



Probus Club of Sydney

www.sydneyprobus.org

Newsletter

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JUNE 2024

Issue 465

MEETING DATES

JUNE 4

DON JOHNSON

Warringah Expressway

JULY 2

EMILY RAVENSCROFT

Circular Quay Redevelopment

ACTIVITIES

JUNE 4

Archibald Prize Tour

JULY 23

Winter Lunch

AUGUST 16

Salon des Refuses

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A touch of Humour

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gentlemen,

Once again it was very pleasing to see another high attendance with 69 at the May meeting, including 6 guests. 49 stayed on to enjoy lunch together. Hopefully some of the guests may see the benefits in joining, thereby sharing in the camaraderie and well-being stimulated by the speakers and interesting events that we enjoy so much, such as last month's outstanding tour of the Royal Botanical Gardens led by highly knowledgeable guides on a glorious day.

At the committee meeting, 3 new members were elected, taking total membership over 130. At the general meeting, we heard fascinating summaries of Life before Probus from David Kirton and Alec Brennan, drawing on the diverse international experiences each had through their work and personal lives.

We then heard an extraordinary presentation by Dr Matt Landos, who switched almost 20 years ago from a large animal vet practice to focus on fish, with much of his practice involving fish farming around Australia.

I will unfortunately miss the next meeting on 4th June, as Robin and I will be celebrating her sister's 80th birthday in Vienna. I am very disappointed to miss the guest speaker, Don Johnson, who has been literally deeply involved in tunnelling in many of the major infrastructure projects such as Sydney Metro, West Connex, etc. I am sure you will be treated to a deep insight into such projects, so put it in your diary and register, also to join the lunch if you can.

Best wishes,

Peter James

President

Note

To Register to attend the June meeting at the Union, University and Schools Club - [click here](#)

FUTURE GUEST SPEAKERS

JUNE 4

Don Johnson

COO and Executive GM NSW, CPB Constructions

Tunnelling supporting Transport Infrastructure



Don Johnson is one of Australia's most experienced construction executives and has played pivotal roles in Australia's largest infrastructure projects. A Civil engineering graduate of Queensland Institute of Technology, Don's career has taken him all states of Australia over a career spanning 40 years.

In Don's current role, he is involved in the procurement and execution of most of

Australia's mega transport projects including :

- Sydney Metro (\$6B) Sydney
- West Connex (\$14B) Sydney
- North-East Link (\$12B) Melbourne
- Cross River Rail (\$8B) Brisbane
- Torrens to Darlington (\$15B) Adelaide
- Western Sydney Airport and Metro Line (\$4B) Sydney

Don will focus on the role of tunnelling, together with some insights into the challenges of delivery of these projects.

Geoff McWilliam

MAY MEETING REPORT

President Peter welcomed six guests to the meeting including some who had just been accepted as members at the preceding Committee meeting. He highlighted an issue with payments at lunches and asked members to ensure that they have paid for everything after the lunch.

There were committee reports from Geoff McWilliam about the speakers programme for the next few months. Ted Brogan (Activities coordinator) spoke of visit to the Botanical Gardens and the Bradman Museum. There will be a visit to the Archibald Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW on 16 June. He also made note of the Winter Lunch to be held at the Killara Golf Club on 23 July, the speaker being Anna Louise Bouvier (a well known physiotherapist).

Life Before Probus

David Kirton



David treated the meeting to a brief history of himself and his family. His ancestors came from Northern England, Scotland, the Channel Islands and Germany and most emigrated to Australia, to northern Tasmania and central Victoria during the gold rush of the 1850's. The family became successful with his grandfather serving as the Member of Parliament for Ballarat for more than 25 years.

David studied Industrial Chemistry at the School of Mines in Ballarat and had a scholarship from BHP and moved to Newcastle where he stayed for a few years before moving on to join Union Carbide where he was involved in introducing plastics made from natural gas from the Bass Strait.

His next position was with the James Hardie Company which had discovered plastics and he became the marketing manager for the introduction of plastic pipe systems, moving backwards and forwards between Melbourne, Sydney and other places. Eventually, in 1985, he set up his own company to manage the operations of an Israeli kibbutz company which manufactured pipes and fittings systems for fluid distribution and he has been doing that ever since. More recently he has dissolved his own company but acts as Chairman of the Israeli company in Australia. His youngest son is also now involved in the company which is active around Australia.

His hobbies are golf, reading, surfing, tennis and croquet. He still sails an Etchell on the harbour. Given that he has had a long association with Israel, visiting the country once or twice a year, he commented on the situation in Gaza and the current problems of shipping products to Australia.

He added that another 'hobby' is killing cane toads by becoming involved with Queensland University which is developing a bait to attract the toad tadpoles and a tracking system. The system is being distributed around the country.

He is 83, lives in Bellevue Hill and has 3 children and 9 grandchildren.

Alec Brennan



Alec Brennan told us how he had always wanted to pursue a science/engineering career and work in manufacturing, which is what he ended up doing. He wondered if he would have made a different career choice if he had known back then that over the next 40 years most Australian manufacturing would end up shutting down!

Alec joined CSR in 1969 as a research scientist but wanted to get into international marketing and CSR sponsored him to do an MBA in London where he spent time with his wife and one son. On return to Australia, he became involved in international sugar marketing and was involved in the famous 1977 Australia/Japan sugar dispute.

In the 1980s he had a stint living in NZ and running the NZ Sugar Company. He, along with his wife and three sons loved the fishing and camping opportunities there.

Returning to Australia he was put in charge of Gove Aluminium (partly owned by CSR) before serving as CEO of a number of CSR's building and construction materials companies including Bradford Insulation and The Readymix Group. In 1993 he was appointed CSR Finance Director and was actively involved in extricating CSR from its US asbestos litigation exposure.

He was appointed Deputy MD and Strategy Director in the late 1990s and was responsible for rationalising the CSR portfolio and then conceiving and directing the work that led to the demerger of the company into Rinker Materials and CSR. He remained on as CEO of the remnant CSR and retired from the company in 2007.

In 2007 his wife of 40 years was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. Alec took on the primary carer role until she passed away in 2010 but he has remained actively involved in looking after people with MND and funding research work up to the present.

Of his post CSR activities Alec recounted his time on the Senate of Sydney University where he served as Chair of many of its committees and as Deputy Chancellor.

These days Alec divides his time between the family philanthropic foundation that he founded, which includes his three sons and his current partner Chrissie, and a number of other charities. He also remains a director of a sugar cane farming business in the Burdekin. He and Chrissie enjoy time with family as well as travel and bird photography.

Alec was awarded an AM in 2013 for service to business, tertiary education administration and the community and in 2021 he received an Honorary Doctorate in Business from Sydney University for his service to the business community.

GUEST SPEAKER

Matt Landos

Director Future Fisheries Veterinary Service P/L

Of Fish and Men – Unintended consequences of pollution in the environment



Matt Landos took us on his personal journey from an animal veterinarian to a fish veterinarian and some career changing research he undertook for a client in 2008 who was operating a fish hatchery near Noosa, Queensland.

The fish hatchery was contiguous with a macadamia farm. Fish spawning season coincided with when the macadamia crop was sprayed. Subsequently serious development abnormalities were observed in multiple batches of

fish larvae. The problems disappeared when the fish hatchery was moved to a location away from the macadamia farm. Of particular note was the fact that the level of contamination was barely measurable.

The outcome of the research opened Matt's eyes to the potential impact of minute quantities of a range of endocrine disrupting chemicals to the development of fish and amphibians but with his unique veterinary experience and understanding of the common biology in all animals, the impact of these chemicals on all animal life.

To help us understand the ubiquity of these endocrine disrupting chemicals he presented a list of the most common categories.

- Pesticides (Herbicides, Insecticides, Fungicides)
- Wetting agents (alkylphenols)
- Plasticisers (BPA/ phthalates/ UV stabilisers)
- Flame-retardants (PFCs/PBC's)
- Non-stick & stain resistant coatings (PFAS)

- Gortex, Teflon, Scotchguard (PFAS)
- Cosmetics (PFAS, parabens, phthalates)
- Perfumes (Phthalates)
- Coal combustion/Waste incineration (PCBs)
- Pharmaceuticals (eg anti-depressants).

Matt then provided evidence of human impact of these chemicals in areas such as reduced testosterone, reduced fertility, increases in a range of chronic diseases including obesity and diabetes, increases in attention deficit disorder and autism spectrum in children, and increases in human developmental abnormalities.

He advocated strongly for the impact on human wellbeing of these chemicals to have a much higher profile than is currently the case and was open to advice from PROBUS members about how this might be achieved.

Matt highlighted the existence of IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network www.ipen.org) and provided links to a number of its papers.

- [Link to IPEN here](#)
- https://ipen.org/sites/default/files/documents/IPEN_brochure_update_2018_10_15a.pdf

We thank him for a stimulating and, in some ways, troubling presentation.

Matt would welcome any questions arising from members, so feel free to contact him on matty.landos@gmail.com

Matt has made a copy of his presentation available on the Probus Club website.

Alec Brennan

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

Royal Botanical Gardens Visit

We had 35 registered for this event and that meant we had 3 groups circulating around the gardens with their own Guide. All Groups reported that the commentary was excellent and involved a mix of the history of this historical area, an explanation of how the gardens perform scientific research and a viewing of some of their more interesting plants and specific planted areas.

Many of the plants have a special significance to the original local inhabitants and others are examples of tropical species from around the world (which, with a little help, seem able to grow in the Sydney climate).

The visit finished at the Farm Cove Eatery in the Garden grounds.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Tour of the Archibald Prize at the Art Gallery of NSW.

Monday 24 June: A private guided tour of the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman prizes for 2024 has been arranged at the Art Gallery of NSW. The tour lasts for one hour and starts at 9.30am. This enables us to have 30 minutes of private guided viewing before the public are admitted. Please arrive by 9.15am and meet on the steps of the Art Gallery. **The cost of the tour is \$30.** Bookings are strong and can be made through the club website.

For those members who wish to have morning tea after the tour, the Gallery Cafe is suggested, and Members may then wish to visit the new Extensions to the Art Gallery.

Buses do not run along Art Gallery Rd until after our start time. It's a shortish walk from St James Train Station and a more challenging walk uphill from Circular Quay. Parking is available at the Domain and in the Cathedral St Car Parks.

Winter Lunch

The Winter Lunch will be held at Killara Golf Club on **Tuesday 23 July.**



We are delighted to announce that our Guest Speaker will be Anna-Louise Bouvier, the well known exercise physiotherapist. She is an Adjunct Fellow at Macquarie University and appears regularly on the ABC with Richard Glover giving practical advice on treating a variety of ailments through exercise. She also consults on wellbeing and fitness to major Corporations such as CBA, Optus, and ASX. An author of three best selling books with her Physiocise programmes being enjoyed by over 100,000 participants. She will speak on the very relevant subject of "Bones,

Brains and Balance" and introduce us to the interesting concept of a "Body Bank" into which we can make "deposits" via regular exercise to provide capital for a longer active life.

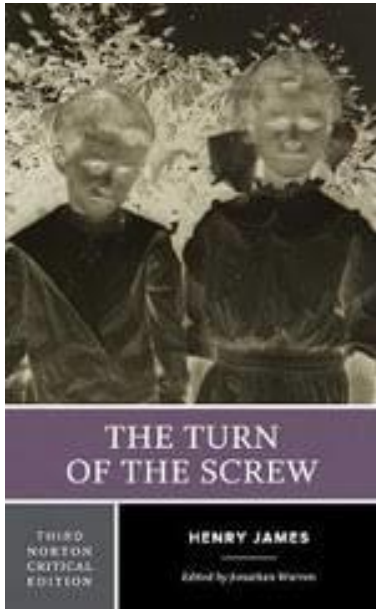
Although modernised extensively, Killara Golf Club has retained many of its unique Art Deco features. It is an outstanding function venue with many years of experience hosting events such as our Winter Luncheon.

Onsite parking is extensive, the Pacific Highway becomes a clearway at 3.00pm but parking is available in side streets such as Fiddens Wharf, Buckingham, Stanhope and Marian. Killara station is a 13 minute walk.

Cost is \$130.00pp and includes pre-luncheon drinks, canapés and wines. Bookings are open on the website.

Ted Brogan

The Turn of the Screw by Henry James (1898) – 125 Pages – Fiction



Although this might be the ultimate gothic/horror classic it can be hard going for modern readers. Post Hemingway, we are no longer accustomed to long semi-opaque sentences.

However, the story remains compelling. A young brother and sister in a remote English country house are possessed by the ghosts of an evil valet and governess. Or are they?? And is the young new governess, through whose eyes the story is told, hallucinating and hysterical? Excellent fodder for Freud, feminists, lovers of ghost stories and Upstairs Downstairs.

This story of dark deeds, imagined or otherwise, has stood the test of time and given birth to an opera, stage play and countless movies. That is why it is a classic. Many of you will have read and/or seen one of these, some time ago. Well worth a re-visit if only to see which theory most appeals to you. Those who "enjoy" Wuthering Heights, Jane Eyre, Dracula or Frankenstein will find themselves in familiar territory. Well worth putting up with the language and, I'm told, the talking book is excellent.

David Castle

A TOUCH OF HUMOUR!

Family Drama (*from an old Dutch magazine, courtesy of Peter James*)

My father and I lived together in a flat. A widow and her daughter used to live on the floor below. I fell in love with the widow and we got married. My father fell in love with her daughter and married her. That's when the trouble started.....

As my father married my wife's daughter, who is now also my daughter, she is now my mother. However, at the same time I am her father, being married to her mother. Furthermore, my father became my wife's father-in-law as I am his son. My father, at the same time, became the son-in-law of his mother-in-law thus I am his father-in-law as I am married to his mother-in-law. But this is not all!

My wife gave birth to a son and now the real confusion starts. In the first instance my son is my son but also my mother's brother being my wife's daughter. At the same time he is the brother-in-law of my father. I am the cousin of my son and

therefore also the cousin of my mother, because she is his sister. Consequently, my mother is my aunt.

The worst is yet to come. My father's young wife became a mother and so her son is my brother. Besides, my own son becomes the uncle of my grandchild because he is my daughter's brother. My wife is his grandmother because the child is her daughter's.

As her husband I am his grandfather and as the grandfather of my brother also is mine. I am my own grandfather! HELLO GRANDPA!

Eskimo Food

I went on holiday to Greenland and decided to visit an Eskimo restaurant.

I asked to see the menu but the waiter said "we don't have a lot of options so I'll just call them out to you".

"We have Whale Meat Steaks, we have Whale meat Curry, we have Whale Meat stir fry and of course we have Vera Lynn."

"What's the Vera Lynn" I asked.

He said "Whale Meat again".

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson go on a camping trip. After a good dinner and a bottle of wine, they retire for the night and fall soundly asleep.

Some hours later, Holmes wakes up and nudges his faithful friend. Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see".

"I see millions of stars, Holmes", replies Watson.

"And what do you deduce from that?" Watson ponders for a minute.

"Well, astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I can see God is all powerful and that we are a small and insignificant part of the universe." But what does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes is silent for a moment. "Watson, you idiot" he says. "Someone has stolen our tent!"

HOW TO CONTACT A COMMITTEE MEMBER

To contact any committee member [Click here](#)

Please use email where possible or telephone if you require urgent contact.