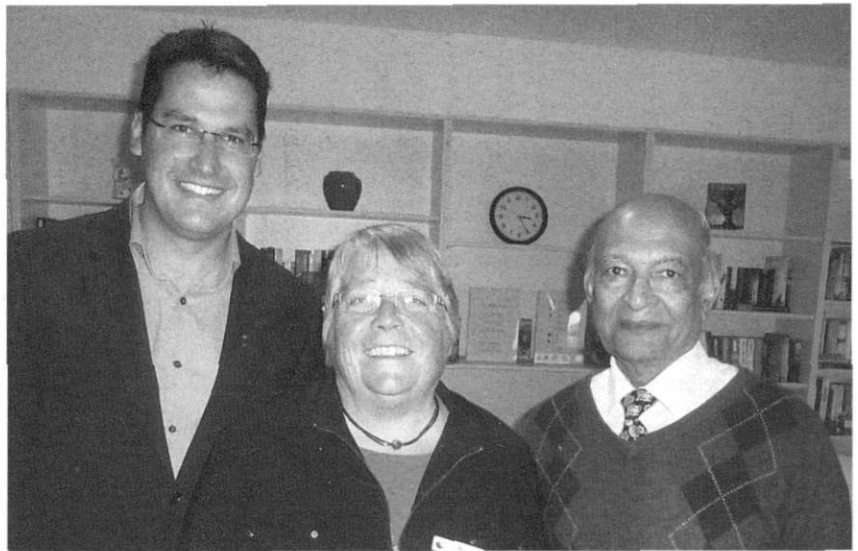
By Zed Seselja,  
Leader of ACT Opposition

The Canberra Liberals understand that seniors clubs are instrumental in providing a great range of activities and support for older Canberrans and we believe the Government should assist, and not obstruct, this important work.

Last month, we held a forum with representatives of senior citizens clubs and other organisations about how the ACT Government can best help them. We received suggestions on a range of issues, including government assistance for seniors clubs, access to the health system, the *Retirement Villages Bill 2011*, the timing of pedestrian cycles at traffic lights, and a range of issues concerning disabled parking spots. We are using the ideas that were raised in these discussions at the forum in our policy development.

We understand that financial support for seniors clubs is a serious concern for many Canberrans. We have already announced a policy structured to provide veterans' organisations access to grants totalling \$400,000 over four years. These grants could be used for a range of purposes including capital works, administrative support, welfare support, remembrance ceremonies, memorials, and legal or advocacy work.

We have also announced policies to reduce the current cost of living



Zed Seselja, Sue Allen and Roy Parekh at opening of car park extension.

pressures most Canberrans face, including removing the payment penalties for people who pay their vehicle registrations quarterly, saving up to \$100 a year. We look forward to releasing more policies over the coming months

We will continue to consult with the community about how a Canberra Liberal government can best support senior citizens and assist them through the many challenges they face.

*Note: Roy Parekh and Anne Murray represented Woden Seniors at the forum, which was hosted by Zed Seselja and Liberal MLA Jeremy Hansen. The forum took place at the Legislative Assembly. About 80 people, representing 40 organisations, attended.*

## Artists, and their work, escape hurt

The work of our talented artists largely escaped without damage when displays collapsed at the Artists Society of Canberra's annual exhibition and sale at the Hyatt Hotel earlier this year.

Minor damage was reported, but at least two paintings had been snapped up and taken away by discerning buyers before the collapse early on the first day.

As *Meridian* went to press our artists were displaying work at a Curtin exhibition and preparing to exhibit at Radford College.

## Thank you, Mr Hindmarsh

The club will receive \$2500 for each of the next two years for mailing out *Hindmarsh Living*. A nice little earner! A big thank you, to our volunteers.

## What is the difference between WiFi and Mobile Broadband?

*Answer:* Mobile broadband uses the mobile phone network to access the internet. This means you can send and receive email or browse the web (check Facebook?) when you are "out and about." You need a mobile plan which includes a data allowance (traffic over the internet is in the form of data.) Mobile phone plans for smart phones usually include a data allowance so you can use the internet on your phone in most (populated) places in Australia. Some tablets, such as the iPad, are 3G - This means they can use the mobile phone network to access the internet but you need a sim card (like your phone) and have to be on a data plan, or have pre-paid sim card, with a phone company. You can adapt your notebook computer to access the mobile network by buying a mobile broadband dongle (plug-in device) or a mini wireless modem to form your own

little wireless hotspot (see below.) If you have post paid plan you need to monitor your use carefully as it can be expensive if you use more data than allowed in your plan. With a prepaid plan you can't use more than you paid for in advance unless you buy some more data.

WiFi is a local wireless system which needs a normal broadband connection to the internet (you have to be signed up with an Internet Service Provider (ISP)) and have a wireless modem/router. This enables wireless devices within range to connect to the internet via the wireless modem. Many homes now have a wireless router so the occupants can access the internet anywhere in the house from a notebook computer, a tablet, or their phone, or even their TV (in the latest models) without any wired connections within the house - apart from the one connection from the

modem to a phone socket. All modern notebook computers and tablets have built in WiFi. Even though your phone may be able to connect to the internet over the 3G network it is still cheaper to do it via your home (or someone else's network). There are many free wireless hot spots where you can connect to the internet from your phone or computer, for example MacDonald's or Office Works. WiFi routers have a key (a code) set so that only approved people can access it (if you have one check that you have set a key or your neighbours may be using your internet connection!)

Disclaimer: I don't personally believe anyone really needs to check email or one's Facebook page while out shopping or down the beach!

If anyone wants more advice feel free to call me. Polly can give you my number.

Grahame Hellyer

# Development, and its impact on our club

Woden Seniors views with concern the proposed development at Woden which, if it goes ahead - as it seems inevitable it will - will see buildings of 17, 21 and 29 storeys on the "car park site" opposite the club. More than 1000 people will live there, and clearly the resultant vehicular congestion, and consequent difficulty of accessing our club is of major concern.

Accordingly, the club has written to the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate:

"Woden Seniors is situated on the corner of Melrose Drive and Corinna Street. We have a Concessional Lease for many years into the future.

"With a membership of close to 800 people and with 32 regular activities, Woden Seniors is a very busy community organisation. We have members, visitors, service personnel coming into the centre throughout the day and evening. We therefore need clear and uninterrupted access to the building and car park for our members. Some of our members are quite elderly and come by bus or community transport.

"We would very much appreciate your sympathetic response to our need".

## *Editorial comment*

The ACT Government's Land Development Agency seeks, among other things, to shift Canberra towards high-density living, and clearly development of Woden Town Centre is an important part (perhaps *the* most important part, at this stage anyway) of its overall strategy.

The reality is that that is what the future holds, and it has long been recognised by Woden Seniors that, sitting on

an important "gateway" site as it does, the club will not escape the consequences.

It has always been a matter of time before our club (*that is, the site it occupies*) is overshadowed by tall buildings, with consequent reduced amenity, sunlight and ease of access. There may be delays, but it *will* happen. And for a considerable time before completion one can confidently predict building activity, bringing with it noise and dust.

It is an unpleasant prospect.

However, much more encouragingly, our club does have a concessional lease of a site that *must* be redeveloped if long-term plans for Woden are to be realised (it is unimaginable that, at a major gateway to an area such as that envisaged by the ACT Government will sit our one-storey building!). We can't be forced out. Inducement to leave must be generous, and to the club's demonstrable advantage.

It is because of the inevitability of our club being part of overall development that we have been prepared this past ten years to listen to proposals by potential developers (the most recent being Waldren Constructions). The prospect of a spanking new, enlarged club being part of a deal to relocate has always had much to commend it. A new club, without debt! The stumbling blocks have always been access to the new location, and provision of adequate car parking. Nothing has changed.

*Meridian* has commented in the past that our club's office-bearers shoulder a heavy responsibility. It is they who will increasingly be charged with difficult, and time-consuming, negotiations with the ACT Government, its agencies, and potential developers. It can be unpleasant to play "hard ball", but nothing less will secure our club's future.

An onerous responsibility, indeed. - DB

## SELLING YOUR PROPERTY!

If you plan to sell your home or other property, you are welcome to contact Noel Lane of Luton Properties (LUTON), for a confidential and informative discussion.

We offer Members of Woden Seniors special low selling fees and make a substantial donation to Woden Seniors for each property of a Member that Noel sells.

We are a major supporter of Woden Seniors.



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# Woden Seniors this past ten years, as recorded by *Meridian*

Extracts from *Meridian* 2002-2012

2002: New editor Dennis Blewett explores the club's future with President Anne Murray and Administrative Officer Umar Bourke. Anne speaks of challenges posed by redevelopment of Woden Town Centre, an expected increase in membership brought about by "ageing" in the Woden Valley, and the club's key role in developing a healthy, active community; younger members must assume more responsibility, she says. Reporting on the AGM, *Meridian* says that Anne, having spoken of a year of robust growth, singled out two particularly successful innovations - the reintroduction of birthday lunches, hosted in turn by activity groups, with average attendances of 70, and a concert at the Hellenic Club.

*Meridian* also reports on the table tennis group, with Hank Messen and Des Davies talking of plans for the club to be represented at the following year's Australian Masters' championships. The Melbourne Cup lunch is a great hit, with final arrangements undertaken by Sue Murray, Pat Birrell and Marie Matthews and lunch provided by David Jones; 80 members attend the Christmas lunch at the Hellenic Club; the likelihood of computer classes is foreshadowed (classes have subsequently become one of the club's most successful and popular activities); Laddie Hindley writes about his adventures piloting helicopters in Papua-New Guinea.

2003: The club receives a \$40,000 grant for research into its community role; Sue Murray is awarded the Order of Australia for community services; Ralph Wingfield writes of visiting South Africa with wife Jane to attend their son's wedding; Dennis Blewett describes going to Sydney and watching Steve Waugh's dramatic 29th Test century, and recalls being at Headingley, Leeds, in 1948 for Don Bradman's 29th and final Test century.

A series of eight science-based lectures of particular interest to seniors, co-ordinated by retired science teacher Jane Brown is announced; Ian Pritchard tells of visiting Cyprus to take part in excavations at the site of a Graeco-Roman theatre at Paphos; a large and appreciative audience attend the Autumn Concert, compered by TV personality Phil Lynch, afternoon tea being provided at cost by David Jones

The May Ball proves a great success, with more than 70 people

enjoying a night of social dancing, and a delectable supper. Brian Venables provides the music, and so popular is the evening that Anne Murray foreshadows a repeat.

In August, members join consultants and selected guests at the Southern Cross Club for a day-long workshop to consider the club's future. Participants form teams of eight to consider specific questions, and spokespersons from each team present conclusions to the whole group. There is agreement that club facilities have serious deficiencies that need to be addressed, and a recurring theme is the need for more members to share the work. The ACT Government is urged to regard seniors clubs not as a drain on government finances but as a cost-effective means of funding services that are properly government responsibility.

Dennis Blewett considers difficulties faced by older people who want to downsize but find that alternatives to the house they have lived in for 30 years are either far too expensive, and unacceptably small, or on the outskirts of Canberra far removed from their doctor and other services they are familiar with. At a time when they want to drive *less*, they would find themselves driving *more*. The conclusion: "Get a gardener, get the kitchen fixed, refinance the house if you have to. It's got to be cheaper than moving".

Debate continues on the club's Strategic Planning Project, with Marcus Mackay and Barry Allen contributing thoughtful articles. Peter and Lesley Witting write about their 15-day cruise on the *Marco Polo* from Copenhagen to Stockholm, and Barry Allen writes about holidaying in Townsville. Des Davies reports on nine of the club's table tennis players taking part in the Masters' Games, and coming away with a very respectable medals tally. A busy time for Des, who also writes of a visit to Coffs Harbour with wife Jocelyn to compete in an over-50s table tennis tournament.

2004: The club's Strategic Plan (consultants Alan Hodges, Marcus Mackay and Grahame Hellyer) is completed and made available to members. Getset, an arthritis study by the University of Sydney, is launched at the club, with members invited to take part. Gail Giuliano is honoured with the Order of Australia for service to the community.

Bridge directors Anne Scott, Bill Davey and Maurice and Janet Arundel are profiled.

In April *Meridian* reports on a special meeting to consider the Strategic Plan. There is disquiet about the cost of possible major redevelopment, but members are assured that no policy decision has been taken, and no decision *will* be taken without the approval of members at a specially constituted meeting.

Dennis Blewett writes of a recent visit to the United Kingdom, commenting that whereas everything had appeared so inexpensive when returning to Britain in 1976 after twelve years away, now everything has become very expensive. It is difficult to understand where Britain's wealth has come from as it appears no-one actually makes anything any more.

In August the Development Advisory Group asks: Is there anyone out there prepared to enter into a business arrangement with us that will result in a bigger, up-to-date club, at the same time ensuring our long-term future? Members are assured that in discussing any proposals, the club would be represented by a solicitor, an accountant and its own architect.

In other news Chief Minister John Stanhope hands over a cheque for \$30,000 to assist with the club's strategic planning and redevelopment agenda; Home and Community Care case manager Stephanie Tolson reminds members that she is available to help with matters that concern them; and Rugby League legend Mal Meninga visits the club to meet members of Pryme Movers, a fitness program run by the YMCA.

The AGM is more "participative" than usual, with some members concerned about the financial situation and redevelopment proposals. The meeting is preceded by a selection of favourites sung by the Woden Senior Singers, and followed by afternoon tea. Elsewhere in *Meridian* there is further news on computer training, an appreciation of the winter concert, and Alan Hodges writes of a crisis in Papua-New Guinea and a timely rescue by then Squadron Leader Laddie Hindley who manoeuvred his helicopter into difficult terrain.

2005: George Heron becomes manager. An ex-Naval officer, George is to prove an extremely capable and popular appointment. A planning day is held, with groups workshoping implications of the Strategic Plan.

Activity fees for 2005 become \$3 for a first session and an additional \$1-50 for a second session; the first Introduction to Computers sessions are held; Wendy Mukherjee writes

of the benefits of Tai Chi; and Ralph Wingfield writes about colonial service in Northern Nigeria in the 1950s.

The club receives a grant of \$6000 for a project called Outward Bound for Seniors, and members are invited to express an interest in this physical activities program. Laddie Hindley writes of a forced landing in the Everglades.

The Commonwealth Bank and the Public Trustee present seminars; Grahame Hellyer begins lectures on "today's technology" (since then Grahame has conducted many lectures, written extensively in *Meridian*, and helped many members with their technical problems); David Griffiths writes of the great strides made by the IT Sub-committee in its first year; and (in an issue dominated by "computer" news) Dennis Blewett writes of the wonders of the internet ("even my *Wisdens* dating from 1950 are looking forlorn now that I can access on-line detailed scores of any first-class match ever played").

Presenting her sixth annual report, Anne Murray says the club had received \$150,000 in grants in the year and the Chief Minister has asked the Ministerial Council on Ageing to use Woden Seniors as a basis of how other seniors clubs should be managed; the three-stage Master Plan, prepared by architects Small Quinton Coleman, is presented to the meeting by Ric Small. 2006: Responding to concerns, George Heron details exactly how the club spends money received in grants. A special general meeting approves stage one of the three-stage development, to cost \$250,000. Anne Murray announces that she will stand down as President, but - in the absence of nominations - is re-elected at the AGM.

An ABC camera crew turns up at the club to talk about services for older people in the ACT and Anne Murray and Dennis Blewett make it on the 7pm news - however briefly.

George Heron resigns, and is replaced by David Temple (David will be remembered for his enthusiastic setting up of tables and chairs and vigorous policing of the car park). 2007: The Autumn Fete raises \$2400; Noel Lane of Richard Luton Properties joins the club; the Sunday Afternoon Concert at the Top of the Cross is an outstanding success, as is the Musical Christmas in July, at which Dorothy Rafferty and Dennis Glanville are honoured for their service; the club receives a grant to conduct a leadership workshop for women.

Dennis Blewett says there is a Catch-22 to an assertion by people appearing on *Four Corners* that they will "exit" when they think the time is

right. When the time is right, Dennis says, people are no longer *able* to act for themselves (this article attracted considerable comment).

Then Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd visits the club along with an army of staffers and media and teams up with Des Davies to defeat Joan Rackham and Dennis Carthey 21-16 at table tennis.

Maureen Hickman visits South Africa and paints a forbidding picture of the country - "they call it the chicken run - white migration to Australia to escape endless violence".

At the Melbourne Cup lunch Ron Barnes, Margaret Wright, Myra Hickey and Gail Giuliano are honoured; Dennis Blewett tells the story of Sasha Nekvapil, Olympic skier, Thredbo Golden Girl, successful businesswoman and enthusiastic bridge player.

The AGM tells of a disappointing year, with stalled membership, fewer people taking part in activities, and the financial position such that the Management Committee puts club development on hold.

2008: Cost of activities goes up to \$4; David Temple leaves, and Polly Kong takes over; Baby Boomers at the Southern Cross is an outstanding success; Kazanne (Southlands) holds a fashion parade; Christmas in July is run by expert chef Arnold Nordin and his team.

Chief Minister John Stanhope opens building of new wing, laying a brick, and Anne Murray expresses appreciation of loan approved by Bendigo Bank.

The club receives a \$50,000 grant; Grahame Hellyer asks "What is the meaning of life?", and begins a series (still running) of frequently asked questions; Maureen Hickman writes of cruising the great rivers of Europe.

Treasurer Ian Cleaver tells the AGM current assets are \$163,354-56; His Excellency Michael Bryce opens the new wing in time for Christmas. 2009: Barrie Clarke conducts bowls lessons; Dennis Blewett writes of cruising the Mediterranean; Ralph Wingfield of cruising south-east Asia; Julia Widdup of cycling in Britain and Italy.

John Stanhope launches *The Gallery*, an Iris Blewett initiative; the autumn fete raises \$1100; Anne Murray reports to the AGM that the new wing is proving popular, and singles out Robin Brinton for his hard work over eight years; the Spring Serenade, Christmas Fair, Melbourne Cup afternoon and Christmas lunch are all well attended; Judy and Richard Henderson and Iris and Dennis Blewett are invited to Parliament House to

receive International Day of Older Persons awards.

2010: The ABC's Alex Sloane presents the 666 Morning Show from the club with Anne Murray taking the opportunity to suggest \$50,000 a year a not unreasonable expectation from the ACT Government and when Alex puts this to Minister for Aged Care Joy Burch the Minister agrees it doesn't appear unreasonable before moving hastily to safer ground.

The Autumn Fete raises \$3500; ACT seniors' clubs combine for a party in Glebe Park; Michael Bryce attends the Floor Party (new parquet floor).

Sue Barrett writes of "Fire, fjords and Faroes; Pat and Brian Watson tell of wintering in Darwin; Margaret Wright goes to Fromelles to honour war dead and Liz Teather writes of visiting East Timor.

Gilbert and Sullivan concert well received; at the AGM Anne Murray again says that if the ACT Government truly wished to pursue "healthy ageing" it should fund clubs dedicated to this objective. She singles out Luton Properties for contributing \$7350 to the club over the year.

Members write of their Christmas memories and the Christmas party concludes the year, with Opposition Leader Zed Seselja presenting certificates to Margaret Kennedy, Joylene Litherland, Sue Barrett and Grahame Hellyer.

2011: Michael Bryce visits for Senior Singers' 30th anniversary; Dennis Blewett writes of circumnavigating New Zealand; Margaret Wright receives Order of Australia; Grand Party in Park greatly enjoyed despite inclement weather; Winter Serenade wins warm approval.

Anne Murray steps aside after twelve-and-a-half years as President, with Neil Stevenson taking over until the AGM, at which Roy Parekh is elected. Anne is honoured by the lounge being named the Anne Murray Room; Michael Bryce and Joy Burch pay warm tribute. Zed Seselja returns to club to open Christmas Fair.

2012: Activity fees increased to \$5; car park extended by Waldren Constructions at no cost to club. Sue Allen tells of her plan to walk the 100km East Gippsland Rail Trail.

*And the future? Of the club, in the shadows of the Village in the Sky?; and of Meridian, with increasingly members having access to news on line? Uncertain, for both. But one thing is certain - without a written record, the club's history will go unrecorded, and will be quickly forgotten. - Editor.*

# Why I walked 100km, and thank you for your support

By Sue Allen

Over fifteen years ago, I was in a bad car accident, which left me with limited mobility and strength. While I was able to resume teaching I was much reduced in my capacity to do many of the things I loved such as gardening. I had to plan my days so that I could complete activities such as hanging out the washing in very small increments as I could not hold my hands over my head for more than a few minutes. Driving was another planned affair as holding my arms on the steering wheel was possible only for a limited time. I became a past master at finding places to stop for breaks and my friends used me as a reference for best places for coffee between Maffra and Melbourne as I had stopped at them all.

Life was becoming dreary and then as part of my rehab I was introduced to Tai Chi. I was terrible at it, but it made me feel a bit stronger and more engaged and here was an activity I could do for an hour. Something I hadn't found till that point. My Tai Chi teacher in Sale was in her 60s and used to come to Canberra to have lessons herself. What an inspiration she was and the more I learned Tai Chi, the calmer I felt and the more I could do those little seemingly minor things that make life more manageable. Suddenly I could change the doona cover, hang out the washing in one go, make fewer stops when travelling and most importantly walk for longer.

Soon I was back to walking 20 minutes a day and having Tai Chi lessons once a week. During this time my daughter, who was teaching in Canberra, married and settled in Canberra. I was retired from full time teaching and was sick of the long seven-hour drive from Maffra to Canberra. Still seven hours, but with fewer breaks.

So it came to be that I settled in Canberra, living in the back yard of our shared house in a granny flat. Finding a Tai Chi instructor became a priority because as soon as I stopped, my mobility decreased and the pain increased. Finding Elizabeth at Woden Seniors became my saviour. I joined one class, then another, and then she introduced me to another class in Weston and the more I did my Tai Chi, the fitter and more mobile I became.

On one of my trips back to Maffra on the V Line Bus I was able to see the old railway line that followed the road from Nowa Nowa to Orbost. As a child I had loved that road and the rail line because of all the old trestle bridges that had been built to cross the creek gullies and keep the rail line on a gentle gradient. As I had been born in Orbost and spent much of my life in Gippsland, I decided then and there that one day I would walk the Rail Trail from Orbost to Bairnsdale. I told a friend who promptly gave me a book called *Rail Trails of Victoria and South Australia* which became my favourite bedtime reading for many a night.

You have to understand that in my family if the cancer doesn't get you, then the heart attack will. One sister died at 42 from cancer and my brother died at 56 from a heart attack while playing hockey. My mum died at 62 and my dad had his first heart attack at 54. So at this point when I turned 64, I was older than most of my family and only my older sister and I were still alive. So, here I was in Canberra, getting fitter and stronger by the day with walking and Tai Chi and having set myself a goal of walking from Orbost to Bairnsdale a distance of 100km. Not one to set personal goals and achieve them, and being overweight (easier to walk around than over as my father would say), I knew I would have to ensure I could walk the distance with ease. Thus began my daily walking.

Canberra is wonderful for walkers, I walked further some days, I found paths that took me to Woden over the hill from Weston, I saw kangaroos and other wildlife in the centre of Canberra and looked out towards Stromlo in the mornings and watched as the sun hit the hills from

the East. Friends walked with me, I found places in parks to practice my Tai Chi without feeling an idiot and I met people who smiled, talked, allowed me to pat their dogs (mine died last year), and I walked my beautiful grand-daughters to parks and playgrounds near and far. All this in itself was a reason to feel good, and the bonus was I was preparing myself for a challenge I was not sure I could achieve.

The turning point was when Elizabeth, my friend and Tai Chi instructor, heard my mini goal to walk around the lake and offered to walk it with me. What a revelation that was to me, I could do it, and do it we did, a number of times and even two days in a row. While I pulled up a bit sore, I felt such a buzz that this bigger goal of the 100km walk might actually be achievable. I then put myself on the line and suggested to the Seniors Club that people might be willing to support me by sponsoring me to walk this distance and we would use the money in some way in the club to support the various activities the club offers. I can only say how overwhelmed I was to see how people have supported me in this venture and how interested you have been in the walk. We have raised over \$900 and every step was worth it.

Elizabeth then offered to walk with me. I already had some friends from Orbost and Maffra joining me for some if not all the walk and another wonderful friend who dropped everything to come with us to drive us to our starting point each day and collect us at the finishing point. So we started on our six-day adventure, loaded with a daypack, water, nuts and fruit. We headed out above the river flats of Orbost, the last of the corn still standing, rustling in the light wind. We saw our first wildflowers, the floral symbol of Victoria – Pink Heath, our first lyrebird and snake. The trail itself consists of light gravel, the rails and sleepers having been removed. The volunteer Rail Trail groups keep the trails clear and put in signs and gates where necessary. While generally the walking is easy because of the cleared track and easy gradient, I am here to tell you that even such a gradient becomes tiring when you are walking uphill for many kilometres.

Each day was different in vegetation, wildlife and countryside. Sometimes we were walking in state forest miles from anywhere, not even able to hear the sound of cars or trucks, and at other times we were right beside the Princes Highway with all the doubtful pleasures of cars and trucks rushing by.

One of the most spectacular sights was the Stony Creek Trestle Bridge not far out of Nowa Nowa. This was the site of a derailment in 1964, which caused four goods trucks to fall into the creek. The railway to Bairnsdale from Melbourne was opened in 1888, but the rail to Orbost was not completed and opened until 1916. Much of the goods carried on this section of the line was timber from Orbost and surrounding areas and general goods in. The Orbost line was closed in 1987. This Rail Trail is just one of many in Victoria.

Six days later we arrived at Bairnsdale having achieved something I thought not possible even ten years earlier. I can recommend both walking and Tai Chi to all, as a way to get fit, enjoy life and stay active. We had such a great time and felt so good afterwards that we have decided to tackle another walk next year and are considering the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, Wangaratta to Bright, passing through Everton, Beechworth, Myrtleford and Porepunkah. So if you feel that walking (and Tai Chi) can be part of your life and are prepared, as I was, to slowly walk, walk and walk until the day you can tackle 100km in six days without blisters and without falling in a heap, then start walking and you may choose to join us next year.

Stay fit, healthy and alive with Tai Chi, walking and a joy of living. That is what Woden Seniors helps us all do, so thank you to all of the members of Woden Seniors for your support and interest and come join us next year.



## Ralph Wingfield tells of the London Olympic Games

You will ask "What year?" It was 1948. Just after the war.

In fact, quite a number of countries, after the upheavals they had experienced, were not yet ready to train and send teams. Russia, Germany, Japan and many others were not represented. There were hardly any of the African countries.

At the time I was an impecunious student and delighted to see an advertisement in the paper offering temporary vacancies in the Olympic Village for cleaners, porters and kitchen hands, quarters provided at nominal cost. Staff were to be taken on from 1 June in small numbers, increasing towards the end of that month. Fortunately my university began its long vacation on the last weekend of May making it possible for me to apply to work as a porter right at the start before any of the other universities broke up.

Two villages had been built on Wimbledon Common, one for male and the other for female competitors. They were fibro structures probably mostly asbestos, but at that time nobody worried about that. I was only involved with the men's village which consisted of a number of buildings within a vast enclosure, the biggest being the joint kitchen and cafeteria area. Then there were numerous buildings all alike which we called "spiders" because they had a central core with eight legs sticking out in different directions. In the centre was a lounge room with easy chairs, writing desks and tea and coffee making facilities. Nearby was an ablutions block. The eight legs were dormitories with curtains separating individual cubicles. Having these legs rather than long corridors seemed a good idea since it made the whole arrangement more intimate.

Being a porter wasn't what I had imagined. There was no luggage to be carried but unending deliveries of food, equipment, laundry, mail etc. to be checked, often signed for and then brought to whomever or wherever it belonged. The second function of a porter was gate duty. There were three entrances to the village: a main one, one near the kitchens, and one near the transport area from where a constant link with the airport and the

various London competition venues was maintained. At each entrance were two porters during the day and one at night to prevent unauthorised persons entering the village and to take charge initially of deliveries before handing them over to other porters for onward transmission.

The village had an administration headed by a retired senior army officer who had some innocuous official title but we only referred to him as the "commandant". He had separated the services provided by the village staff into eight and had appointed a supervisor for each of these. These eight people formed a kind of cabinet and met at regular intervals. When I had been ten days in the village there was such a meeting. We never found out what exactly happened but there must have been an almighty row. The upshot was that with the exception of the doctor in charge of the small medical unit who was to arrive the following day and the transport supervisor, also a former army officer, all supervisors resigned and walked out.

This put the commandant in a very awkward position. There was no time to advertise for replacements and, in any case, unless the whole matter was carefully hushed up the press would have a field day with it. So the commandant decided to fill the positions from staff he had available. In the army, whenever promotions are to be made and all other things are equal, service seniority decides. As I had been among the first six to arrive, I was offered the position of supervisor of the cleaning staff. (Sardonic laughter from my wife when she heard about this many years later.)

My major task was working out duty rosters. There were such a lot of different things to be considered. To start with everybody had to have a weekly rest day, unpopular duties such as cleaning the ablution areas had to be fairly distributed and duties which could, if necessary, be postponed, had to be earmarked for switching in case of people reporting sick. Among many other criteria to be considered was an unexpected one of which I only became aware after a few days on the job. It had not been possible to recruit more than a dozen or so male cleaners and most cleaners were women. Some of these appeared to be perturbed about something and reluctant to work in the Scandinavian area. It turned out that a few Scandinavians wandered

between their sleeping quarters and the ablution blocks in the nude. Consequently it became necessary to find out which of the cleaners were offended by male nudity and avoid rostering them to spiders occupied by Scandinavian teams.

There were many other minor troubles to be dealt with. Serious ones I was told had to be passed on to the administration. Fortunately this happened only once when a Miss Shakespeare provoked a group of hot-blooded South Americans into what began as good-natured teasing and then got out of hand and ended in tears and bitter complaints.

Track and field events were held at Wembley Stadium and there was a special area of seats reserved for competitors and officials who wanted to watch. As transport to and from Wembley would also be required the whole business of seat allocation and transport was handled by the transport department. Team managers were asked to inform the transport office by five o'clock of the previous day of the number of tickets they required for their teams. Any seats not claimed by then became available for off-duty staff. I had no fixed hours of duty and was therefore able to get tickets for most events in which I was interested.

After so many years I can't remember many details. But there are two which I'll never forget.

The first was a Dutch mother of three, Fanny Blankers-Koen, who flew past all her rivals in the sprints and won four gold medals.

The second featured a Czech called Emil Zatopek who ran the middle distances in a most ungainly manner. He seemed to twist his chest from side to side as he ran. But that did not slow him down and he won the 10,000 metres (four years later, he starred at Helsinki, winning three gold medals, all in record times).

Had I known I was to become an Australian later in my life I would have paid more attention to the performances of my future countrymen but unfortunately I cannot recall them now. There must have been at least one Australian gold because, knowing that the Australian national anthem was *God save the King*, I remember wondering whether they would repeat that anthem which had just been played for a British victory for the Australian success. But no; they played *Waltzing Matilda*.

## Meridian captures images from the Autumn Fete



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