

# THE BLACKWALL BUGLE

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## Sunshine Sugar

In 1881 the Broadwater sugar mill was established and since then the sugar industry has been the life-blood of the local economy. The Blackwall Bugle header above shows the Blackwall Range and below it, the standing crops of cane and the ploughed paddocks awaiting the planting of the next new crop. The whole industry depends upon the farmers who own and work the land, the harvesting teams which retrieve the sugar cane, the cane trucking teams that transport the crop and the engineers and staff at the Broadwater mill who process the harvest.



A cane fire at night is spectacular. A pre-harvest burn makes the harvesting, transporting and processing of the cane easier and less costly.



A cane harvester cuts cane, drops the billets into the following haul-out truck and returns the trash to paddock.

A fleet of cane trucks moves the cane, which has been cut into 300 mm billets by the harvester, to the Broadwater mill.

Raw sugar is Australia's second largest export crop, earning around \$1.2 billion in export sales each year. This major industry is directly and indirectly responsible for the employment of many members of the local community. Farmers, engineers and workers and their families earn a good income. They buy machinery and fertiliser. They pay wages and taxes. They go shopping and send their children to local schools.

Richmond Valley cane crops are planted in two-year cycles. The cane is cut into 300mm pieces called "setts" and planted in rows 1.5m apart and at a depth of 100mm. It is then fertilised and weeded for about four months. After two years it is harvested and a new "ratoon" crop grows from the base that was left in the ground.

Over the next four to six years two or three more ratoon crops are harvested. Then, the paddock might be "rested" with soybeans which is an oilseed. In Australia soybean has traditionally been used for stockfeed and oil extraction for soy milk and tofu. The soybean plant enriches the soil which can then be replanted with sugarcane at the start of a new cycle.

There is a lot of risk with farming including variations of the weather and the market. Shake hands with a farmer!



Preparing the ground for the next planting



## The Biggest Morning Tea

Just a few of the members of the local community who supported the Cancer Council of Australia at 'The Biggest Morning Tea' that was held in the Wardell Hall.

Local identity and community leader Ros Walsh and Kerry Turpin of the Progress Association organised the event. They reported takings of \$670.00 for the Cancer Council.

Little did we know but at that time, Ros' husband Ray was undergoing spinal surgery in a Brisbane Hospital!

## Polling Day Cheer!

After six weeks non-stop politics, you did your duty and fronted up at the Wardell Hall to cast your vote on a ballot sheet seemingly twice as wide as the polling booth. What a relief then to step outside into the real world of a brilliant winter's day to be greeted by the ladies of the Red Cross.

Doris Campbell, Faye Nixon and Sue Steel were on site to tempt you with an array of homemade cakes, Dennis Corrigan was there too - tending his hot plate with the inviting aroma of sizzling snags and fried onions. The Red Cross is always there when needed.

Ros Walsh: Tel 6683 4111



## Social Tennis

Social tennis is played at the Wardell courts on Monday evenings at 6.30 pm. With the weather about to warm up it would be good to see some new players. At present about 8 to 10 players come along with ages ranging from teenager to very senior.

The cost is a very reasonable \$5 and the evening concludes about 8.30 pm.

The courts are also available for hire through the Wardell BP Service Station.



**Wardell  
Tennis Club**  
Pat Carney 6683 4360  
Bill Davis 6683 4306

## Chinaman's Wharf

"My Mother, Rebecca May Monti, arrived in the Bagotville area in 1925. At that time there was a banana-loading wharf, known as Chinaman's Wharf, 1km on the northern side of the main creek from the Barrage at Bagotville. Riverboats would have called at the wharf to collect the bananas grown by Fong Dong. The farm was owned either by a Smith or a Gaudron but was farmed by Fong Dong. The wharf was adjacent to the hill, which was about 300 feet high. There was good basalt soil for the growing of bananas. From the top of the hill, Dungarubba looked like an inland sea. The jetty was on the edge of the creek - it didn't jut out into the creek. It was constructed as a corduroy of tea-tree and hardwood

logs. From the jetty, planks were extended out to the deck of the visiting boat to enable the boxes of bananas to be carried aboard.

"The banana cases were a big bushel and a half in size. Saw-miller George Wilson, who was Noel Wilson's Grandfather and the owner of the Bagotville Mill, provided the timber for the boxes. I clearly recall how my Mother described a meeting between Fong Dong and George Wilson:

"Good morning Mr Wilson."

"Good morning Mr Fong"

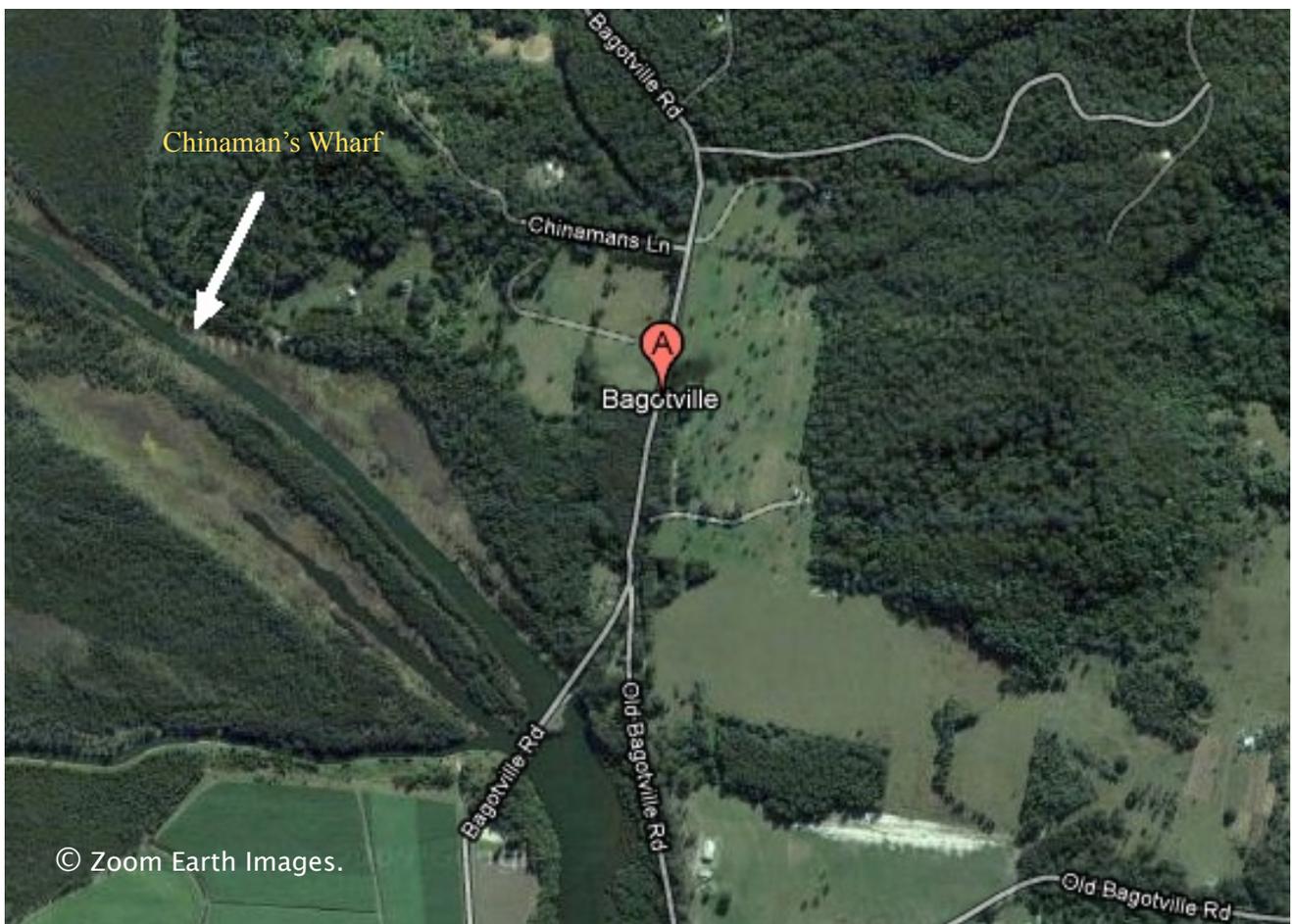
"Send fifty case round in the morning Mr Wilson."

"All right Mr Fong."

"Good morning Mr Wilson."

"Good morning Mr Fong."

**Trevor Monti**



**History of Wardell. PJ O'Connor writing to Mr W Lang on 18Nov1946 - from documents held by Rose Leeson for Richmond River Historical Society.**

"I am now 66 yrs old. My father was the first selector at German Creek (Empire Vale) in 1869. Wardell was then booming with timber. He opened the hotel the "Harp of Erin" where he died in 1886. At that time there were four hotels in Wardell; the Royal Hotel kept by Sam Smith, the Star kept by Jim Brown, the Crown kept by Fred Robins and the Harp of Erin kept by John

O'Connor. All done a great trade, now only the Royal left.

"There were several stores: Edwin Bartlett's, Duncan McIntyre's, T.McMahon's and Mrs Troy's; also two halls and a Temperance Hall. There was a doctor by the name of Dr Violette and a branch of The Australian Stock Bank. There were two sawmills - Carter's on the hill opposite the Police Station and Jimmy Jimmie's at East Wardell."

What a busy place this was!

## Keeping Warm This Winter



On 9 June 2016 the Knit 'n Knat group handed over 50 handmade blankets to the East Ballina Lions Club.

On the left - Dawn Sword and on the right Bob Sword of the Ballina Lions Club with members of the Wardell Knit n' Knat group:- Judy Cocomozzo, Rhonda Barnes, Shirley Strangman, Sue Steel, Sue Cechner-Simmons, Ivy Carter, Theresa Lumsden, Afra van Baarsen, Joan Grace, Jeanette Rushby. Apologies from founder Rose Leeson. Everyone's thoughts that day were with Lorna Dorey.

On 18 January 2003, Dawn and husband Bob, were trapped in their Canberra home surrounded by flames. They had no warning of the approaching fire and had no option but to run through a firestorm to safety. They lost their home of 18-years and all of their belongings that day. They were given a handmade blanket which they treasure to this day.

Dawn and Bob moved to Ballina Shire and became deeply involved with the East Ballina Lions Club, Meals on Wheels and the Lennox Head View Club. Ballina Shire Council awarded Dawn Sword Citizen of the Year 2016.

Dawn thanked the Wardell Knit n' Knat group for the beautifully presented articles including warm beanies, scarves and balaclavas. She said, "We have a family refuge in Ballina where families arrive with nothing, having left home. They are counselled, they are taught how to manage their lives and when they leave, they take with them their blanket. There are quite a few homeless people sleeping rough around Ballina for whom the "Soup Kitchen" provides a

substantial meal. For them, a blanket is not just a necessity in winter but a spiritual connection to those who made and gave it. Every now and then we get someone coming to the soup kitchen who is living in their car with their children. During this winter it will happen and I will keep a few blankets in reserve especially for them.

Benefiting from the work of the Knit n' Knat group and the dedication of the Swords, are the Ballina Hope Haven Women's and Children's Refuge, The Mental Health Support Group and the Hot Meal Centre.

Members of the Knit n' Knat group meet weekly in the Wardell Hall on a Thursday morning to knit and crochet lovely warm blankets and winter garments for the needy from donated wool. They also enjoy companionship and, in a light-hearted way, they can help solve the problems of their own community.

New members are always welcome. For more information, contact Sue Steel on telephone (02) 6683 4994 or email:[sue5@cff07.com](mailto:sue5@cff07.com)



## Nigel Buchanan

“I took over the businesses of the Wardell Pie Shop and the Wardell Café on 9 November last year. I was originally a farmer from Moree but left there in 1999 due to poor weather conditions. We came over here and bought the Squash Centre and Gym in Alstonville and ran that for seven or eight years and then became involved in the fleet car business. Then my wife bought Russellton Takeaways in Wollongbar. She still owns that and she got me interested in takeaway food. Wardell pies were sold through that shop and I found that people would travel a long way for Wardell pies. So, when the Wardell Pie Shop and Café came up for sale, I made an offer to buy the business.

“We are now putting pies into Casino and we have outlets in Evans Head, Woodburn, Coraki, Ballina, Alstonville and Wadeville. We have thirteen people employed and we are open from 6.30 in the morning until 7.30 at night and 8.00 at weekends. My wife runs her Alstonville business but keeps a strong interest in the Wardell operation. We take a lot of pride in the quality of our pies and in the running of the Wardell Café next door. We are getting good custom from the tradies building the new Pacific Highway and I am very confident that once the bypass has been built, this beautiful place will really go ahead.”

**Nigel Buchanan.**

## Pimlico News

Telephone 0439 488 510

The Pimlico Ladies will be holding their Hoi Days on Monday 1 August and Monday 5 September at the Pimlico Hall. Proceeds from these days go to local charities which include Camp Quality, Ballina SES and Marine Rescue. A wonderful afternoon tea is to be served and a good time is assured. Starting time is 1.30 pm. Please come and support these charities.

The cane season is underway again. It was a very wet start with total rainfall ranging between 300 and 400 ml across Pimlico. The area is starting to dry out and activities in the paddocks have commenced.

The days of the Pimlico Ladies Charitable Organisation being able to manage the Pimlico Hall are slowly coming to an end. Council has been notified that we would like them to look for a new managing committee to run the hall. If there is an organisation looking for a new home in a lovely setting, please contact the Ballina Shire Council.

An up-date on our beloved Betty. Betty is back resting at Crowley after having a fall and breaking her leg. This required surgery at the Base Hospital.

**Jill Lock**

## Snakebite

It is very important to know that the treatment of a snakebite does not include the cutting of the wound or the sucking out of poison or the application of a tourniquet. All such practices are dangerous.

But in the old days such methods were common. Just ask Pat Carney - he survived!

The snakebite kit on the right is owned by Phill Reeves who until recently operated the BP Servo. It is about the size of a lipstick. The cap has been removed to reveal a small spear-like double edged cutting blade. The base contains permanganate of potash which was used to mix with the venom to neutralise it!

The kit is an historical treasure - not to be used nowadays!



If someone is bitten by a snake, call 000 and get medical help. Apply an immobilisation bandage and keep the bitten limb level with the rest of the body.



## The Volunteers

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart.” ~Elizabeth Andrew

Sue Felsch drew our attention to the two volunteers who have recently been awarded life membership of the Australian Seabird Rescue. Rochelle Ferris' dad was Lance Ferris, alias the Ballina Pelican man. She has strong connections with Wardell through her nursing family.

Michael Heugh just loves all creatures great and small. He has spent over eight years with Australian Seabird Rescue making regular beach patrols and being on call to attend to pelicans, cormorants, gannets, shearwaters and other birds entangled in fishing line or snagged on hooks. He specialises in caring for stranded and ailing sea turtles.

He is descended from the adventurer and entrepreneur William Heugh who was a hardware merchant and cedar trader operating a fleet of schooners from his property at Pimlico. William Heugh was also co-founder of the Wardell Public School in 1867.

Michael has been a volunteer firefighter with the Wardell Brigade RFS for 26 years and whenever there is a call to arms you can almost guarantee that he will be there.

Michael is also a very talented artist - so if you are thinking of having a portrait created of your daughter, your dad or your dog, he might be the man for you!



Rochelle Ferris and Michael Heugh

## Peg-leg Plover



This brave Spur-winged plover has been around the village for a couple of years. It has a badly broken leg but it flies to both sides of the highway. It is seen feeding by the school and by the police station and at many points in between. We worry that it might get run over or be taken out by a cat or dog. But then we see it again - like here in the pouring rain, getting on with life and it lifts our spirit!

## Congratulations!

to our Mayor Cr David Wright  
OAM

on being awarded the Medal of the  
Order Of Australia in the Queen's  
Birthday honours list 2016.

**He is one of us!**

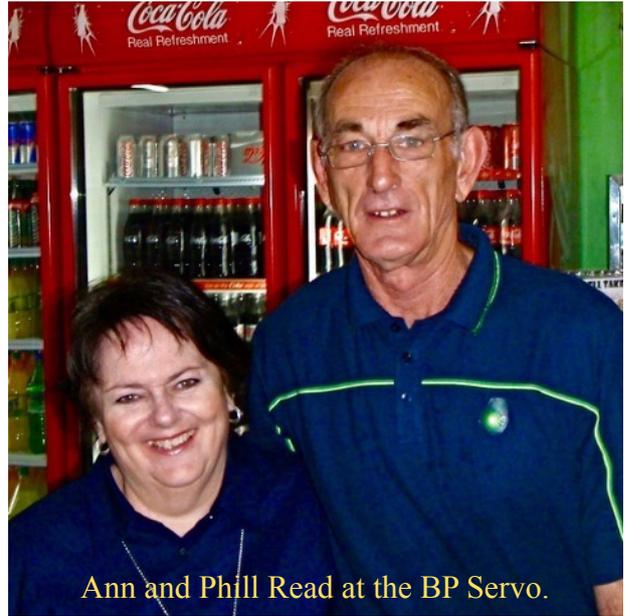
# Phill Read

At home at Meerschaum Vale  
speaking with Mike Rushby

I was one of five brothers and three sisters all born in Murwillumbah although we never lived there. Straight after the war, we lived on a property at The Pocket when Dad was in some form of business partnership with Doug Anthony who was then the local member for Richmond. He was share-farming bananas, beans and tomatoes. There was no hospital at Billinudgel and the nearest was Byron Bay but, because Dad had no car, he would get the milk carrier to pick up Mum at The Pocket and drive her to the Billinudgel railway station with her black bag and belly full. From Billinudgel there was a train to Murwillumbah but no train to Byron Bay. So we were all born in Murwillumbah.

Mum was born in Milla Milla, north Queensland, and Dad were born and bred in Byron Bay. His Mum was born there too. Dad was an only child. His mother was Annie Flick whose parents came from a large family of Flicks as in 'Flick Pest Control.' There are two clans of Flicks. They originally came from Baden in Germany back in the 1800s and stayed in the Newcastle area for a couple of years then settled on a property allocated to them by Mr Wilson of Wilson's Creek in the area now known as Lismore. Great-Grandfather Flick was a builder and built things like the courthouses and a lot of other structures that are still to be found in Lismore. It was a large family that split up and went in all directions. One of the sons went to Suffolk Park and another went to Ewingsdale and there is strong controversy over Flick Pest Control. According to my father, his father actually invented it but, because he didn't have the funds to promote it, his brother, who had money, decided to take it on and promote it. It became very successful after a year or so then my Great-Grandfather said, "OK I invented it – it is mine! I want a slice of the money." His brother said, "You are getting nothing!" So the family split. The businessman got the product and the inventor got nothing.

We later lived at what is called 'Footrot Flats' on the Ballina – Byron boundaries then we moved to Lennox and Dad took on the job as foreman for the sand mines that were working the Black Head to Flat Rock area. We then bought a house at Ballina where Dad still lives in Burnet Street. Mum passed away recently. So, I grew up in Ballina in the 50s and 60s, which was the best era. Security wasn't an issue. The old ladies next door would come over and take in our washing if there was a threat of rain. In those days houses weren't locked up. Ballina was a great town to grow up in as a kid. There was so much adventure – so many things to do – canoeing up rivers – just a 'Huckleberry Finn' style lifestyle. There was no real risk of danger and being one of eight kids in the family, you learnt about your own safety and what was right and what was wrong.



Ann and Phill Read at the BP Servo.

We had to be home by dark or we would get no tea. Ballina was a totally different town then. It was a major port with ship building in the main street. We were all somehow connected with mucking about around the ships and boats that were being built. We would swim the rivers and swim across to South Ballina just to see what was on the other side.

When I was thirteen, I worked Saturday mornings in a butchers shop owned by businessman Charlie Jacobs and managed by Stan Strong. When I turned fifteen I left school and became an indentured butcher's apprentice. The work was different and I enjoyed being there but it really wasn't me. A lot of my mates had joined the military. They came home on leave and told me about the uniform and the girls and the good food. I don't think I joined up out of patriotism but because of the perceived improved chances of getting a girl!

Something that boys did in the days of my youth was the collecting of bird's eggs. It is now against the law but as a kid it gave me a deep knowledge of the natural world around me. To this day if a bird flies past me I can tell within an instant what sort of bird it is and what its life style is. Identification and knowledge of wild life was important to us. But one thing I didn't have was shag's egg or cormorant's egg. There was a cormorant colony opposite the Ballina Marina just to the east of the ferry terminal but on the South Ballina side of the river. I was about twelve years old and decided that as I had no cormorant's egg I had better do something about it. The other kids had one and I had an egg for just about every other bird that lived in the area. So I swam across the river and got to the cormorant colony. There were nests everywhere. I think you can still see the colony today. I must have climbed four mangrove trees and found nothing. Then I found a nest with one egg in it. I thought "You beauty!" I put the egg in my mouth to safeguard it as I climbed down the tree - as one did in those days.

I never used my pockets because I was covered with mud. When I was half way down the tree, I slipped! Bang I was flat on my back in the mud at the bottom of the mangrove tree. The egg broke! But what I didn't realise until that moment was that the egg was out of season. So that egg was one year old and it burst in my mouth! To this day, I detest the smell of an egg. I dry reached and I think I drank half the Richmond River trying to wash my mouth and throat clean.

Where the old Paddy McGinity's Hotel stood was the slipway and at the front section of the slipway was just a fence then there was open ground to an old Morton Bay Fig Tree. When circuses came to town, they set up on that property inside the fence. Like all kids we would take off down the street and followed the caravans. I was watching all the big cats – the lions and tigers and I was taken by this leopard. There was just a sign saying, "Don't get too close." I was just standing by the rope and five or six feet from the front of the cage and this leopard turned around. I didn't know they pissed backwards and he absolutely pissed all over me. I'll never forget the smell. Everybody laughed at me and I ran down to the back of the slipway. I dived straight into the Richmond River and swam around trying to rid myself of the smell. My Mum tried to wash the smell out of my clothes and couldn't so she threw the clothes away. She said that was my Christening.

In 1970, when I got to be late seventeen turning eighteen, I decided to join the Airforce. I had to go to my nearest capital city to sign up so unfortunately, because I had to go to Brisbane, I am classified as a Queenslander! I had joined up as an airfield defence guard, which was like a specialised army defence job. The job was security of Airforce bases and outlying areas. After further training at Point Cook Academy, I was posted to Amberley just outside Ipswich. I got there in late '71 and in 1975 I was offered promotion and was posted overseas to Malaysia.

After joining the Airforce to meet the girls, I came home on leave, went down to the beach and met a local girl - Annie. I was working on Ballina beach with a couple of other guys as a volunteer lifeguard. One of the guys I was with went to school with Ann. We went down and met and had a chat with her. Then I took her to the old Ballina Mardi Gras, which operated all the way down the main street of Ballina. It was a good night with slippery pole, pillow fights, hanging wheels and chocolate wheels. That was on 6th January 1973. We started going out and in that period, I got posted to Malaysia. I proposed to Ann. I knew I was going to be away for possibly three years and parting for that time wasn't going to work. I went off to Malaysia for six months and, having no telephone, arranged everything for the wedding by mail.

In that six months the paperwork was unbelievable. Ann actually had to have a passport in her married name prepared, whilst she was still single with her maiden name. The priest who married us in Lismore handed us our wedding certificate and then handed Ann her passport to enable us to go over to Malaysia. We were married on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1975, then Ann and I went back to Malaysia for two and a half years. We lived on Penang Island in the Malacca Straights where our daughter Rebecca was born on 8 June

1976. On return to Australia, I was posted to Kingswood on promotion to Sergeant to be 2IC or second in charge of the Fire and Rescue team. Kingswood, was the largest ammunition dump in Australia. It was a non-flying base but it was a posting on promotion and you take the good with the bad.

One day we had a bomb revetment practice fire. The revetments were a sunken house-sized building surrounded by a fortified embankment. The particular building at that time was used for the storage of airforce missiles. We did a practice fire-prevention exercise wearing full breathing apparatus entering the revetments.

A couple of practice smoke grenades were thrown into the building. We came screaming in with breathing apparatus on. We found the bodies in the thick smoke and pitch black and dragged them out. The operation was mostly over with a bit of smoke still hanging around when we were told we could remove our breathing apparatus. We were a three-man team and we got quite ill and started to lose consciousness. They got us back to the base in a mad rush. They didn't know what was wrong with us. We had no feeling and no taste and we were dizzy. They rushed us to hospital. They checked the details on the smoke grenade and it turned out that those grenades had been banned worldwide for about 25 years and Australia was about the only place that was still using them. The propellant in the smoke grenade was hexachlorophene gas. Adolf Hitler could tell you more about that!

With hexachlorophene gas you lose all circulation and all the extremities start dying. We pretended we weren't worried. Being young and virile, every now and then one or another would stand up and check down the front of his shorts and say "No! It's all right!" They tried light humour in a serious situation by pretending, never mind the fingers, at least their dicks weren't falling off! We eventually got through it. We all had internal damage – mainly liver damage from the chemical.

We left the Airforce and moved into a house in Lismore. I started driving a heavy truck delivering large commercial plumbing. Within nine months I was appointed the manager of the branch and I worked there for ten years before I was recruited by Andrew Hurford of Hurford Building Supplies and worked for them for ten years. I drove a company vehicle for over thirty years and I used to call in at the Wardell BP Service Station now and then to get fuel. I thought it was a business with good potential. So I bought it.

Ann and I have been very happy and very busy in our business in Wardell which we recently sold. One day I will tell you all about it. We would like to thank all of our customers for their support and for the shared laughter and tears. We made some wonderful friends. We wish you all have long life and happiness.

**Phill Read**

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