

Chapter XI

Burnishing Grey Matter

I thought I'd try and write. The following philosophical peregrinations are the outcome. I needed somewhere to purvey my pen. I'll start with an imperfect paragraph.



Lord Rothschild III aged 23 and 63

Lord Victor Rothschild III detested the idea of having his mind deteriorate even marginally or in a way that most septuagenarians would consider normal. So he hired a Cambridge don every Friday afternoon for an hour to supervise him in statistics. 'My brain cells have been dying,' he told friends, but I feel immediate benefit. I intend to go on polishing the remaining functional ones.' I'm impressed with his logic. We have some things in common. I am 70: I can forget my keys and where I placed that book. However I did not represent Cambridge and Northampton at cricket: nor was I an Apostle, suspect member of the Spy Ring of Four – or Five - or a Life Peer. Lord Rothschild also said: 'People who think creatively hear the music of the spheres; I have heard them once or twice'. I'm still waiting for the clarion call. So it's back to the trammels of quotidian life. I think I may have used that before? It's called reinforcement. Let's start with the past imperfect.

It was a dark and stormy night.

It was a dark and stormy night is an often-mocked and much parodied phrase written by English novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton in the opening sentence of his 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*. The phrase is considered to represent the archetypal example of a florid melodramatic style of fiction writing also known as purple prose. The phrase comes from the original opening sentence of *Paul Clifford*:
It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents — except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.

Writer's Digest described this sentence as the literary poster child for bad story starters. On the other hand, the American Book Review ranked it as #22 on its 'Best first lines from novels list'. The Peanuts character Snoopy always begins his novels with the phrase: 'It was a dark and stormy night'. Cartoonist Charles M. Schulz made Snoopy use this phrase because it was a cliché, and had been one for a very long time. A book by Schulz, *It Was a Dark and Stormy Night* and credited to Snoopy as author, was published in 1971. It is the opening line (and paragraph) in the popular 1962 novel *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle:

It was a dark and stormy night. In her attic bedroom Margaret Murry, wrapped in an old patchwork quilt, sat on the foot of her bed and watched the trees tossing in the frenzied lashing of the wind. Behind the trees clouds scudded frantically across the sky. Every few moments the moon ripped through them, creating wraithlike shadows that raced along the ground.

L'Engle biographer Leonard Marcus notes that:

With a wink to the reader, she chose for the opening line of *A Wrinkle in Time*, her most audaciously original work of fiction, that hoariest of clichés. L'Engle herself was certainly aware of old warhorse's literary provenance as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's much maligned much parodied repository of Victorian purple prose *Paul Clifford*. While discussing the importance of establishing the tone of voice at the beginning of fiction, Judy Morris notes that L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* opens with Snoopy's signature phrase. I like Snoopy and Charles M. Schulz.

Maybe I should try a different approach? *It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.* That really was the start of something big. I read 'Pride and Prejudice' eight times in 1959. I more or less had to: it was the selected book text for my 'O' levels in English Literature. I exceeded the expectations of my English teacher. Excuse me while I leave this page to burnish my remaining cerebral grey matter cell. Perhaps a course in memoir writing would help?

Matthew Arnold Philosophy

Preface to 'Poetry of Byron' 1881:

Matthew Arnold attempting to enlist the Regency aristocrat as an ally in his own appalled resistance to the Victorian age:

'As the inevitable break-up of the old order comes, as the English middle-class slowly awakens from its intellectual sleep of two centuries, as our actual present world, to which this sleep has condemned us, shows itself more clearly, - our world of an aristocracy materialised and null, a middle-class purblind and hideous, a lower class crude and brutal, - we shall turn our eyes again, and to more purpose, upon the passionate and dauntless soldier of forlorn hope.'

Matthew Arnold 1881

A Figurative Journey

I've recently embarked on a figurative journey. For five or six weeks I've taken part in a memoir writing course. Self-improvement Wednesdays embrace my six 'E's of learning: encouragement, enrichment, enhancement, enlargement, embellishment, enlightenment. Could this be cerebral? I have to ask myself what I learned. The best way to check is to write it down. Test your memory by reflection and revision. How much is imprinted? Reinforcement can be powerful. Planning has been emphasised at every turn. I'm reminded of bite size digestible chunks of learning known as modules in another life. Learning outcomes is a time worn cliché borrowed from the competency based training purview. My erudite academic colleagues call these attributes. It may be playing pedantic semantics. In the cognitive domain of learning we have knowledge, understanding, comprehension, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Let's see how far we have climbed. In the end we go back to the beginning: yet one more recidivist chestnut.

In the beginning I learned that writing begins with imitation. I like that. Imitate until it becomes your own voice. Write what you know. Write what you read. Use a dramatic sense of language. Add variety. Is this a licence to plunder, plagiarize and purloin? Why indeed reinvent a written wheel. Others have claimed that you must read at least one hundred pages in order to write one. I'll subscribe to that. Write an opening which snares. Write short sentences and short words. Writing is about who, what, where and when. A journal is a subset of memoir. The connection is at the beginning: emphasis at the end. Another mantra states writing is about clarity, precision and elegance. I may have trouble with the third edict. Use quotations sparingly. I'll try to remember. Eulogies are speeches of praise. Eulogy is a world of character. Focus on words, deeds and reputation with a congruence of words. *'Smart as a hatful of rats'* is very good. It's vital to focus on character: we are what we say, we are what we do and we are what others say about us. The structure will have a beginning, middle and an end. There will be skilful choice placing of key words with balance and closure. I had my first introduction to sober colons. The appositional colon links examples to the collective: it anticipates a list. The causal colon replaces because in the middle of a sentence. The semi-colon takes out both 'and' and 'but' in a sentence. Both sharpen the dialogue. Journeys are actual and figurative. A literal journey may carry a figurative force. Characterize who and the place. Use quotations sparingly. I despair. How can I write what I read? Cheating and padding are more difficult. Unless journeys are serendipitous they will have a PLAN. The journey has a goal: consequence of a conscious plan. The plan will include where, when, who, what and why. There will be a 'motif': a pattern of language with words in sequence. Journey narratives embrace: modes of transport, reason or reasons, duration, time element (short or long), unexpected incidents, destination, 'sense of place', ambience and purpose. Phew! I think I understand.

You don't write a paragraph; you make a paragraph. No wonder the engineers are doing so well. The PLAN will start with a topic sentence including subject and focus. Supportive detail in the middle links to a conclusion with cohesive key words: check for topic, focus and ending. I wonder if this works?

Write down a skeleton plan. Lexical chains are sets of words linked by meaning: linked words. They create cohesiveness and make the prose hang together. Lexical chains in boxes are very good for writing.

Journals can be daily or weekly accounts within narrow timeframes. There is immediacy and accuracy: clarity, precision and elegance. Eulogies are appraisals of life: praise, celebration and thanks. Journeys can be literal or figurative. A literal journey is a factual account. A figurative journey will include who, what, why, where and when. It is a repository for ideas with portals such as food, meals, seasonal time, doors and windows. It can be spiritual or transitional, may lie within a literal journey and stimulate recall. Rising action moves to a greater significance as exemplified by Shakespeare. Always start a new major topic with a new paragraph.

As instructed I have just 'Googled' Leda and the Swan by W. B. Yeats. How sensuous is that. What's Agamemnon doing there? I've read an analysis of The Second Coming by the same author. It's about *the emotional element and the symbols that drive the emotional element*. This will take me some time.

We consider the ending at the end: pure logic. Although advised not to I will finish with a quotation: *'When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child that we were, and the soul of the dead from whom we spring, come and bestow upon us in handfuls their treasures and their calamities'*. *La Prisonnere* by Marcel Proust, translated by C. K. Scott-Moncrieff.

Actually I have never read Proust; this is the first sentence in *The Cardboard Crown* by Martin Boyd. I thought I'd better own up: I'd be found out anyway. Perhaps Lord Victor Rothschild III was right: it's all about burnishing our residual grey matter.

Three Texts

Dear Bill,

Thank you so much for sending me your texts. I enjoyed them very much indeed and have put comments in the form of footnotes on each of them and as general remarks at the end of each.

As memoirs, these would be an admirable set for a collection of what you might call "Reflections." They are recounts of events and they mark your own engaging personality as you describe those events. I'm attaching them here.

I'm sorry that you felt intimidated in class but I'm pleased you have been candid and let me know. I can't issue an imperative to relax but I can certainly say that, from my perspective, you have every reason to feel confident as a writer.

I look forward to next Wednesday.

*Thanks,
Ben*

Travels without My Aunts

July 2013 was always going to be a torrid time of interminable travel. We had a catalogue of vitally important family celebrations to attend. 'We' had been reduced to my son Hugh and myself for the first of these on the other side of the globe. Hugh Howey has recently emerged as a famous name in modern literature. The American author of 'Wool' and my son met at a book signing in Sydney earlier this year. My only nephew Jon Howey was to marry in Holland on Friday 5th July 2013. He and fiancée Dr Dagmar Meeuse had deliberately planned this day and date some twelve months before in order to accommodate Hugh's designated mid-year vacation from his teaching duties in Tamworth. We travelled independently. Hugh made the most of his time including a holiday in Germany. On a cycling trip through the country to the east of Berlin he came upon a village festooned with rather gauche effigies of kangaroos stuffed with straw. Ludwig Leichardt was here!

Chronic convalescence from influenza was an unwelcome companion on the journey out for me. This was mitigated to some extent by a relaxing comfortable pew towards the pointy end of the Airbus even if it does not totally eliminate the stress or the exigencies of jet lag. Some of us are not made for prolonged confinement. This was further exacerbated by the fact that I contracted acute food poisoning on my first night 'aboard' the wedding venue. Low levels of resistance?

The celebration was exquisite very much in keeping with its European setting. The SS Rotterdam is the original Holland American Atlantic Liner now converted into a tourist hotel and convention centre parked permanently in the middle of one of the world's busiest sea ports. The harbour is exciting. This was fortified one day by the modern successor to the original SS Rotterdam leaving with its passengers bound for New York. The wedding celebration was a modern secular event conducted in Dutch with some English translation. We were very popular as Australian relatives. Other guests had travelled from as far afield as Los Angeles. Dagmar's delightful wheelchair-bound aunt could not hear enough about Sydney. She had represented Holland in Basketball at both the World Paralympic Games and the Sydney Olympics. In the latter Holland were defeated in a close tussle with the host nation for the Bronze Medal - but no hard feelings!

After four days of obligatory close proximity to plumbing facilities it was home again via Dubai. Twenty-four hours recovery in Sydney pre-empted a flight to Darwin with my spouse Sarah for our granddaughter Maeve's baptism at St Paul's Church, Nightcliff on Saturday 13th July 2013. We were very popular as minders for our hyperactive grandson gelignite Jasper who is just emerging from the terrible twos. Heroic son Hugh and two sisters-in-law Jane and Susan also made the journey. The latter celebrated her third or fourth 21st birthday. I thought she was very much older but a gentleman never discloses or questions a lady's age. Maeve is only our second grandchild. Paternal grandparents Laurie and Patsy De Souza have thirty-one – and counting! Daughter Kirsty and her partner Dr Mark De Souza were devoted and proud parents doing the right thing by their second child – and also delighting Mark's devout mother Patsy! Hugh and Mark's niece Elise from Adelaide were the most appropriate witnesses and suitable Godparents.

Mother Kirsty has been very busy on ancestry.com. She produced a revelation during the service. King Malcolm's Queen Saint Margaret of Scotland (c. 1045 – 16 November 1093) is Maeve's 27th great grandmother. Saint Margaret was canonised in 1250 by Pope Innocent IV. Supervising priest Father Binesh from Kerala was most impressed. Sisters Jane, Susan and Sarah were equally astonished that they are all her 25th great granddaughters. I rather fear the saintly DNA component – which may have been female line mitochondrial inherited – has been somewhat diluted with the passage of generations and time. The baptism service was followed by a typical Indian banquet at the family home – a fitting end to a very special ritual.

I almost forgot. I am enrolled in a Memoir Writing Course at the Australian Club in Sydney. It is spread out over six successive Wednesdays in July and early August. Each lesson will entail a three day/two night trip for me from Scone. Country Link XPT and City Rail should be a cinch after Rotterdam and Darwin. Despite the nightly RSL Club's dictum to the contrary, 'age shall weary them and the years condemn'. Maybe it's because I didn't serve.

Bill,

This is a model of journal writing. A collection of such pieces would constitute a powerful and striking memoir. There is the clear sense of the narrator's voice and character, both in the range of detail and in the humour. You read as a writer on whom no detail is lost. I have a few footnotes about this and that. Polishing only.

Thank you.

Ben

This Thing Can Be Done

I'm inspired by the Demon. Many of you might claim I'm consumed by them? Fred Spofforth refused to accept inevitable defeat at the Oval. On 28 August 1882 England only needed a mere 85 runs to clinch the test match. The Demon famously proclaimed: 'Boys, this thing can be done. This thing can be done'. Spofforth took match figures of 14 wickets for 90 runs and bowled Australia to a remarkable seven run victory in the fourth innings. The celebrated letter subsequently appeared in 'The Times' announcing the death of English cricket so giving rise to the iconic 'Ashes'. A commissioned statue of the Demon now graces the Members Pavilion at the SCG. What a fabulous idea and what a fine tribute!



Sculpture of the 'Demon' F. R. Spofforth at the SCG

It's a fact of community life that most great advances come from inspiration rather than regulation. I was forcibly reminded of this fact when attending the 'King of the Ranges' in May. In 2009 I was fortunate to visit the Jasper Rodeo in the picturesque Rockies of BC in Western Canada. The competition was held indoors in a multi-purpose sports hall the prime purpose of which was ice hockey. I was impressed. In hushed reverential tones a local told us the 'Edmonton Oilers train here'? By contrast I thought the unique ambience, class of competition, enthusiastic attendance and exquisite natural beauty of the complex at Murrurundi exceeded that of Jasper. Well done Shane, Paul and cohort crew. I'm not sure who had the original idea but indeed 'this thing could be done'.

Once upon a time I bred fast cattle and fat horses. Bill Presland reading this in the Belmore Hotel might reflect. I had delusions of grandeur in the spheres of thoroughbred racing and breeding. I enjoyed my moments in the harsh sun but eventually the time came to sell the farm and opt for more sanguine pastures. My green fingered spouse Sarah wanted to turn on the water tap without recourse to the pumps. It worked – at a price. With more time on my hands and on reflection I devoted extra time to volunteer community events. None of these was either prescribed or indeed proscribed. Historian A. J. P. Taylor wrote: *‘Any event once it has happened can be made to appear inevitable’*. In other words once it has happened it has happened. Is coal seam gas inevitable?

Making things transpire by insistence and persistence rather than instruction is the key. On reflection, I can recall many community achievements which depended more on inspiration, imagination, innovation and perspiration than by decree. White Park Horse Boxes, Bill Rose Sports Complex, Junior Soccer, Scone Race Track and Research Centre, Upper Hunter Horse Festival and the Upper Hunter Village Association now known as Strathearn Village all qualify. Men’s Sheds are fast becoming a reality in the Upper Hunter. Think ‘King of the Ranges’, ‘Highland Games’ and ‘Festival of the Fleece’? The list goes on. ‘Old Bill’ of Stratford wrote: *“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the full leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat. And we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures”*. In other words – get stuck in, do it now and make it count.

The National Farmers’ Federation defines rural success as: *‘Vibrant local volunteer community concerned with health care, aged care, education, employment, adequate policing, public transport and committed to arranging events such as shows, gymkhanas and tennis tournaments’*. Gerard Henderson recently wrote in the SMH: ‘European Culture of entitlement is mercifully absent Down Under’. Let’s keep it that way. Doesn’t sound like regulation to me? The concept of self-help prevails? Perhaps I should try breeding fat cattle and fast horses next time? What do you think, Bill?

Cree Indian Saying

Wolf Robe

Only when the last tree has died
The last river has been poisoned
And the last fish has been caught
Only then will we realise
We cannot eat Money

This Thing Can Be Done

Dear Bill,

I'm home just for a little while and I do like to read work as soon as I receive it. I've read and commented on one of your texts and I attach it here. I'll read the others later this evening.

You have a vigorous personality in your writing. Memoirs are as flexible as memory itself. Have you considered a collection of reflections? This would fit well into that.

Good to know you are thinking about journeys.

Sincerely, Ben

The Trammels of Quotidian Life

Of course I've borrowed the title line. Write what you read? I subscribe to that. I apply the four P's to my writing; plunder, plagiarize and purloin where possible. I'd never have thought of the heading myself. If I had, I'd have been Aldous Huxley in his brave new world. How prescient was he? He only had the timelines wrong. It's here already. Following a frantic early pace ABC Radio 702 hosts Adam Spencer and Richard Glover's dry July has settled into a more familiar staid rhythm and steady routine. They also promote a segment called self-improvement Wednesday. Could that be the nub of an idea? There are some piquant interludes during a quiet time.

In another life I've thrown my lot in with the aged care industry in the Upper Hunter as a volunteer. Otherwise what would one do in the sanguine twilight zone of benign self-imposed genteel redundancy? Perhaps learn to write? Could it be relevance deprivation syndrome? This has involved chairing the Board and assisting generously with resources. We have embarked on major construction of a new Residential Aged Care Facility and Residential Village. The Federal Government has encouraged us with Zero Real Interest Loan (ZRIL) of AU\$15.5 million. Strathearn Village was the brain child of the late great Doctor Walter Pye who is still revered as an icon in the local community. In 1970 his was an idea well before its time. *"People should be able to remain amongst their friends and their workmates, hopefully close to their family, their doctor, their clubs, their pub, friendly trades-people and neighbours where they are known. In retrospect it would seem that the greatest and kindest care would be the ability to allow people to die peacefully and quietly in their own homes and supply the comfort and care required to do so. People living far out of country towns would need to be cared for in the towns (hostel or villa) where the auxiliary services are available. Remember the height of any civilization can be judged by the manner in which they care for their aged. This community must rank high"*. He adduced the case of the town drunk who had reached the stage of requiring specialised care. He pleaded not to be sent away as 'he had lived here all his life'. He was sent to Lidcombe and never heard of again. Dr Pye avowed this would never be allowed to happen again.

All this has special resonance in 2013 when we celebrate one hundred years of the Scott Memorial Hospital. Victorian Dr Harry 'Tup' Scott represented Australia at cricket and was captain of the second Ashes touring side to England. Fortuitously for us he decided to settle in Scone over one hundred years ago. Having established himself as a community titan he died tragically young from typhoid fever in 1920. His name is indelibly imprinted in the eponymous hospital at the top end of town adjacent to Strathearn Village.

The Friends of Strathearn Village are a dedicated self-appointed charitable clique of senior local ladies who raise funds for the facility. Their flagship event is the Friends' Dinner in late July every year. It is their version of Christmas in July. This time I am honoured to be invited back as guest speaker. It follows a similar event at the Royal Hotel during Scone Horse Festival in May. VRC delegate and Melbourne Cup Handicapper Greg Carpenter and I presented an historical perspective. The Friends benefitted by \$5000:00. Perhaps they think I'm bankable? The subject matter was left to me but they indicated they wanted more of the same.

I've chosen to tell them about Scone's unique princess. In early 1969 kindergarten teacher Jean McPherson won a prize as the inaugural Golden Slipper Princess promoted by the Sydney Turf Club. Baerami Creek born and bred Jean was the perfect selection from an eclectic field. Apart from local celebrations she won a trip to the actual Golden Slipper Race at Rosehill where she was photographed with all time champion winner 'Vain'. It didn't end there. Jean also met visiting American actress Phyllis Diller. Jean was the more photogenic of the two. She was later when she met the famous 'Goose Girl' at Hollywood Park Race Track, Los Angeles. The visit was also a component part of her prize. Major Norman Larkin, erstwhile Scone visiting veterinarian and President of the Australian Thoroughbred Breeders Association was a chaperone for Jean. Jean is very much better looking than Norman! What is the message? I think it will be 'that from very small acorns great oak trees may flourish'. Beginning with any bright idea you have to be in it to win it.



Golden Slipper Princess Jean McPherson 1969 and Golden Slipper Winner 'Vain' 1969

Strathearn Village also has its own unique brand of eulogy valedictions. Inevitably in any given six months several residents pass on. We celebrate their lives with a combined in-house service conducted by a cadre of priests and ministers from the local Anglican, Uniting and Roman Catholic Churches. We like the idea and it works extremely well. Although some past residents are not represented by family we make sure that everyone has someone to place a flower in the vase at the anointed time. Recently I placed a flower on behalf of Brian McGrath. Shades of a stone for Danny Fisher?

Brian had been a giant in the Upper Hunter as head teacher, primary school principal, extreme left wing idealist, socialist, political commentator, radio host, journalist, outstanding Rugby League player, administrator and chairman of the Scone Sports Development Committee. I worked very closely with him on the latter as one of his minions thirty years ago. He was outstanding. Sadly he succumbed to debilitating dementia. His demise was rapid with what the industry euphemistically labels challenging behaviours. I knew widow Nola was not there. I saw her later in Scone Post Office and she thanked me profusely. 'She could not bring herself to attend'. Nola reminded me that their daughter Cindy had been one of our babysitters. I had forgotten. It was important to her. I gave her a grainy photo finish of the final of the Streaker Boyd Gift at Scone Race Track in 1980. Brian was the judge. I had retained the photo for over thirty years. Although there were only millimetres in it the winner Brian selected had in fact run third? Nola explained that the young bloke from Quirindi Rugby League Grasshoppers was down on his luck. Brian knew he needed the money. Justice prevails.

Tiger Batterham was a founder member of the Australian Stock Horse Society and an early chairman. Also a devotee of the Belmore Hotel Tuesday Boozers Club he was a great character. Pauline was there for him.

On schedule was a matriarch of the scion Fairfax Family. Mrs Sue Fairfax was approaching one hundred. She had lived a rich and full life. She used to order me about at her soirees in her home in Waverley Street – especially to replenish her glass of Scotch! At least two of her granddaughters have excelled. Nicky Bishop is an equestrian Olympian having represented Australia at Atlanta in 1996. Nicky's elder sister Amanda is Julia Gillard's nemesis with her merciless mimicry and plangent parody on both screen and stage. Their mother Dinie placed the flower for Sue.

Remarkably Brian, Sue and Tiger, although coming originally from very different strata of society, discovered congenial company in their nether years. Sue attended finishing school in Switzerland. Brian was born in a tent by a railway track. We like to believe this is Dr Walter Pye's original vision still at work.

The Trammels of Quotidian Life:

Dear Bill,

I read you on the page and I lose sight of the fact that I am supposed to be marking your work. You write beautifully. You match structure and style to the subject, and you have a wonderful sense of tone. I am drawn in as to a text I am reading.

I hope that you find a structure to accommodate texts such as this in an anthology of your writings.

My mother loved the word quotidian. She would use it with an ironic sigh when some news report struck her for its remarkable banality: "Well, dear, it brightens the quotidian scene." Your daily life, Bill, is anything but banal.

Thank you indeed.

Sincerely, Ben



The trammels of quotidian life



Books

'Books are increasingly the sleepers on the rusting railway line of your life, the pickets in the fence of your history, the bricks with which you've built your brain'

I'm cheating! I've included the following by Phillip Adams. I like it. It's helped me also.

The shelf life of beloved books

By: PHILLIP ADAMS: From: *'The Australian'*: February 04, 2012 12:00AM

Sitting beside me, in a purpose-built case, is one of my proudest possessions: the 20 venerable and venerated volumes of the Oxford English Dictionary in its awesome and expensive entirety. But I drag out the hefty books infrequently since my iPhone has an Oxford app that not only gives the name, rank and serial number of a squillion words but, at the tap of a fingertip, has a voice pronounce them. I've also got two sets of the Encyclopaedia Britannica - one a facsimile of the first edition and the other the last they ever produced. Once again my iPhone has usurped it. Another app - "all of Wiki" - is ready to pedia anything I want. The whole of Wikipedia, in the phone, needing no further email connection. Now, that's awesome.

("Awesome, adj. Extremely impressive or daunting; inspiring awe: the awesome power of the atomic bomb." Thank you impressive, daunting Oxford app. App? Noun. Short for application.) And yet I cling to my library, filling many a room, shelves buckling beneath the weight of 40,000 books, the accumulation of almost 70 years of reading, like the drowning man to his straw. I've got 'em all, pretty much every book I've ever read, going back to Biggles, the Billabongs and William Holds His Own - right up to last week's load from the beleaguered publishing industry sent in the hope that I'll interview the authors. Once upon a time a library that large would have been worth a fortune. Now it's little more than landfill. Even local libraries don't want the books I can't house as gifts.

Yet I love them dearly. The colours of the spines. The smell of them. Their heft in my hands. Their personal history. As my eyes blur over their serried but not well-disciplined ranks (instead of the Dewey decimal system I opt for random) I instantly recognise and remember them. Sometimes I remember the very bookshop I bought them in - often the second-hand shops I haunted as a child. And most have an ex libris I had printed decades ago, with my name in Egyptian hieroglyphs. We've grown old together. Both of us, books and reader, destined for landfill.

When videos arrived, VHS defeating Beta, I wrote a column sticking up for the quaint, old-fashioned book with its pages fastened by a hinge. Calling it the "word cassette" I pointed out its advantages. Fast-forward? Just flick through it. Freeze page? Stop flicking. And it needs no batteries. Read it anywhere - under a tree, on the bus, in the loo. But the word cassette now is a word cassette, and they flow into your Kindle through the internet, from the mighty Amazon. Well, not my Kindle. You have to draw the line.

The book has one huge advantage over TV and cinema. Apart from the exhausting task of dragging your eyes over the text and turning those heavy pages, you have to visualise the characters, the costumes and the setting for yourself. Now everything comes pre-imagined for you. Soon there'll be an app to turn the printed word into instant images, just as I've got an app that not only downloads virtually any newspaper on Earth but also reads it to me, albeit in the same mechanical voice employed in your sat nav.

So curse the Kindle! To borrow from Whitlam at another time of crisis, "Maintain the page!" Stick with hinged reading matter purchased from one of the few traditional and troubled bookshops that survive (those old-style emporia with hinged doors, as opposed to some dubious digital virtual alternative devoid of atmosphere and human contact), surely the most civilised retailers on the planet. And if you have books, keep them. If you die, have them buried with you just as a Chinese emperor entombed his wives and eunuchs. For books are the sleepers on the railway of life, the pickets in the fence of your history, the bricks with which you've built your brain.

The Figurative Journey

The journey gives meaning to our destination. That's not a bad start? I wish I could figure it out? I noticed it as the subtitle of a picture, possibly a painting, hanging in the office of our Strathearn Village CEO. I should have been concentrating on the serious business in hand. I'm easily distracted. The image was an evocative one of a settler's cottage in a rough bush location. It certainly raised questions: who made the original journey to such a place; where it was; what had driven them; when they came and also why? How many were there? It looked lonely. Have you noticed how many tales of journeys embrace elements of isolation, seclusion and solitude?

I fear this might be a specimen day? That's not what you might think. Such a revelation immediately conjures up images of surreptitiously delivering small warm jar or jars to a medical practice or pharmacist. I have just visited my own original veterinary facility: the largest in rural Australia. There are some very large specimen pots there. They are for horses. All comparisons are odious. In Virginia Woolf's troubled life, specimen days were not normal: rather specimens of distraction, worries, absurdities that make up one's life. I can identify with that. Writing is difficult.

Then there's the problem of style. Flaubert believed in style more than anyone. Julian Barnes *aka* Geoffrey Braithwaite writes of Flaubert in *Flaubert's Parrot*:

He worked doggedly for beauty, sonority, exactness; perfection – but never the monogrammed perfection of a writer like Wilde. Style is a function of theme. Style is not imposed on subject-matter, but arises from it. Style is truth to thought. The correct word, the true phrase, the perfect sentence are always 'out there' somewhere; the writer's task is to locate them by whatever means he can. For some this means no more than a trip to the supermarket and a loading-up of the metal basket; for others it means being lost on a plain in Greece, in the dark, in snow, in the rain, and finding what you seek only by some rare trick such as barking like a dog.

Given options I think I'll just nip out to the supermarket; it's just across the road. Greece will take a little longer: figuratively speaking of course. I'll leave the barking of a dog to anyone else. I have enough trouble with my neighbours now.

JB/GB also writes: *What if Gustave himself had changed course? It's easy after all, not to be a writer. Most people aren't writers and little harm comes to them.* Faced with enigmatic dilemmas in the age of Google I resort to cheating. I thought you should know. Perhaps I should have stuck with *The Age of Kali* by William Dalrymple? That's more transcendental. Anyway I uncovered the following definition of 'Figurative Journey': *A figurative journey is one that is imagined. For example, suppose you were in a quiet place with no-one to disturb you. You have a National Geographic Magazine with a photographic article on Brazil. If you look through the article and imagine yourself to be there, that's a figurative journey.* That's cleared it up for me.

I'm thinking about the settler's cottage now. I try to imagine I've been there. In a real sense I have. My wife Sarah was brought up on one of the totem properties 'Tinagroo' in the Upper Hunter Valley. At the very top end of Thompson's Creek at the foot of Mount Tinagroo there's an old cottage. It's called Bell's Cottage. It was home to the original Bell family; there were about fifteen children. We found leeks there by the creek which had gone feral from the earliest garden. We took some home and planted them. They grew. The leeks became the link between the actual and the figurative. Max and Kevin Bell whom I know very well are direct descendants. They haven't been to the cottage. The first children used to attend a school at what was then called 'The Junction' on Thompson's Creek. The school was closed. The kids had to traipse over the pinnacle to another school at Sparkes Creek. I try to imagine their coming and their going. It would have been tough. Its rugged country now: even on horseback. These were the schools made famous by Havelock Ellis:

'At the end of the year (1875), he returned to Sydney and, after three months' training, was given charge of two government part-time elementary schools, one at Sparkes Creek, near Scone, New South Wales and the other at Junctions Creek. He lived at the school house on Sparkes Creek for a year. He wrote in his autobiography: In Australia, I gained health of body, I attained peace of soul, my life task was revealed to me, I was able to decide on a professional vocation, I became an artist in literature . . . these five points covered the whole activity of my life in the world. Some of them I should doubtless have reached without the aid of the Australian environment, scarcely all, and most of them I could never have achieved so completely if chance had not cast me into the solitude of the Liverpool Range'.

Was Mr Ellis' Australian excursion both actual and figurative? It may have been spiritual: his subsequent professional career was anything but.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day; the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea; the ploughman homeward plods his weary way; and leaves the world to darkness and to me. There they are again: all those elements of evening, pathos, isolation, encroaching darkness, elegy, seclusion and solitude. In my wild erratic fancy..... That's been done before too. Banjo was on a vicarious figurative journey: I think. Is this tautology or an oxymoron? Is there any sequence of words in the English language which hasn't been strung together yet? Now that it's getting late I think I'll try and catch up on some sleep. There is no doubt this writing and thinking business is both tiring and time consuming. It's not spontaneous: it's laborious. I think the key must be in the planning.

Heritage

And you thought we didn't care? This time it's about our heritage and your UHSC Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC). Just think if Jack Munday hadn't happened there would be no 'Sydney Rocks' area left? Former NSW State Minister for Planning Tony Kelly MLC stated: *Heritage has a high priority within my planning portfolio, as I see careful management of our shared heritage sites as critical to the promotion and enjoyment of our community's sense of place and character. I look forward to building on this Government's strong advocacy of sound heritage management.* Well said Tony – let's endorse and emulate those sentiments!

An absolute hero of mine is Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Indian Tribe of NW USA. Chief Joseph said:

'My father (also Chief Joseph - Tuekakas 'converted' by Christians and re-named) was the first to see through the schemes of the white men. He said, "My son when I am gone you are the chief of these people. Always remember that your father never sold his country. You must stop your ears whenever you are asked to sign a treaty selling your home. My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother". I pressed my father's hand and told him I would protect his grave with my life. A man who would not love his father's grave is worse than a wild animal'. "Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself -- and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty". Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekht ('Thunder rolling to loftier mountain heights') has spoken for his people.

Profound advice! Joseph Junior kept his word but lost out anyway to the 'might from the right' with their weapons of mass destruction!

The Wonnarua people are traditional landowners in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales and hold the same beliefs. According to the Wonnarua dreamtime the Hunter Valley was created by the Great Spirit, Baiame (Byamee). Before Baiame there was nothing, everything was sleeping. Baiame awoke and created everything, the mountains, plains, rivers and every living thing. The Wonnarua were part of the land. Renowned historian and Wonnarua descendant, James Miller explains in his book *'Koori a Will to Win'*:

"The land held the key to life's secrets. Man was given the knowledge to read the land and for every rock, tree and creek he found an explanation for existence. He did not own the land, the land owned him."

Some responsibility! I am current custodian of a heritage listed property. This brings with it not RIGHTS but obligations and responsibilities! Think about it? Custodianship is temporary. Aren't we all?

Happily your HAC is listening – and acting! We have a dedicated group headed up by consultant and Heritage Advisor Lillian Cullen whose services are available free through the UHSC. I am titular chairman – or 'tit' for short! We are spread across the geographic landscape and meet regularly between Murrurundi, Scone and Merriwa. This is a seminal moment in our/your history. Under review are the Heritage Conservation Areas for each locality. You should become familiar with the content by visiting our website and/or our UHSC offices in Scone, Merriwa or Murrurundi.

I commend your representatives on HAC: Cr Deirdre Peebles, Cr Pam Seccombe (UHSC), Brian Baker, Libby Walker, Lea Luckett (Merriwa), Matt Dixon, Geoff Field, Barbara Riddell (Murrurundi), Mary Woodlands, Kate Halliday, Gordon Halliday, Bev Atkinson (Scone), David Casson, Paul Smith (UHSC). Some great things have been happening such as the Merriwa Railway Restoration Project (Brian) and the Murrurundi Museum (Geoff). Get with it and be in it!

Freya Stark

'Dust in the Lion's Paw' – Autobiography 1939 – 1946:

'A great traveller, a woman of astute judgement and an extremely sensitive writer' – Sunday Times

'Persuasion alone looks like the weapon of the future, with annihilation as the alternative'.

'It's a poor world where we are impartial through ignorance, prudent through impotence, and equal through mediocrity'.

Equality?

Myth or Reality?

Have you ever contemplated the real meaning of equality in our society? The Macquarie Dictionary – like the Macquarie Thesaurus never far from my grasp these days! – defines **'Equality'** as: *"the state of being equal; correspondence in quality, degree, value, rank, ability etc."* **'Equal'** is further delineated: *"as great as another; like or alike in quantity, degree, value etc.; of the same rank, ability, merit etc.; evenly proportioned or balanced; uniform in operation or effect; adequate or sufficient in quantity or degree; having adequate powers, ability, or means; level as a plain; tranquil or undisturbed; impartial or equitable; one who or that which is equal; to be or become equal to; match; to make or do something equal to; to recompense fully."* Quite a lot in that little scenario! Just underneath is EEO! Is it realistically attainable and/or sustainable?

I was stimulated to think and prompted to write about this topic by another most welcome little present from Santa Claus! I was fortunate to receive an autobiography of Eric Blair by Jeffrey Meyers. Eric was an intriguing fellow who lived his short peripatetic life in the first cataclysmic half of the previous century ultimately falling victim to ubiquitous 'consumption'. He left an enduring legacy as the writer, critic and social philosopher George Orwell. Described by his peers as *'the wintry conscience of a generation'* he contributed greatly to the English language as the author of several seminal tomes including *'Animal Farm'* and *'Nineteen Eighty-Four'*.

"All animals are **equal** but some animals are more **equal** than others" (*Animal Farm*) has become as much a part of our etymological heritage as "Big brother is watching you." (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*). Reference to another of my close companion edition(s) (*Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations*) reveals many scintillating citations from other sources. E. M. Forster in *Howard's End* (1910 Ch. 6) attests humorously: *"All men are **equal** – all men that is to say, who possess an umbrella!"* In *Proper Studies* (1927) *'The Idea of Equality'*, Aldous Huxley affirms somewhat stridently, *"That all men are **equal** is a proposition to which, at ordinary times, no sane being has ever given his assent."* Sir J. M. Barrie echoed the prevalent social conditions of the day in his play *The Admirer* Crichton performed in 1902, *"His lordship may compel us to be **equal** upstairs, but there will never be **equality** in the servants' hall"*. This was presciently redolent of the proletarian philosophy so richly espoused in the very successful serial UK tele-drama *'Upstairs, Downstairs'*. *"We have talked long enough in this country about **equal** rights. We have talked for a hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law"* was LBJ's lofty 'though doubtless sincere rhetoric in his speech to Congress, 27 November 1963 following his unpropitious succession to JFK. Sir Isaiah Berlin in *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958) separated conceptual definitions thus: *"Liberty is liberty, not **equality** or fairness or justice or human happiness or a quiet conscience"*.

Have you noticed a common thread in these quotations? They are all male oriented and refer almost exclusively to the masculine gender! How sexist! *"All human beings are born free and **equal** in dignity and rights"* (*Tous les etres humains naissant libres et egaux en dignite et en droits'* – sorry no French inflections in my program!) is in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 1948. It represents the ideological high-moral-ground pronouncement and being gender neutral somewhat redresses the balance.

Following the massive immutable 'juggernaut' (not before time!) of the feminist revolution lead by Germaine Greer and others Polly Toynbee has stated with *metier* in the *Guardian* 19 January 1987:

*"Feminism is the most revolutionary idea there has ever been. **Equality** for women demands a change in the human psyche more profound than anything Marx dreamed of. It means valuing parenthood as much as we value banking".* Very interesting!

The most famous phrase in *Animal Farm* (enunciated by the self-serving pigs) combined Jefferson's fundamental concept in the Declaration of Independence, "*all men are created equal*," with Eve's self-destructive command to the Serpent in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (9.823-25): "*render me more **equal**, and perhaps, / A thing not undesirable, sometime / Superior.*"

Robert Zimmerman (*aka* Bob Dylan) obviously had reflective thought in composing his 1964 song *My Back Page*:

*'Equality', I spoke the word
As if a wedding vow
Ah, but I was much older then,
I'm younger than that now.*

Where the hell is all this leading I almost hear you ask! Well, as I'm much younger now I've also found time for reflective thought except, unlike Bob, I compose abominably and sing abysmally! I recall my entry into veterinary practice in Australia with Murray Bain at Scone NSW in the mid-sixties! There were 2.5 'all male' veterinarians! Guess who was 0.5! Women veterinarians were almost unheard of, especially in rural practice! Ideologically, I'd made up my mind for various reasons I wanted time and space to myself in veterinary practice having been exposed to quite the reverse in Ireland and Scotland. Based on the premise 'provide the service and get the work' we expanded to 20 veterinarians (48 on the payroll) within 20 years in 1988. This was only made possible because the thoroughbred population of Australia and specifically the Hunter Valley quadrupled during these 2 decades.

The present Associate Director was the debutante female neophyte to 'see practice' in Scone. What a memorable revelation! The Stud Managers and 'strappers' were most impressed! Gentlemanly conduct (and fear!) prevents me from divulging when! Wendy Paul, now a PGFVS Councillor followed soon after, had a similar impact and was the first non-male employee veterinarian in Scone as a locum tenens. Again, modesty forbids time disclosure! Murray was not only an ardent ornithologist but also *rue gallante* with a highly cultivated eye for the aesthetically pleasing female form! The late Sue McCubbery was the first full time employee just prior to Murray's tragically early demise in 1974. Scone Veterinary Hospital, the evolutionary outcome of our earlier efforts, employed in excess of 20 veterinarians in the season just completed in 2001. More than 50% were female. Does this mean, using the Scone analogy we have achieved professional 'equality'? I rather suspect not! However, I believe it has little or nothing to do with gender but everything to do with generation, attitude and aptitude!

On entering practice, my naive altruistic ideal was for a socially democratic veterinary cooperative capable of delivering eclectic service, excellent facilities, adequate financial recompense, cutting edge CPE and CPD and appropriate unencumbered family oriented and focused lifestyle. My personal goal(s) included intense involvement and commitment to local clubs, societies and cultural and communal activities not excluding social events! After preparing duty rosters for so many veterinarians in practice over 20 years I reached the irrevocable and immutable conclusion, like Orwell's 'pigs' that **'some are more equal than others!'**

Is this mildly cynical and slightly pejorative redolent of inculcated sanctimonious 'old flatulent' attitude? I do not think this situation has altered dramatically with the passage of time. What has/have changed exponentially is/are the expectations of the veterinarians themselves, clients, employers and employees. This reflects profound societal development and is certainly no bad thing!

I regard the PGFVS with patrician care rather like my practice but with broader boundaries and widely divergent philosophies! I trust this is not too, too 'Orwellian'? In *Animal Farm* every detail had political significance in this allegory of corruption, betrayal and tyranny in Communist Russia. The human beings are capitalists and the animals Communists led by the principal pigs with the margins of their 'acquired' behaviour becoming increasingly blurred as the plot unfolds! Interestingly in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Blair did not foretell the ultimate demise of the great human social experiment of the twentieth century within a decade of the passing of 1984! In *Animal Farm* the pigs, like the bureaucrats at the BBC, "had to expend enormous labours every day upon mysterious things called 'files', 'reports', 'minutes' and 'memoranda'. Does this mean my role resembles that of 'Napoleon' (Stalin), 'Snowball' (Trotsky) or more likely the self-sacrificial horse 'Boxer'? I'm acutely aware of the dangers of creeping, crawling, cancerous bureaucracy so I'll opt for the latter and promise to do my best! It is a sobering thought that Boxer, like Orwell, collapsing from overwork suffered a tubercular haemorrhage: "A thin stream of blood had trickled out of his mouth..... 'It's my lung', said Boxer in a weak voice." Isn't it fortunate we occupy such healthy space these days?

'Equality'? Are there such things as two equal halves of anything? Are 'identical twins' ever exactly the same? It depends on the criteria applied and the circumstances prevailing. I think of **equality** as a finely balanced see saw with two 'equal objects' arraigned at identical distances from the fulcrum. Applied to the veterinary context, such are the forces of nature and vicissitudes of human (animal) behaviour they will never be in 'perfect balance' apart from the infinitesimally short time the 'bar' is perfectly horizontal in fluctuating between ends. Goodness, I'm waxing lyrical! It's about time I stopped! I've just received a telephone call from my wife Sarah with news a very great friend of mine has died not unexpectedly at Warwick, QLD! Fortunately I called him on Christmas Day and also wrote to him the same morning! Thank God some are more equal than others! I'll leave it at that!

We have a lovely young lady undergraduate who is assisting us the PGFVS. I almost earned a slap in the face the other day when I said: "Of course we're not equal – I have more testosterone than you!" I really meant it as a compliment but Anne was not quite so sure! Dangerous territory spiked by our new age nemesis 'political correctness'!

W. P. Howey

Director PGFVS

Our Future World - “Megatrends” and “Megashocks”

Benjamin Disraeli was the original proponent of the mildly pejorative three kinds of untruth aphorism: lies, damned lies and statistics. I’m going to write about the latter. It can be boring? I’m good at digression and usually I do but I’ll try to concentrate? Disraeli was one of the most eminent Victorians and a great favourite of Queen Victoria who did not much fancy the alternative Whig William Gladstone? He was an accomplished author and smart enough politically to acquire for Great Britain the shares in the Suez Canal then owned by the Khedive of Egypt.

Now back to the future! The CSIRO recently published (March 2010) a draft document entitled ‘Our Future World’ distributed to us as Councillors. It presents an analysis of global trends, shocks and scenarios. *‘The scientific research we conduct today will deliver solutions for our children, grandchildren and future generations’*. This is why it’s so important even at the local level. The report describes the outcomes from a CSIRO global foresight project. It identifies five global ‘megatrends’ and global risks that may redefine how people live. A *megatrend* is based on the aggregation and synthesis of multiple trends. A trend is an important pattern of economic, social or environmental activity that will change the way people live and the science and technology products they demand.

A global risk, or “megashock”, is a significant and sudden event: the timing and magnitude of which are very hard to predict. The CSIRO lists the five megatrends as: ‘More from less – a world of limited resources’; ‘A personal touch – personalization of products and services’; Divergent demographics - Older, hungrier and more demanding’; On the move – Urbanising and increased mobility’ and ‘World – Digital and natural convergence’. Some of the last century’s most progressive thinkers were somewhat pessimistic. Freya Stark has stated: “Persuasion alone looks like the weapon of the future, with annihilation as the alternative” and: “It’s a poor world where we are impartial through ignorance, prudent through impotence, and equal through mediocrity”.

Similarly that most eminent scientist and eradicator of Small Pox Professor Frank Fenner (1914 – 2010) is quoted: “As a result of the population explosion, ‘unbridled consumption’ and International failure to curb greenhouse gas emissions, Homo sapiens will become extinct perhaps within 100 years. Whatever we do now is too late”. It may be that Dinosaurs beat us to it as the architects of their own demise? The major herbivorous sauropods were such potent producers of Methane and most flagrant ‘fugitive emitters’ of their day. They made no concession to etiquette both proximally and distally (make that front and back) if you appreciate my windward drift?

Did they destroy their own habitat by over population and voracious consumption to the ultimate detriment of their 'uninhabitable' environment? Chief denier Professor Ian Plimer might disagree. The 'megatrends' identified above will gradually play out over the coming decades. However there will be unpredicted 'megashocks' or risks which will impact on the global community and have a profound impact on people's lives – including thee, me, we, you and us. Recent examples include 9/11 in 2001, the Asian Tsunami of 2004 and the recent/current global credit crisis. So how will this affect me here and now? Quite a lot actually! The latest Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO State of the Climate 2012 outlook reaffirms that we are in a steady state of predictable 'climate shift'. We will all have to become more efficient in energy usage, food consumption and waste disposal – think dinosaurs. While the political cycle of four year terms does not lend itself to long term initiatives LGA/UHSC education programs have raised general awareness.

In a Q report entitled 'Has apathy overtaken urgency in the debate on climate action?' (SMH News Review Weekend Edition May 19-29, 2012) Ballina Councillor Robyn Hordern responds:

"I am confident that local Councillors have a real desire to protect and enhance the lifestyles within their communities for future generations".

I wish I'd written that first?

Balance or manifest destiny – that is the question?

How do you achieve acceptable balance? The NSW Department of Local Government Council's Charter requires that we as elected Councillors act according to the following premises: provide directly, or on behalf of other levels of government, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community; ensure that provided services are managed efficiently and effectively; exercise community leadership; have regard for the long term and cumulative effects of decisions; have regard to acting as custodian and trustee of public assets; effectively account for and manage assets for which we are responsible; raise funds for local purposes by way of rates, charges and fees, investments, loans and grants; keep the local community informed about activities; ensure that in the exercising of regulatory functions act consistently and without bias. The Guide to good governance and ecologically sustainable development for local Councillors states that the Council serves to represent its local community and that local Councillors are intrinsically more accountable and accessible than their counterparts in other spheres of government ('grassroots government').

On quality of life and ecologically sustainable development Councils make decisions that can significantly touch upon the day-to-day lives and 'quality of life' of the local community; Councils and Councillors must provide vision and leadership to their community; Councils and Councillors must protect and improve the community's quality of life taking into account competing priorities that are inevitably involved - 'social, economic and environmental' dimensions'. The Mission of the Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) is 'to enhance the quality of life of all Shire residents by the provision of appropriate services and facilities through effective and efficient management of resources'; 'to serve the community through equality of opportunity and involvement', and 'to build a prosperous environmentally sustainable future'. Similarly we are committed to 'protection and enhancement of the natural environment, including the promotion of development, which is compatible with the area's natural environment and which will enhance the area as a place to live and work'.

I think you'll agree it's a pretty tall order? The keyword in all of this is 'balance'. My review thesaurus lists alternatives to balance as equilibrium, poise, stability and steadiness. Frequently during the past four years we have been placed very firmly under the microscope to arrive at decisions which will satisfy the criteria listed above and not upset more than 51% of the local population. Recent DPOP roll out consultations have reaffirmed this in spades. Think Scone Traffic Lights, Bickham Coal Mine, Air Quality Monitoring, Wind Farms, Timor Quarry, NEH overpass, SRV and CSG to name but a few without mentioning 'fugitive emissions' in our midst.! Herbivorous dinosaurs were very good at the latter both front and back with no concessions to etiquette. Rural and remote say roads, roads and roads. The jury is still out on some of these. Manifest Destiny was the 19th century American dictum that the United States was destined to expand across the continent. It was used by Democrat-Republicans in the 1840s to justify the war with Mexico.

Advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that expansion was not only wise but that it was readily apparent (manifest) and inexorable (destiny). Do other democratically elected governments share the same philosophy? Do you think it's our manifest destiny to be devoured by the ever northward expanding industrial corridor with its insatiable voracious appetite – or will we retain our identity? Remember the North Muswellbrook jibe early last year? It's well over 200 years since Lieutenant Shortland discovered coal on the beach at Newcastle while pursuing recidivists. That really started something! Could it be that our largely silent mainly urban majority warmly welcomes the exceptional lucrative job opportunities made available in the mineral extractive industries? Some of the arguments are compelling while others are equally dispelling.

Did I mention balance? Aren't wind energy, solar thermal and geothermal tomorrow's technology? Do you ever delude yourself we're masters of our own destiny? Are we united only in the face of adversity? Clarity of vision and unity of purpose are high ideals but I rather fear Homo sapiens are more inclined to solipsism, sophistry and vested self-interest? Do we have the power of self-determination or are we subservient to 'the odious hypocrisy of economic convenience'? How do you redress the balance? You might like to contemplate all of this before the LGA elections. You might even 'throw your hat in the ring' come September 2012. That's the challenge.

Malcolm Muggeridge:

'Never forget only dead fish swim with the stream'

'One of the many pleasures of old age is giving things up'.

Animal Behaviour

The Worst Animal

My son Hugh gave me a beautiful book for my birthday. “The Wilderness Family” was written by Kobie Kruger (The ‘U’ should have an umlaut!). Kobie’s father Jamie Uys made the cult film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. Her husband Kobus was a Game Ranger at a number of remote camps in Kruger National Park in the NE Transvaal Province of South Africa adjoining Mozambique. The Kruger parents raised their family of three daughters and numerous orphaned animals in this wild environment.

“Golden sunshine glowed in the lush garden; hippos basked in the Letaba River (Mahlangeni); storks and herons perched along the shore. Kobie felt she’d found heaven on earth – until she found a python in her bedroom on the first night! It was the perfect introduction to the wonders and terrors awaiting them. Nothing, however, prepared them for the sheer joy and heartbreak of raising a lion cub. Kobus found the three-day-old orphan hoarse with crying for its dead mother and brought it home. Though terrified of lions, Kobie turned into an instant lion-mother. Leo became an adored member of the family, though they always knew that someday he would have to return to the wild. By turns funny and heartbreaking, engaging and hair-raising, *The Wilderness Family* is an unforgettable memoir of a woman, her family, love for an orphaned lion and life in the African wilderness in a remote corner of the world they called home for seventeen incredible years.”

The story evoked particularly poignant memories for Hugh and I as we spent a few days at Pretorius Kop during a Cricket Tour to South Africa in 1995 with Hugh’s School Team. This was the same Kruger Park Camp where I attended the First International Symposium on Equine Diseases in 1974!

Do you ever feel enraged when the popular press describes especially errant, even despicable human acts as ‘worse than animals’? Do you ever feel compelled to speak up on behalf of our illiterate companions and subordinates? One passage in the book encapsulated for me the most accurate definition of ‘animal behaviour’ *vis a vis* ‘human behaviour’. Kobie’s daughters Hettie (14yo) and Sandra (13yo) had just voluntarily herded a mob of buffalo away from encroaching danger. On reflection Kobie remarked perhaps there was logic after all in her daughters’ reluctance to regard close encounters with wild animals as frightening experiences. ***Animals have no malice, they attack only in self-defence, they hunt only when they must eat. It is man, the most successful predator on earth, who is the most dangerous of all creatures.***

Well said Kobie Kruger! I have been searching for words to express my own feelings of outrage! I’ll settle for yours! I’m very good at plagiarising!

W. P. Howey

Director

Chief Seathl (Seattle) to the President of the USA in 1855:

“If all the beasts were gone from the earth, man would die from great loneliness of spirit”

Irrelevant?

I very vaguely evoke my earliest recollections of considering veterinary science as a career. I was in the equivalent of Year X (4th. Form) and had some decisions to make. Neale Holmes-Smith was in my year at school and a close friend. His father was an eminent Ophthalmic Surgeon but Neale was passionate about animals and veterinary surgery although Botany was his best subject. I was very keen on making the 1st. XI, summoning up enough courage to ask out Maggie K. and bashing John Michael Horrocks-Taylor for ducking me at swimming pool. He was the same person who bore the brunt of my imitation Stradivarius in Year 1 before they took it off me!

I put down 'Veterinary Science' when I was called to see the Careers Advisor. Guess what my first lesson was? Neale gave me the idea in the first place and I couldn't think of much else! My science master said everyone wanted to be a doctor and they were 'commonplace'. Eventually I made it into the Royal (Dick) Veterinary College in Edinburgh via all the sporting teams, school hierarchy and some timely diligence in Chemistry, Physics, Botany and Zoology. I never did manage to impress the eternally beautiful (in my memory) Maggie K.! I still wonder what became of her? However I digress! Neale struggled with basic sciences and eventually found his niche at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. He was a devout Quaker and I think disapproved of my 'freshman' discovery of bacchanalia! We lost touch!

Coming from a farming community in the 'Borders' where my family had practiced the mixed variety without significant change for over 400 years I was full of idealistic altruism! My father was a very good farmer but excelled at hedonism. Punting on the races was an absorbing and consuming passion. I could see the family heirloom gradually and systematically working its way to Margaret Laidlaw the SP in the Turks Head Hotel in Rothbury. I determined to win some of it back! I also thought I could improve the lot of the national flocks and herds to the great benefit of the food chain, the nation and all of mankind! Pompous pious puerile little prick!

Some of the established routines on East Hepple Farm were not best or current practice. It was a revelation in 1950 when my neighbour Aunt Peggy started intensive deep litter pullets in the old blacksmith's forge and battery laying hens as well. Much to our consternation they all made happy noises! They weren't so happy when George Foggon's rabbit ferrets escaped one night and slaughtered more than fifty unsuspecting chickens in the old forge! In a village our size that is news, news, news!

Dad knew lots of short cuts especially if it meant saving veterinary fees for the 3:15 at Epsom! We spent quite a bit of time pumping up the udders of the lambing South Country Cheviot ewes succumbing to 'Grass Tetany'. It works although slowly! The wonders of the parathyroid gland! I thought there had to be better ways so set off to find out on my journey of discovery. My mission was the health of the nations' food producing animals. Companion animals didn't count. This was probably the prevailing philosophy of the day. 'Smallies were pussy and sissy'! I still thought I was 'relevant'!

Imagine my dismay more than forty years adrift when I distinctly heard a senior eminent 'production animal scientist' - a veterinarian - state at a public forum veterinarians are largely 'irrelevant' in today's animal management systems on farm.

How did we manage collectively to achieve this remarkable feat in so short a time? Is it just? With OJD peregrinations we know from bitter first-hand experience we are very much 'on the nose' in the sheep industry.

Do we deserve this or have we brought it on ourselves? We won the TB war and the S19 battle but lost the routine work involved in subsequent CAB follow up investigations.

There are fewer Government funded 'get on farm' animal health programs involving private veterinary surveillance these days. Are we outnumbered in Cattle PD's, Horse's Teeth floating and Equine 'Chiropractic'? Do we have the numbers and the will and/or desire to compete for territory? Are there enough graduates with the essential 'attributes' to take on this type of work? Is it worth their while even if they do? Do the Universities really have the resources to assist in their preparation faced with ever diminishing Government financial support?

I'm worried! I don't like feeling 'irrelevant'!

W. P. Howey

Relevance Deprivation Syndrome (RDS)

Andy Warhol put into perspective! We are each entitled to our own fifteen minutes of fame! Some of us are allocated more time and some less. Old Bill Shakespeare also intimated how we can artificially influence our fair share by being selectively proactive in making life's most important decisions:

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the full leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyages of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries"

(IV, iii 'Titles from Julius Caesar)

We all have to deal with it sooner or later and it can be a bitter pill to swallow! I confess the intellectual property of the title is not my own – although I would claim it! I heard it mentioned on talk back radio as part of the acrimonious debate over the internecine NRMA Board debacle in NSW. A particular formerly high profile media delegate was described as suffering a bad case of 'relevance deprivation syndrome' (RDS). I liked it and it stuck!

Whenever we volunteer for duties or are elected to Association, Council or Board positions we must remember we have a finite term of duty! Knowing when to quit is the big question. Senior iconic sporting figures seem to have the most difficulty? Is it dollars or is it hubris, vanity and ego? I must confess to my fair share of wounded soul searching and retribution in the past. Now in the twilight quadrant of my life's journey I am completely inured to its effects. Does it matter? Could it be related to successful extirpation of my own expansive ego a decade ago? One of Australia's great national treasures put it beautifully many moons back. 'Remember, we are merely temporary custodians of the (greater) game'. Thank you Sir Donald! I will never lose sight of that!

W. P. Howey

'It's the Council's Job'

'Walking through my town the other day, I happened upon a man who had just discarded his cigarette packet into the middle of the street. When asked whether the refuse bin, just metres away, might not have been a better idea, he looked at me askance: "It's the council's job to keep the streets clean, not mine" he said'. That's a quotation from an erudite sports journalist in a syndicated international newspaper column. I'll come back to that later. Does it resonate with you as it did with me? Many mornings I count as many as a dozen or more discarded cardboard milk shake containers whose origin is very readily identifiable by the well branded logo on each relating to a fast food outlet. There are two main 'offenders'. My abode seems to be on the main trade route for one of them? Depending on my mood and location I sometimes pick them up - "Councillor's duty" - but often I'm defeated!

The quotation in the introductory paragraph was actually written by former English Test Cricketer and Captain Mike Atherton (The Weekend Australian, December 3-4, 2011 and also The Times, Thursday 1 December, 2011). He was making a statement about the reasons for the demise and ultimate carnage of the English Rugby Team on its World Cup campaign in NZ under Coach Martin Johnson. The headline in the Australian was: 'The welfare state mentality that destroyed England's World Cup bid'. The London Times caption read: 'Martin Johnson is a sad casualty of sport's nanny state'. Eight years before Martin Johnson was the tough 'go to' man who led England to triumph in Australia – the only time the Rugby World Cup 'Old Bill' or the William Webb Ellis Trophy has ever left the southern hemisphere. Atherton cites both as 'glaring examples of the kind of personal responsibility upon which the proper functioning of any society or organization relies'. Well said Mike! I didn't like your batting style or bowling technique but I do admire your philosophy! Atherton further pontificates that sociologists would draw some similarities between the litterbug in his town and the England rugby team?

Where does the absolute responsibility lie? The Mission of the Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) is: 'to enhance the quality of life of all Shire residents by the provision of appropriate services and facilities through effective and efficient management of resources'; 'to serve the community through equality of opportunity and involvement' and 'to build a prosperous environmentally sustainable future'. By now all three of you who read my articles will know that I derive much of my inspiration from the game of cricket, its great exponents, elite combatants and cultured commentators over the ages. I confess to being the ultimate tragic more severely afflicted than even John Howard himself!

I particularly liked the following quotation taken from an obituary entitled “Sam Loxton the ‘bulldog fighter’ among Bradman’s Invincibles” (The Australian, Monday, December 5, 2011). It is attributed to Lord Harris who presided over the Sydney Riot in 1879: “You would do well to love it, for it is more-free from anything sordid, anything dishonourable, than any game in the world. To play it keenly, honourably, generously, self- sacrificingly, is a moral lesson in itself and the classroom of God’s air and sunshine. Foster it, my brothers, so that it may attract all who can find time to play it; protect it from anything that would sully it, so that it may grow in favour with all men.” High sounding flowing esoteric stuff! Maybe the guy who discarded the cigarette packet should read it? Excuse me while I leave this page!

Back on this page where do you think the ultimate accountability for litter and detritus lies? Is it the Council and why don’t we put out more litter bins? Or could that just be personal responsibility and abnegation of the welfare state mentality? Should the purveyors of the ubiquitous throw away ‘carton culture’ be held accountable? Perhaps it’s a combination of all three? How much should devolve to personal responsibility? How do you promulgate it? Atherton also comments that he was as puzzled by England rugby’s sad demise as he was by the litterbug and his attitude? He offered no apology for starting his column with that anecdote - as I don’t’. What is a matter of grave concern to our society is the self-serving prevailing and all-pervading philosophy that if I sully the environment then someone else in authority or public service will clean it up? By the way, although Mike Atherton’s cricket skills may have been flawed, mine were execrable! Did I ever mention that many of my messages are oblique and from left field?

Requiem for a Lost Tribe

It was Phillip Adams who introduced me to the concept of traditional numinous in one of his essays in the Week End Australian magazine. I wrote to him – and he replied. He lives near here. I was thinking about this when I composed an article about the Worimi people on one of my visits to my favorite bolt hole at Hawks Nest. It's a tad fanciful and contains elements of whimsical ephemera. I've borrowed some of it. It goes like this: 'The plangent cry of the Black Cockatoos harshly expunged the soothing mellow morning calm. Their stentorian call contrasted sharply with the gentle lyrical patois of the fading tribal elder of the local Worimi people. The Kaattang or Kathung argot was unique to the area the 'whitefellas' called Little Gibber or Dark Point. Here since the sweeping creation by the Rainbow Serpent the Worimi had gathered their shells, honed their tools and manufactured their weapons. Ritual burials occurred near this awesome place where the low angle of the early morning and late evening sun casts lengthening shadows over the windswept surface patterns of the sand, animal tracks and the towering dunes themselves'.

It caused me to think of another vanquished tribe in another place and time with whom I've developed an enduring fascination. Alan Moorehead wrote passionately about what he called the fatal impact of white - mainly European exploration - on previously isolated civilizations. Due to proselytizing and disease things would never be the same again. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were rescued by the Nez Perce tribe in their great overland voyage of discovery to the Pacific Coast in 1804. French fur traders coming from Canada had originally contacted and named the Nez Perce in the far north west of what would become the USA. Chief Joseph said: 'My father also Chief Joseph - Tuekakas converted by Christians and re-named - was the first to see through the schemes of the white men. He said, "My son.... when I am gone.....you are the chief of these people. Always remember that your father never sold his country. You must stop your ears whenever you are asked to sign a treaty selling your home.... My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother". I pressed my father's hand and told him I would protect his grave with my life.... A man who would not love his father's grave is worse than a wild animal.

The Nez Perce had their own set of beliefs not dissimilar to the Australian Aboriginal story of creation and their relationship with mother earth. Chief Joseph was interviewed by the Board appointed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the Lapwai Reservation, Idaho in March 1873. 'Do you want schools or school houses on the Wallawa Reservation they had asked him? No, he answered, we do not want schools or school houses on the Wallawa Reservation. Why do you not want schools? They will teach us to have churches. Do you not want churches? No, we do you not want churches. Why do you not want churches? They will teach us, Joseph had said, to quarrel about God as the Catholics and Protestants do on the Nez Perce reservation and at other places. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that'.

Chief Joseph was referring to the infamous Wallawa Massacre which had occurred sometime before. A Nez Perce brave became very confused by the constant bickering between the Catholic and Protestant Missions who both claimed to worship the same Christian God. The Protestant Minister was also a medical doctor and had a young family. His children were immune to diseases such as influenza and small pox which decimated the local population of first nation children. In his simplistic way this brave surmised that this amounted to 'bad medicine'. He concluded the Catholics were right. His solution was to butcher the Protestant Minister and his family and so exorcise these demons on behalf of his community. Faced with peremptory white justice in the untamed Wild West he was later the focus of a neck-tie party and paid the ultimate price of summary execution.

Chief Joseph craved for freedom from white domination. "Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think and act for myself -- and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty". Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekht – 'Thunder rolling to loftier mountain heights' - has spoken for his people.

This was not to be. Faced with unrelenting persecution and under Chief Joseph's leadership the Nez Perce tribe broke out of their reservation and abandoned their tribal and spiritual home. They heroically fought an unrelenting and at times strategically brilliant rear guard guerilla campaign against the might of the US Seventh Cavalry. With advancing winter and only fifty miles from salvation and the protection of the Great White Mother – Queen Victoria – in Canada the tribe was surrounded. Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce addressed his now famous speech of surrender to General O. O. Howard, Colonel Nelson Miles, Lieutenant C. E. S. Wood, Guy Howard and Arthur Chapman at Bear Paws, Montana on Friday 5 October, 1877.

He dismounted his horse with dignity, handing his gun to the General. With Chapman doing the interpreting and Wood taking down the translation, Joseph began to speak:

"Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before, I have it in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohoolhoolzote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say 'Yes' or 'No'. He who led the young men Ollokot is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are – perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs! I am tired. My heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever. I could not bear to see my wounded men and women suffer any longer".

Ollokot, Alikot or 'Little Frog' was the War Chief and younger brother of Chief Joseph whom General Howard had known and respected. There was a moment of silence. Then Joseph drew his blanket over his head. The war was over. Joseph's sad and beautiful words affected the officers. Lieutenant C. E. S. Wood was overcome.

He later became a major civil rights lawyer in the East. The long journey was ended. Only eighty-seven warriors were left alive after a thousand miles of fighting and half of them were wounded. Joseph's wife was dead. His older daughter had escaped to Canada with White Bird and only the girl papoose born on the flight was left to him.



Chief Joseph 1877

Chief Wolf Robe has a Cree Indian saying: Only when the last tree has died, the last river has been poisoned and the last fish has been caught, only then will we realize we cannot eat money. Chief Seattle said the white man made all the promises and kept but one – they promised to take our land and they took it.

“Revelations” at Christmas

Because I believe it is appropriate, I like to think optimistically at Christmas time! “Revelations” helps.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations”. (Revelations 22:1 – 2)

Similarly, eminent authors and modern composers have poignant cogent advice barely concealed in exculpatory rhetoric:

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried”. (*G. K. Chesterton* 1874 – 1936, *What’s Wrong with the World* (1910) pt. 4, ch. 14).

“And here’s to you, Mrs Robinson
Jesus loves you more than you will know.
God bless you please, Mrs Robinson
Heaven holds a place for those who pray”.

(*Paul Simon* 1942 - , *Mrs Robinson* 1998 song; used in the film *The Graduate*)

(The Mrs Robinson character so excellently portrayed by Anne Bancroft in *The Graduate* might have more in common with Madame Bovary than the Madonna!)

A Happy Ending after All

The last word is the best news of all

A New World at Last

“There will be no more tears then, nor pain. Wild animals will frolic, not kill. Once again creation will work the way God intended. Peace will reign not only between God and individuals, but between him and all creation. The kingdom comes out into the open. The City of God flings wide its gates”.

Revelations ends on a note of great triumph. Somehow, out of all the bad news augured here, good news emerges – spectacular Good News. To those who believe, Revelations becomes a book not of fear, but of hope. God will prevail. All will be made new. *There is a happy ending after all.* (Revelations 22)

I/we wish for you at the time of the incipient Millennium the merriest Christmas and the happiest and most prosperous New Year!

W. P. Howey

'Defend to the Death'

"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it".

The citation above was attributed to Voltaire in *'The Friends of Voltaire'; (1906) S. G. Tallentyre (E. Beatrice Hall)* but is not found in his works.

Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister of Great Britain (1910) also invoked the same quotation in dealing with a youthful, determined and vituperative Winston Churchill who was allegedly most aggressive and assertive in debate. "You will learn, when you begin to understand that conversation is not a monologue" the PM is reputed to have rebuked the garrulous WC while still defending his right to free speech!

Not surprisingly I have been taken to task for printing 'Ruffled Feathers' with my Christmas Director's Circular. I had contemplated and anticipated such admonishment and offer no apology! I have little further to add other than to reiterate the views expressed by Kevin McManus do not purport to represent those of the Foundation or its management. The PGFVS has (almost) always been 'politically neutral' and allows all sides the right to their say. This position will be nurtured and maintained. As far as I am concerned I have respect for the opinions of all my collegiate veterinarians although there are many I do not see eye-to-eye! My numerous associates in practice will attest to this pronouncement! Like Voltaire (?) I will ultimately defend the right of any individual to express his or her considered views without fear or favour and unencumbered by so called political correctness however conventionally unpopular. Anything less in my view amounts to an onerous form of editorial censorship. Who am I to judge my peers in this way?

Similarly my knowledge of the Muslim religion and contents of the Koran were brutally exposed by a well-intentioned and extremely well informed Christian member who has read the Koran! My major premise was to promote harmony, peace, good will and most importantly tolerance in these trying times! I must do my 'home-work' better in future although I still fervently believe in the essential unbiased content of the message promoting forbearance in general!

W. P. Howey

Director

University of Sydney Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science

Punctuality

I called to see Tom the other day (14/05/02) on my way from my city *pied a terre* at Bondi Junction to my *real* home at Scone in the Hunter Valley. This involves traversing Sydney from the Eastern Suburbs through the CBD to the Upper North Shore. Foolishly I agreed to be at 'Farleigh', Burns Road, Wahroonga at 9:00am sharp! It is palpably unwise even bordering on extreme stupidity to rely on smooth passage through the *milieu* of Sydney traffic at this hour! Almost inevitably I was late! Tom was not amused! The first task I performed was to change a light bulb for him. At 90+ he was not confident of climbing and balancing on a high ladder. ('Farleigh' is a magnificent old residence redolent of the area with very high 12' ceilings rarely encountered nowadays). This small 'charitable' act seemed to humour him a little. The truth was I was not game to refuse!

Our discussions centred on the origins of the PGFVS and also the 10th edition of T.G. Hungerford's 'Diseases of Livestock' (McGraw-Hill). It was a fascinating two hours and included a delightful morning tea with Mrs. Hungerford as gracious hostess. ('The worst wife I ever had': TGH). Tom actually prepared the tasty sandwiches I enjoyed so much.

The concept of continuing veterinary education had its genesis through the aegis of the largely NSW based AVA in 1964. Hugh Gordon, Victor Cole, Murray Bain and Ron Churchward were the front runners. Ron was Registrar of the AVA and had a 'political' agenda to pursue. Together they formed the Post Graduate Committee and the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science of the University of Sydney with Vic Cole as Chairman. The original philosophy engendered 'refresher courses' rather than 'new knowledge' promulgation. The first course offered was on 'Sterility of Cattle'. No notes were provided prior to the course and none were delivered for the course. A total of six 'consultants' were appointed to advise on different areas of veterinary activity. Tom was invited to counsel on poultry. Keith Sanders and Graham Edgar were others briefly involved at this early stage.

Eric Butt, a non-veterinarian, was appointed Executive Director of the PGFVS in 1967. It was not long before Tom began to make his very strong views apparent as an 'adviser' to the Foundation! The eventual outcome after much sabre rattling was for Tom to be offered the position of Veterinary Director. 'When can you start'? He was asked. 'Tomorrow' was his succinct and curt reply! As good as his word Tom assumed office at 7:30 am on 6th. August 1968 after leaving his Penrith (NSW) practice the day before. Eric did not stay long thereafter and Tom soon became the sole full time Director. Others such as Don Gates had brief sojourns and Tom 'went on the attack' to achieve his goals!

Tom's goals were admirable and certainly worth revisiting today! It was envisaged to hold a maximum of four major courses per year. These were to be of great intensity and the highest standard of 'worlds' best practice'. Notes were to be produced one month in advance and authors paid per page of *new* material produced. The courses were to be so much 'must attend' so that veterinarians would feel 'blackmailed' into being there!

Great emphasis was placed on ***punctuality*** at the courses by both the participants and the tutors. (At this juncture Tom fixed me with his best ***bold italic underlined*** steely expression as he emphasised the point! The message hit home!). Tom had great delight in relating to me how he switched the microphone from the rostrum to his hand held 'mike' just as soon as a tutor's time was up! He had no compunction in interrupting in mid-sentence and always maintained strict control!

Tom described how it was necessary to impose strict discipline very early to instil absolute confidence in the participants so they would now exactly what to expect and when! Similarly Tom fought and won other basic and not so basic philosophical arguments at this time. 'Control and Therapy' articles were a case in point. Tom defied Committee direction and printed them unedited just as received. Filibustered by a wildly enthusiastic protagonist Vic Cole was 'big enough' to admit Tom was right! A similar situation evolved with control and editorial content of the 'Director's Circular'. Score: Hungerford 2 – Committee 0.

'Punctuality is the virtue of the bored'. (Michael Davies (ed.) *Diaries of Evelyn Waugh* (1976) 'Irregular Notes 1960 – 65', 26 March 1962.

Somehow I don't think Tom would have liked Evelyn Waugh very much?

Further discussion centred on the proposed 10th edition of 'Hungerford's Diseases of Livestock'. Tom gave a wonderful rendition of his original 'negotiations' with the senior principal(s) of publisher McGraw-Hill in head office New York City. Tom opened with the gambit about the 'worst wife he ever had' but the (female) president countered by opening Tom's book and citing the following dedicated quotation:

*"As of the bow the cord is
So unto man is woman
Though she bends him
Yet she obeys him
Though she draws him
Yet she follows
Useless one without the other"*

The allotted maximum 10 minutes interview duration extended to over two hours! Ardent feminists would not have approved but the McGraw-Hill President was impressed! At the end of this time Tom was allocated 'all the resources he required' to produce the 9th edition of his seminal tome. I don't think it will be that simple for the 10th Tom!

W. P. Howey

Vicarious Thrill – Graduation 2001!

I had a fabulous time at the awards presentation ceremony for new Sydney BVSc graduates on Wednesday 19 December 2001! For the information of Sydney alumni it was held in the W. P. Young Room of the Veterinary Science Conference Centre and on the lawn outside. This was an exceptional occasion and huge success with the ambience 'perfect'. Congratulations to the Faculty (Dean Reuben Rose), Veterinary Science Foundation (Jennie Churchill) and everyone else involved! It was a great thrill and honour to present the PGFVS Prize for Clinical Competence the Dr. Elizabeth Duys BVSc, a most worthy recipient. The PGFVS makes similar awards each year at Melbourne, Queensland, Murdoch and Massey.

I had a ball! My only regret is that I had to drive away so greatly inhibiting my style! Graham Brown (Chris's father) reminded me of when I didn't make their wedding in Newcastle 33 years ago because I'd rolled my car and obliterated a few fence posts leaving Denman Races! So perhaps it was as well I was 'restrained'! Graham was PP Board Vet in Scone when I arrived in 1967! I found a lot of other soul mates and 'blasts from the past'! Perry Manus I'd rarely seen since he knocked over my magnum bottle of Scotch somewhere in mid-West USA on the PGFVS Beef Cattle trip in 1973! This was the first and last time the PGFVS went 'on tour'! Victor Cole was an outstanding tour leader! Dave Mossman and Brian McCrae excelled in the 'hospitality' stakes!

It was great to run into John Hayes (Angus's father). Angus and Sam Walker were staunch mates of my son Hugh at St. Paul's College. Chris Brown was also in the coterie although 'in denial' at St. Andrews! George Russ has done well to secure Chris for Neutral Bay! He expects all the 18 - 25 nubile young females from the lower North Shore to turn up regularly for feline consultations! (Actually, I think he said they'd be bringing their cats!)! Angus, Chris and Sam all stayed at our place in Scone when doing 'practical work'. Sarah, not surprisingly, thought they were all 'divine' even heavenly - especially Chris! Nicky Jagger also stayed with us - at my invitation! I met her parents for the first time that night! Genetics rules OK!

Andrew and Janie Stevenson (Edwina's parents) were in their element. Andrew is chairman of the Widden Stud Board as well as St. Vincents Hospital and Westgarth Chambers! Good to see former VETSOC leader Kym Hagon who is bound for the North Coast. There were lots of others but time and 0.05 are limiting! I felt quite 'patriarchal' with some of my proteges now BVSc. Well done! It was an enormous thrill to be there – vicarious like most of my pleasures these days!

My son Hugh leads our family's Christmas prayers each year! Hugh has a very strong faith - finely balanced by the opposing 'anarchist' views of his elder sister 'Cyclone' Kirsty! As I began to write this she was recuperating in Buenos Aires following a hectic global peripatetic perambulation of 10 months duration. Not surprisingly civil unrest had just exploded! Kirsty managed to sneak across a remote border in escaping from Nepal at the time of the Royal slaughter! She was in Turkey for S11! She pushes the boundaries! Since she arrived home NSW has been on fire! Ah well she is her father's daughter! Like I said genotype predominates! ***I will close in wishing you all a fabulous Year in 2002!***

W. P. Howey

Director

What Makes a Good Horse Vet?

What Makes a Horse Vet Good?

Many years ago the late Alf McGeoch delivered me a crumpled piece of paper with a hand written note on it. Alf is the sire of Olympic bid hero Rod as well as my mate Andy and was then the major stud stock consultant with the AML & F Company. I enjoyed the distinction of playing Rugby with Andy who had earlier partnered the legendary 'Pine Tree Meads' in the King Country XV in NZ. (Talk about 'decline and fall' and 'sublime to ridiculous'!) His son James and my son Hugh later played second row for Sydney University Colts. However I digress – I thought you really needed to know that! The writing on the note was in the shaky scrawl of the very elderly F. K. ('Darby') Mackay. 'FK' was my wife's great uncle, a prominent thoroughbred breeder and former vice chairman of the AJC. Like the 'Wizard of Dormello' Federico Tesio he made an intimate study of horses around the world, their behaviour and genotype ('breeding'). Nebo Road and Royal Sovereign were two of his champion breed. His note posed two superficially simple questions:

"What makes a horse good?"

and

"What makes a good horse?"

"Good luck" said Alf as he bid *adieu*. I needed it! I have struggled for correct answers ever since. It's rather like the extant situation with veterinary training. What are the answers?

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. I never came upon my discoveries by a process of rational thinking". Albert Einstein.

"Struggles in academia are always mediaeval and vicious because the spoils are so small".

J. K. Galbraith.

W. P. Howey

Director PGFVS

Word Puzzles

and/or

A Little Light Learning

Many veterinarians have commented on my barely comprehensible use of words and the English language in general! My secondary school teacher vehemently expressed the same critical opinion 45 years prior with profound deleterious effect on my grades! I had great difficulty in making it 'over the line' for the absolutely necessary pre-requisite pass in the subject to attain University entrance! This will surprise no one! Perhaps I spent too much time on the playing fields and too little in the library?

One of my colleagues at the PGFVS (who shall remain nameless!) presented me with a small copy of a book by Guy Noble 'Word of the Day'. This is an etymological compilation of the wonderful words and what they mean as heard on ABC Classic FM radio in Sydney. Guy Noble has been the host of 'Breakfast' on ABC Classic FM since 1999. He is also a conductor, pianist, incurable word buff and father of two small children.

Purely to be obtuse I composed the following from words (with definitions) appearing in 'Word of the Day'. I believe it makes a sentence although my 'Windows 98 Spell Check' refutes the spelling and has great difficulty with most of the words! This is the literary equivalent of Eric Blair's [aka George Orwell] 'doubleplusgoodduckspeaking' in his epic '1984'!

"The pixilated slubberdegullion uxorious poodlefaker was a blutterbunded flibbertigibbet last night, cachinating to a lickspittle before haughmagandy, susurrations and persiflage with a prurient soubrette slooming it off before dysania and becoming caliginous gutfounded with tintinnabulation on a muckle turdiform fuscous goatsucker followed by borborygmus and afflatus!"

Perhaps I should explain! Some of them are not what you might think! I have occasionally been slightly 'blutterbunded' and mildly 'pixilated' myself! I'm feeling a trite tittup today as I spuddle about my umbonate! It's all crapulous logorrhoea to me!

Pixilated = Bewildered, crazy, drunk: as amusingly eccentric as a titillated pixie!

Slubberdegullion = A worthless, slovenly fellow

Uxorious = Excessively fond of one's wife

Poodlefaker = A youth too much given to tea parties and ladies' society generally

Blutterbunded = Confounded; overcome by surprise (from Lincolnshire)

Flibbertigibbet = Flighty, gossiping person

Cachinating = To laugh loudly or immoderately

Lickspittle = A toady

Haughmagandy = Adulterous sexual intercourse

Susurratio = Whispering or rustling

Persiflage = Light raillery, banter

Prurient = Given to or arising from indulgence in lewd ideas

Soubrette = In 18th century French theatre, a clever but impertinent servant girl

Slooming = Sleeping heavily and soundly

Dysania = Having a hard time waking in the morning

Caliginous = Misty, dim, dark

Gutfoundered = Exceedingly hungry

Tintinnabulation = Ringing, tinkling

Muckle = A large amount

Turdiform = Having the form of a thrush

Fuscous = Sombre; dark coloured

Goatsucker = Common name for nocturnal birds such as frogmouth and nightjar

Borborygmus = A rumbling of the guts

Afflatus = A sudden rush of divine inspiration

Tittup = To move or behave in a restless manner; caper, prance, frisk (impatient horse)

Spuddle = To go about a trifling business as though it were a matter of great importance

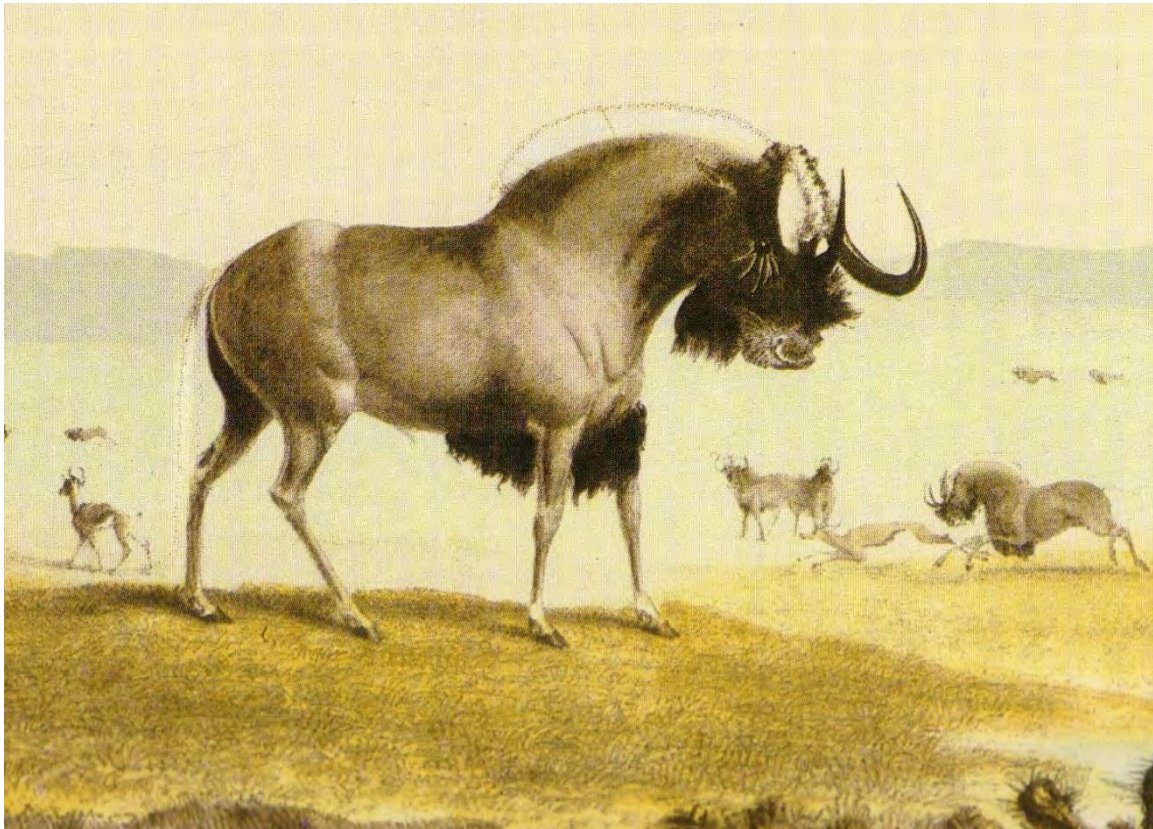
Umbonate = Having a rounded boss or protuberance in the centre

Logorrhoea = Excessive flow of words

Crapulous = Suffering the effects of intemperance

My Associate Director was distinctly not amused when I described her as a trite “tittup”! It has just come to my attention that Windows XP spell check cannot handle this etymological miasma! Eat your heart out Bill Gates! You’re defeated at last!

About the author



I'm a Gnu!

Photo courtesy of Galago Publishing (Pty) Ltd. 1986

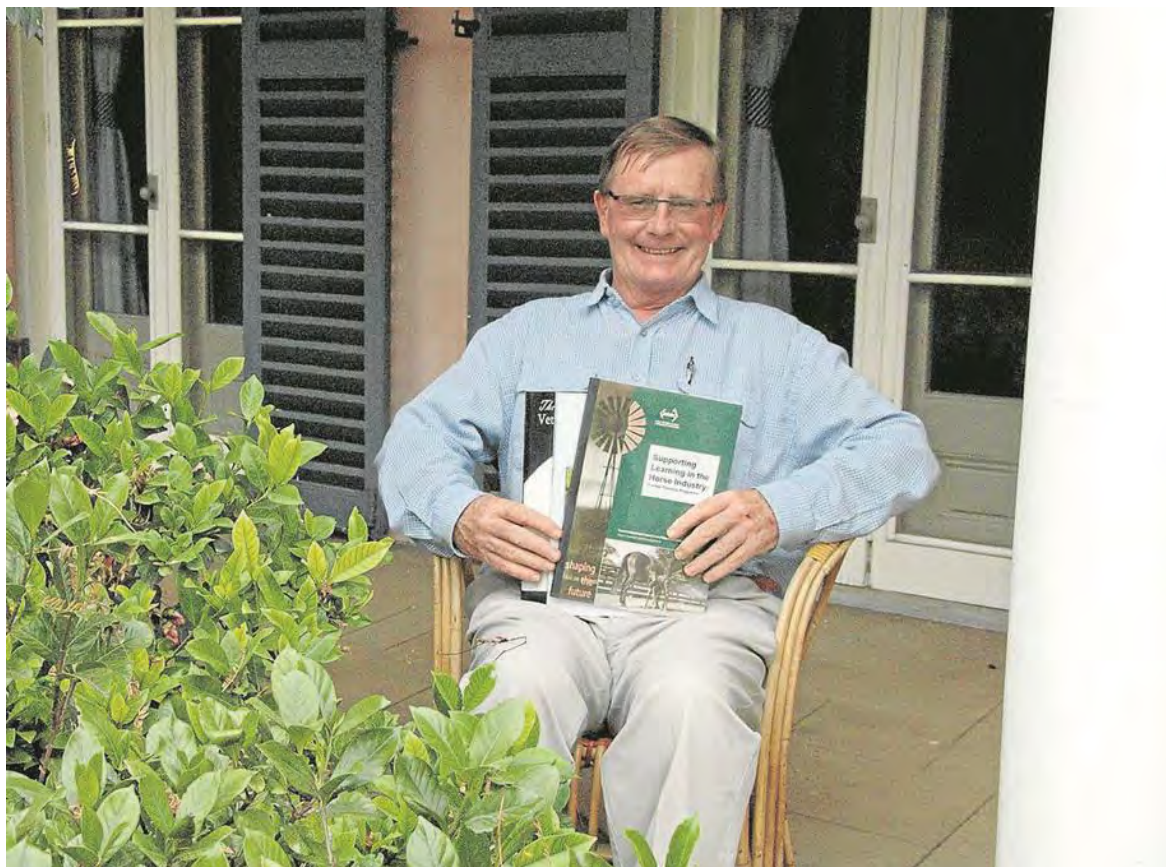
Perhaps you can read the book?

Ah well, back to the trammels of quotidian life!

A Mission to Count

By Caitlin Andrews

The Scone Advocate; September 12th 2013 @ 11:37 a.m.



Scone's Bill Howey with three of his books written to feed his passion for writing as well as provide useful information to others.

He may have moved to Australia as a 'Ten Pound Pom' but ever since landing in Scone Dr William Patrick (Bill) Howey has set his mind to his ultimate belief that you should aim to build society and give something to your community.

Describing himself light heartedly as a boat person, only he came in a plane, Mr Howey believes if you have the benefit of education, you should bring that with you and make a contribution to the society you move to.

This is a belief he holds very close to his heart and one that has driven the husband, father and grandfather to give everything he can to society and the community Australia wide.

The Scone Advocate had the opportunity to chat with this extremely interesting man and before you is a taste of some of the remarkable things Mr Howey has achieved.

Born in Northumberland, England, a young Bill grew up on a mixed farming property that had been in the Howey family for hundreds of years, where they "bred fast cattle and fat horses".

After attending a school of about 30 children in primary school, he had the option of continuing secondary school or going to work on the farm, however with things on the farm going 'pear shaped' it was decided by Bill's father and Irish born mother he would go away to boarding school at Ackworth School in West Yorkshire for the next seven years.

This is the same school that the 2005 Australian of the Year Doctor Fiona Wood attended in later years.

The University of Edinburgh in Scotland was Mr Howey's next stop where he studied veterinary science for five years and ultimately led to him moving to Scone.

It was during his undergraduate years that Mr Howey witnessed a presentation by Scone's Murray Bain at the British Veterinary Association Conference, planting the seed for his move to the Horse Capital of Australia.

After working for 12 months as a veterinarian graduate in North West Ireland, in 1967 at the age of 24 Mr Howey made the big move to Australia, venturing straight to Scone.

It was an advertisement in the British Veterinary Record for a suitable assistant to work with Mr Bain that cemented the decision and with Bain's neighbour and good friend Sir Alister McMullin president of the Australian Senate at the time, Mr Howey's application was fast tracked and he was here within three months.

He chuckles as he remembers finishing work in Strabane, County Tyrone on the Thursday and starting work in Scone, Australia the following Tuesday.

A keen and enthusiastic writer Mr Howey has written three books – RIRDC Equine Research & Development: 'Education & Training in the Horse Industry in Australia', 'The Infinite History of Veterinary Practice in Scone' and 'Geraldton' Scone – A History - and more recently has completed a memoir writing course in Sydney where he documented his journey to Australia in 'The Voyage Out'.

Since moving to Australia, Mr Howey's life has been filled with love, hard work, success and the community.

In 1975 he married his wife Sarah, a local girl who grew up on 'Tinagroo', and two years later Mr Howey with John Morgan and Nairn Fraser established Morgan, Howey, Fraser and Partners in Liverpool Street, now the Scone Equine Hospital.

The trio worked to establish the veterinary practice for the next 20 years before Mr Howey joined the NSW TAFE system teaching and fulfilling the role of project officer in the veterinary science field.

He then extended his portfolio joining the University of Sydney as a lecturer and driving the education of vets in Australia, Australasia and the world through the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science, which is now known as Continuing Veterinary Education.

Locally, Mr Howey has enjoyed making many contributions being a big player involved in White Park and the Scone Race Club, where he was president from 1978 to 1984, when the decision was made to move the racecourse from White Park to its current location.

He is now a life member.

He is also a life member of the Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Equine Veterinarians of Australia and the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Science, an honorary member of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW and was the second Scone and Upper Hunter Horse Festival VIP.

His career and passion led him to be a key stakeholder in the Hunter Valley Equine Research Centre and he has been on the board of the Veterinary Sciences Board of NSW, plus many others.

With Peter McBeth and Dennis Johnston, Mr Howey was instrumental in introducing junior soccer to Scone and was also active in junior cricket, swimming and pony club.

For the past 12 years, the 71-year-old has poured a lot of time and effort into Strathearn, which he remains on the board of.

Being the former chairman for five years, Mr Howey shares the desire with others to offer local elderly residents the best possible opportunities.

With a passion for writing and reading, Mr Howey now finds himself in the role of secretary of the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society Scone and recently joined the steering committee of the University of the Third Age.

After completing his term as a Councillor of the Upper Hunter Shire last year, Mr Howey said he enjoyed his time in local government as it was full of challenges, however feels it is something he should have started a bit earlier in life.

It is the 'enlightening and enriching' experiences he has had the opportunity to realise that have fulfilled life for Mr Howey and he has always enjoyed being very community involved.

Still keeping his foot in the door, Mr Howey is a current member of the University of Newcastle's Animal Care Ethics Committee, which he says is a gold standard tool to ensure animals are used appropriately in research.

Apart from travelling to enrich the mind, Mr Howey enjoys writing and reading for posterity and to stimulate the brain.

He believes his greatest contribution in life has been his two children, Kirsty – a civil rights lawyer and Hugh – a teacher, and he now has two grandchildren with another on the way.

Some of the many awards and medals in Mr Howey's office are the 1995 Hunter Valley Blood Horse Breeders Association President's Award, the 1985 Scone Shire Council Service to Sport Award, the 1995 Hunter McLoughlin Citizen of the Year, the Australian Equine Veterinarian Association Literary Award and Excellence in Equine Veterinary Field and the Sutton Farm Foundation Award for Outstanding Caring to the Scone Community.

My Story



My Story

“Welcome To My World”

“This could never happen to me”

‘Dealing with Demons’

Bill Howey
Veterinarian & Teacher
‘Farmer’
Ambassador
Black Dog Institute

Ten pound Poms
Australia's invisible migrants

A HUNDRED demons were slain at the Wanderers as the Australian tail-enders took their side to the verge of victory and then completed the task.

I became a Rural Ambassador for the Black Dog Institute under the Direction of Professor Gordon Parker, Prince of Wales Hospital & University of NSW. This is a series of fairly complex PPT slides I developed to illustrate my situation. It is VERY complex!



Our Story

“Welcome To /My Our World”

‘Sport (life) is about confronting demons and dealing with crises’ (SMH 13/09/07)

‘A HUNDRED demons were slain at the Wanderers as the Australian tail-enders took their side to the verge of victory and then completed the task’.

A portrait of a man and a cricketer celebrating.

It was something I never expected; and didn’t see coming. Real or perceived ISOLATION was a factor in my descent. Peter Roebuck later took his own life which may or not have been connected to ‘isolation’?



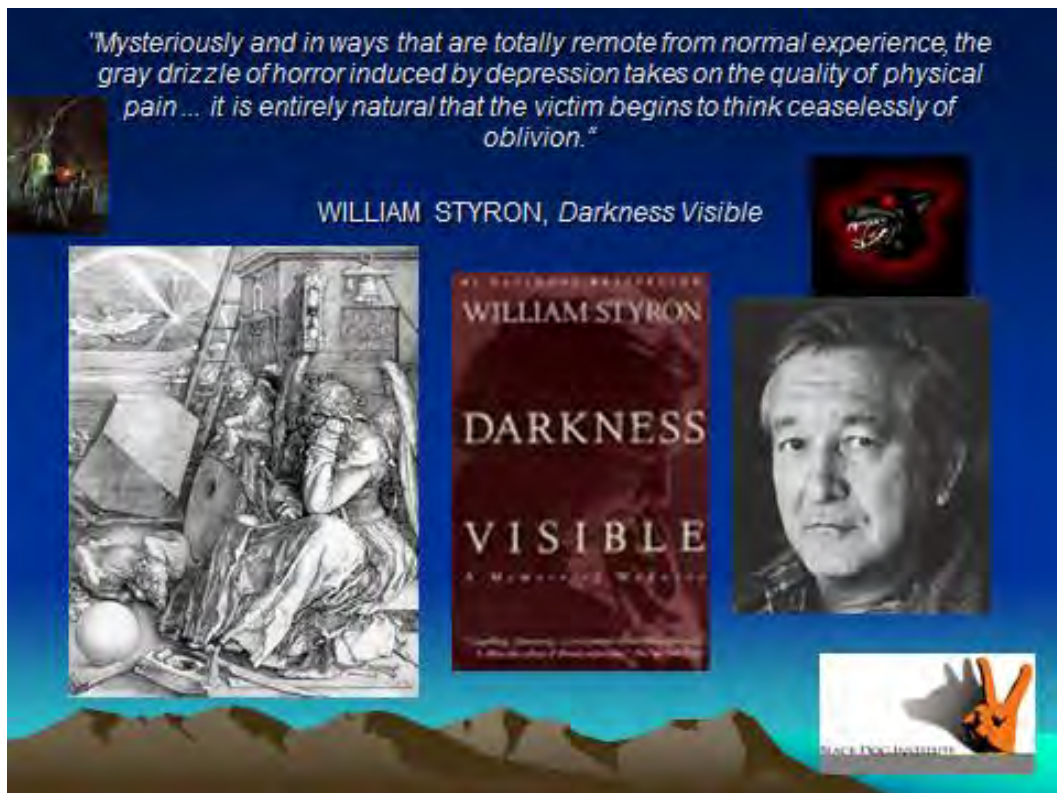
It became apparent that I had a lot of company; many of them high profile performers and high achievers. Did they drive themselves too much at varying times? How do you deal with 'decline'?



Some sufferers were from the highest echelons of our race, culture, caste and all levels of society.
 Mood disorder syndrome is indiscriminate.



Depression illness is non-selective. It can strike any individual from any cadre or creed.



'Darkness Visible' by author William Styron was the most erudite and lucid depiction for me.



Substance abuse is a common sequel; for many it is alcohol. It is not a solution. I was 'guilty'.



I started to read a lot. There was some comfort in discovering the extent of depression illness and how indiscriminate it is regardless of genre, gender, generation or caste.

Some Facts on 'Depression'

- 20% of Australians (1-in-5 = 4 million)
- Third leading cause of 'disability' burden
- Prevalence decreases with age – highest in young men (18 – 24 year olds)
- 10% Australians with 'anxiety' disorder – more women than men
- Men 2x more likely than women with 'substance abuse'



The prevalence is both insidious and extensive.

'Mythconceptions'

- "You'll get over it"
- "This could never happen to me"
- "He'll snap out of it"
- "She'll be right mate"
- "It'll pass"
- "No worries"
- "He's just a piss artist"
- "You're not the man you used to be"
- "It's in the family" (!)
- "He's a weak bastard"
- "He's only looking for attention"
- "We don't talk about this"!



Common platitudes are unhelpful in the extreme.



Residual anger allied with 'frustration' is/are unfortunate chronic consequences.



Sometimes humour can be helpful. It lightens the mood.

The Broadness of Mood Disorders

In essence, there are few in Australia that are not affected by the impact of mental health issues:

- **Sufferers**
- **Relatives**
- **Carers**
- **Friends**
- **Employers**

Almost everyone may be 'connected' although they might not know it?

Depression: Some common signs

- **Lowered self-esteem/self-worth**
- **Change in sleep patterns**
- **Change in appetite, or weight**
- **Less ability to control emotions such as pessimism, anger, guilt, irritability or anxiety**
- **Reduced capacity to experience pleasure**
- **Reduced pain tolerance**
- **Poor concentration and memory**
- **Reduced motivation**
- **Lowered energy levels.**

This is a short list. Much of it is difficult to recognise and/or acknowledge.



Objectives!



- Recognize
- Remove 'stigma'
- Demystify
- Define
- Diagnose

Destigmatize! Demystify! Dignify!



DIAGNOSIS is the key. It's not a simple matter and often 'insidious'. The case description is imprecise. Not all health care workers are aware.



Action!



- Detection
- Recognition
- Admission
- Acceptance
- Accession – Primary GP
- Diagnosis – Tentative



On great difficulty is 'strategic accession' at the right time. Early identification and diagnosis are essential. 'Treatment' is still debatable. There are many options. 'Drugs' might not be the answer?



Action!

- Definitive Diagnosis
- Therapy
- Referral?
- Recovery
- Counsel



'Action' is the key word. It is easy to say; difficult to accomplish.

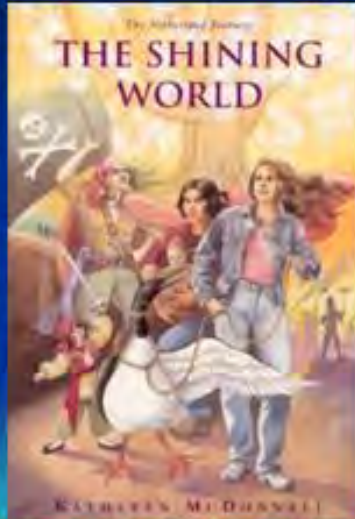
"Light at the end of the tunnel"
'Transcendental revelations'
"This too will pass"



There is genuine hope. I don't think recovery is ever 'complete'? Anhedonia is a possible consequence. Martha Gellhorn (Mrs Ernest Hemingway III) found no enduring respite.

“The Shining World”

“For those who have dwelt in depression’s dark wood, and known its inexplicable agony, the return from the abyss is not unlike the ascent of the poet, trudging upward and upward out of hell’s black depths and at last emerging into ‘the shining world’.



This is the objective. It may be remote?

“The Shining World”

“There is an upside to depression—joy at being alive. I now have a wonderful appreciation for the good thing in life. At times I feel pure exhilaration at being alive and a pulsating sensation from the very forces of life”. (288 BDI)



Family support is critical. It may not be always ‘apparent’ or accepted by family?



This is the ultimate objective. Companion animals are sometimes the most percipient?

Without family support and my obligations/responsibilities I would not be here to write this.

Family

In my memoir I have almost avoided specifically documenting my own family? In 'Hoof Prints' there is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that my children Kirsty and Hugh are my greatest and most enduring legacy. This achievement is shared with Sarah of course. If I wrote the full story in any detail the size of this memoir would expatiate exponentially. For the sake of completeness I attach brief bios here.

Kirsty Howey

Kirsty is the unconventional and independent spirit. She has excelled. Kirsty was dux of Scone Public School in an elite cohort. She had participated in all manner of individual and team pursuits such as swimming (school age champion), tennis, hockey, pony club, netball, music, drama, art and scholastics. Kirsty maintained the momentum at 'Frensham'. Attainments included captain of tennis, first XI hockey (IGSA champions), first XI cricket (opening bat), singing and music (Madrigals), drama and theatre, debating and art. She was a Year XII monitor. Her crowning achievement was a TER/UAI ranking of 99.55 which was by far the highest in the school. At the time it was one of the highest ever putting Kirsty as number three in the whole Illawarra region and being featured in the 'Illawarra Mercury'. Kirsty was awarded a much prized IRIS for Academic Excellence: *'For the example she has set with her enthusiasm for learning, her willingness to share with others, and her ability to balance her studies with participation in so many areas of school life'*.

Apart from genome my only contribution was to teach Kirsty the 'block' (forward defensive) in cricket. She specifically requested this tuition. I know she 'carried her bat' on at least one occasion.

Kirsty's tertiary education continued for five productive years at ANU in Canberra leading to combined degrees in arts (BA) and law (LLB). A summer clerkship with law firm Blake Dawson Waldron steered to a job in corporate law for three years. Secondment to KRALAS (Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal Aid Service) in Katherine NT stoked the embers of what would lead to a protracted career as a civil rights lawyer with the Northern Lands Council in Darwin NT. Further study when on furlough in Vancouver BC, Canada produced a Masters in Law. Next on the agenda is a PhD through the University of Sydney.

While pursuing these objectives Kirsty met Dr Mark De Souza in Darwin. Mark is a similar like-minded highly driven and high achieving professional. Mark is a specialist in Emergency Medicine and Disaster Emergency at Royal Darwin Hospital. They formed a union. For both sets of grandparents it is non-conventional. However it has worked out wonderfully well and has produced three remarkable and beautiful grandchildren for us all to share.

Darwin Family @ 'Geraldton'



Kirst Howey

Dr Mark De Souza

Jasper William De Souza

Maeve Elizabeth De Souza

Margot Louise De Souza

If heterozygosity and hybrid vigour count for anything at all; here is proof positive!

Hugh Howey

I/we should never have christened our son Robert William Hugh Howey. He is HUGH. It's a cross he will have to bear. Like his sister Hugh enjoyed a spectacular if slightly less academically brilliant school career. Five years at Scone Public School were followed by Year VI at Scone Grammar School in its inaugural reincarnation. Hugh cleaned up many Year VI prizes. Like his sister before him Hugh participated with success in a wide range of activities. Junior soccer, junior cricket, Under X Rugby League, Under XII Hockey, swimming, pony club (reluctant), music (reluctant) and tennis were high on the agenda. Hugh really blossomed at the Kings School (TKS). He won a number of prizes including the Logan H Bagby Prize (outstanding promise) in Year VII and the Baulkham Hills Shire Council Award for outstanding citizenship/leadership in Year XII. Hugh also completed two overseas outstanding tours with TKS teams. Cricket went to South Africa soon after Nelson Mandela's affirmative action became de rigueur. I accompanied the team. It was an outstanding experience. TKS Rugby sent a squad to Scotland/England where my mother and sister Diana saw him play.

By striving throughout Hugh attained high office. He was Vice-Captain of School, Captain of Bishop Barker House, 1st XI cricket (wicket keeper, opening bat), 1st XV Rugby (winner of Mack & Bede Smith Honour Cap) and many others especially in Bishop Barker House. It was at Sydney University and St Pauls College that Hugh matured into a respected leader of young men. St Pauls is arguably the crème de la crème. Hugh was elected Senior Student in his final year of undergraduate study. Later he was to become Assistant Sub-Warden. The apotheosis of sporting success came with a first grade championship in the University of Sydney Australian Rules Football Team (Aussie Rules). Hugh also represented St Pauls in the prestigious Rawson Cup in cricket, rugby and tennis which St Pauls won during Hugh's stewardship.

Hugh graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree and two-year stint of employment with corporate taxation firm KPMG. This was not his forte or his calling. It was back to University and Diploma of Education at UNSW while living at St Pauls College Sydney University. Hugh was fortunate to score a placement as teacher of business studies at one of Sydney's elite public schools; Sydney Boys High School at Moore Park. This is an academically selective government GPS school. Hugh was to spend the next four and half highly productive years at this school. Itchy feet and yearning to expand knowledge and experience beckoned irresistibly. The next two years were spent at the International School in Iringa in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. While accepting a huge reduction in salary Iringa was a massive learning experience. I'm sure we all benefitted from his sojourn; not least Hugh himself.

On returning to more familiar turf Hugh lived at home (Scone) and accepted a number of temporary teaching positions at local High Schools including both Scone and Muswellbrook. Hugh informs me these were greatly appreciated. After looking around for some time the offer of a teaching position at Calrossy School Tamworth was accepted. The boys annex is called the William Cowper Campus. It is an Anglican day and boarding school with an enviable reputation. At time of writing Hugh is acting head of senior boys.

Hugh settled well into life in Tamworth and managed to buy his first house at 60 Darling Street. He represented the Tamworth Magpies Rugby Club 1st XV for two years. His mentor at school Joe Goldsworthy was the Magpies Coach.

Fortuitously for all concerned Hugh met Emma Garraway in Tamworth. They tied the knot and married in 2014 in the Armidale Anglican Cathedral. Emma is a true daughter of New England; a superfine wool merino of the highest calibre. Jeff & Kath you did so well! We should be so lucky!



Mr & Mrs Hugh Howey

Both Sarah and I have derived enormous vicarious pleasure from the exceptional achievements of our offspring. We quietly bask in the warm afterglow of their lambent reflected glory. Maybe I should have been progeny tested? None of us boast; except perhaps me?

Fugitive Emissions

William's pants were far too tight and farts had to be purged via the collar.



My late sister Diana sent me this card for my 70th birthday. Does that say something about us?



Did I mention fugitive emissions in my prologue? Sometimes industry and media come up with catchy spin to mitigate the effects of damaging environmental practices. I thought the original proponents of Coal Seam Gas excelled with their cute epithet to describe potentially catastrophic rogue fractures in the earth's crust and rogue absconding gases. Did I include incompetent sphincters as well? There is an increasing risk management component with advancing age. You should look at the card my sister Diana sent for my 70th birthday. Imagine a fluid element as well? This is what it's like in the 80th decade of life's journey.

Ruminant animals are the world's most practiced exponents of fugitive gas emissions. It's from both ends. Eructation ('burping') is the polite scientific appellation of methane as a by-product of digestive fermentation. I once heard some prominent investigative journalists who had this very wrong. They were distal when they should have been proximal; you only have to spend a little time in the company of herd animals to leave you in no doubt. There are multitudes more of them to satiate the excessive human demands for animal protein. Horses don't eructate; but they do produce inordinate quantities of volatile gases from the fermentation vats of the large bowel. Stand well clear at the rear my dear! There are warning sounds.

What's the point of all this? Nothing really except that Dr Paul Ehrlich warned us over 50 years ago of the 'Population Bomb' explosion. He was right if even a little conservative. We humans also produce our unfair share of Methane and Hydrogen Sulphide. There has to be a displacement effect on the quantity of Oxygen available. Will my great grandchildren be able to breathe; or will they asphyxiate? I'm just musing. I don't think giving up eating cabbage will be enough.