

# The Southern Yarn

October–December 2022

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

## downundercalendar

### OCTOBER

**Annual not-so-Formal Dinner**  
**Saturday, October 22nd, 5:30 pm**  
**Back to Bailey's, 185 Lombard Ave**

Again, we will be in the Board of Governors Room. There is no need to pre-order and the prices quoted are subject to PST, GST and 15% gratuity to be added. BUT we do need to know the numbers attending; please **RSVP by October 15**. See menu (below right).

### NOVEMBER

**Annual General Meeting**  
**Friday, November 25th, 2022, 7pm**  
**Scandinavian Cultural Centre,**  
**764 Erin Street, Winnipeg**

Our other not-so-formal highlight of the year – when we get to review our raison d'être and our continuous improvement strategy. All input is welcome. Come along, make a difference and enjoy snacks and drinks from the bar.

### DECEMBER

**Family Christmas Party**  
**Sunday, December 4th, 2022, 4pm**  
**Scandinavian Cultural Centre,**  
**764 Erin Street, Winnipeg**

Further details will be provided by email to our members closer to the date.

### 2023

**Australia / Waitangi Days**

Date and details to come ...

### RSVP for all events:

Call Judy Powell at **204 275 7083** or email [social@downunderclub.mb.ca](mailto:social@downunderclub.mb.ca) to let us know you're coming, and for more information.

### Land Acknowledgement

The Down Under Club of Winnipeg meets on Treaty 1 territory in the Province of Manitoba and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and gather, and all the lands from whence we came, including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Canada. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.



### The DUCW Golf Tournament

A great day was enjoyed by club members and guests on a late August day at The Players Golf Course. We played 9 holes, and in teams of 3 and 4 for the best ball DUCW Golf Tournament. Once again, the teams were equal in strength, and only one shot separated the first and third teams. This year, the team of **Charlie Powell, Dave Ruff, Terry DeLong, and Peter M.** came through on top, closely followed by **Peter D.**, and his father and son team of **Ricky Boodoo and Vishad**, and the team of **Brian and Robin Flynn, and Steve Setka**.

After the game, the team prizes were presented, and the winners of the two sub-events were announced. Dave won the longest drive by quite a margin over the other big swingers,

and Brian showed his pitching prowess in winning the closest to the hole competition. Thanks to **Judy Powell** for organizing the prizes, and thanks to the golfers who enjoyed the day.

### Brunch at Miss Brown's

A big shout-out to Jenny T and the crew at Miss Brown's. We were happy to be back on September 4th at Miss Brown's in their new premises in Hargrave St Market. The food was delicious and our two reserved long-tables meant that most folks could hang around for a social time after the meal. Maybe again next year??



## Annual Dinner Menu

The menu chosen is the same as last year:

- New Zealand 7-point Rack of Lamb
- 10 oz New York striploin
- Pork medallions
- Filet of salmon
- Chicken "Manitoba" breast of chicken filled with wild rice, mushrooms and 3 cheese blend
- Rib-eye steak and garlic prawns (7 oz rib-eye with 4 jumbo prawns sauteed in garlic butter)

Each is \$37 per person, except the lamb, at \$43. Included in each is a salad of Manitoba field greens with a creamy cucumber and dill dressing, fresh rolls, oven roasted lemon potatoes, chef's vegetables, and coffee or tea. Dessert will be available as an extra.



Join us Oct 22  
RSVP today!

online



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## editorially yours

Charlie Powell



It's a beautiful Manitoba autumn – leaves changing to all shades of green, yellow and red; geese honking overhead; harvests in and gardens put to bed; returning songbirds singing to be fed.

It has been fun enjoying in-person club events once again – the pool party, golf tournament, brunch – and more to come, as per the calendar. This issue of the *Yarn* features a brief recap of Queen Elizabeth's visits to New Zealand and Australia as a very new monarch. I encourage you to watch the Youtube recording of the entertainment organized for the Royal couple at Wayville in Adelaide in 1954.

One of my favourite Aussie birds, the spangled drongo, is featured on p.8. Jenny has lined up some small-screen viewing selections (p.3) and there's lots more for your reading pleasure.

Take note of the advertisements and support our sponsors when you can. Thanks also to **Peter, Chris, Jenny, Dennis and Brian.**



Photo credit: Jeremy Cai

### Saudi Arabia imports camels and sand from Australia.

[SOURCE: Popsugar.com, Nicole Yi] Camels are a huge part of the Muslim diet, and due to a camel shortage, Saudi Arabia has looked to other places to get their meat. The remaining population of wild camels is in Australia.

Australia's garnet sand is also largely exported to the country because of its unique properties ideal for sandblasting. This technique is used to pressure-clean building surfaces.

## president's ramblings

Peter Munn



Hello again to all members. It has been uplifting to meet and greet old friends in the Club as we start to get back to a pre-Covid life. Our pool party and the golf tournament were great starts to this, and we hope to see more and more members at upcoming events. Our "Not so Formal dinner" is a fine way to do this, so please consider making plans to join us at Baileys on October 22nd. You are truly welcome. The dinner is very casual, well attended, and we really would like to see you there.

I have been playing more golf than usual this year, and apart from the DUCW tournament at The Players course, I have played my local course, Windsor Park, quite often, and two weeks ago travelled to Pinawa for a game. An interesting place in itself, it is about 10 miles from the site of the original town of Pinawa, which had been developed for workers building Manitoba's first year-round hydroelectric generating station in 1906, which was needed to meet Winnipeg's increased demands to power electric street cars. There still remains the original concrete framework of

the dam, which ceased generating power in 1951, and the townsite was abandoned.

The new Pinawa townsite was started in 1963 by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL) to house the employees for its Whiteshell Research Laboratories. It must have signs somewhere that say "Welcome all animals", as we saw multiple deer, and handsome bucks, an inquisitive fox, a coyote, and a 200lb young black bear that thankfully moved off the tee box to let us play through on the 16th hole. Everyone was anxiously looking to see if Mama was in the area.

That is it for me, hope to see you soon,  
Peter

**STAY COVID-SAFE.** Please wear a mask if you wish. Some indoor areas do require wearing a mask; for others it is a suggestion. please be aware provincial requirements may change.

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I've been searching for small-screen viewing content from down under on the various streaming services. I have **Netflix** – which does feature some Aussie and Kiwi shows – and **Britbox** – which has mostly British screening. I've tried to convince the ABC to allow us to stream iView programming, which has some excellent Aussie selections, but it doesn't look like that will ever happen.

Of course, there are other choices including **Acorn TV**, which has many excellent programs from down under, including:

**Mystery Road Origin** – initially a movie and then a series, this Origin series goes back to the beginning when Officer Jay Swan arrives at his new station.



## 90yearsago

knowing our history

### Australian PM Lyons unveiled the Dog on the Tuckerbox

The Dog on the Tuckerbox is an Australian historical monument and tourist attraction, located at Snake Gully, approximately five miles (eight kilometres) from Gundagai, New South Wales, as described in the song of the same name. The inspiration for the statue has been traced to a doggerel poem, "Bullocky Bill", published anonymously by "Bowyang Yorke" in 1857. Other references state that the poem was published in 1880, in the *Gundagai Times*, but confirmation of either date is hard to find. The poem humorously describes a series of misfortunes faced by a bullock driver, culminating in his dog either sitting on or spoiling the food in his tucker-box – an Australian colloquialism for a box that holds food, similar to a lunchbox, but larger. [link]



**The Gods of Wheat Street** – this six-part series tells the stories of the Freeburn clan, an Australian Aboriginal family.

**The Brokenwood Mysteries** – Detective Inspector Mike Shepherd investigates a wide range of murder mysteries in Brokenwood, a small town in the countryside of New Zealand.

**My Life is Murder** – an Australian and New Zealand murder mystery and crime comedy drama starring Kiwi Lucy Lawless.

**Janet King** – Australian drama about a senior prosecutor who tackles a high-profile murder trial.

**Jack Irish** – Aussie Guy Pearce stars in this acclaimed Aussie noir series.

**Nothing Trivial** – a comedy-drama from New Zealand set around five characters who meet at a pub quiz.

**800 Words** – an Australian family who start afresh in coastal New Zealand.

**The Slap** – based on the novel of the same name, this Aussie drama explores how



a single event can cause repercussions for a group of family and friends.

And those are just the ones I found in 15 minutes of searching.

Occasionally, movies from down under appear on big screens here, and also from time to time at Cinematheque, but looks like for now, you'll have to get your Aussie and Kiwi programming on the small screen.

One to watch out for is **"Salt of the Earth"**, a 10-minute documentary about the creator of chicken salt. Not sure where it will pop up, but Charlie Powell sent us this link about the man, the salty icon, and a trailer for the documentary – [Link]

If you have any recommendations for Australian and New Zealand movies and TV shows on the big and small screen, please email them to [info@downunderclub.mb.ca](mailto:info@downunderclub.mb.ca). We're happy to share them in this occasional column. In the meantime, happy viewing!

– Jenny Gates

## Investing in Our Communities



### Manitoba is investing \$34 million this year in culture and communities through the Arts, Culture and Sport in Community Fund.

This fund supports capital projects, special initiatives and community celebrations - allowing local arts, culture and amateur sport organizations to innovate and respond to emerging community needs, including those that are led by Indigenous, Francophone and ethnocultural communities.

Online funding applications open August 16, 2022. All eligible non-profit organizations are encouraged to apply.

To learn more please call **1-866-626-4862** or visit **[Manitoba.ca/ACSC](http://Manitoba.ca/ACSC)**.

**Manitoba** 

## Good on you, Steve!

Back in August, DUCW member Steve Setka played as part of the Northwind AFL Team in Canada's pursuit of the crown in the 49th Parallel Cup against the US.

As a member of the Winnipeg Bears Australian Football Club, Steve was thrilled to be called up to play in the international event. "I am the only member of the team from Manitoba, and was selected based on my tryouts over the last two to three years," Steve explained. "Of course, Covid delayed a few of them, and also cancelled the 2020 International Cup, which was not re-scheduled. Since the late 1980s, Northwind has participated in international play in Australia and over the world, competing in fifteen International World Cups in that span."

After the weekend, Steve said, "The game was great fun, and I was happy with how I played. I definitely appreciate the support – it

means a lot to have so many supporters."

According to Peter Munn, "Steve was the best player on the field," and as an avid AFL fan, he would know, so quite a feather in your cap, Steve.

Steve actually played in both the Development Squad Game – player #10 – and the Parallel Cup – player #5 – and both games are now available online:

49th Parallel Cup – [Link]

Development Squad Game – [Link]

Good on you, Steve. Hopefully you'll be back there again next year.

Jenny Gates



## newsfromOz

various sources, see web links in online edition



### Tassie phoenix

[Source: AAP with The Project, 17Aug 2022; and thanks to Chris B.] Hollywood stars Chris and Luke Hemsworth have thrown their money behind a Melbourne project to bring the extinct Tasmanian tiger back to life.

The University of Melbourne earlier this year launched a research lab to 'de-extinct' the thylacine, to give the marsupial its official name, following a \$5 million philanthropic donation.

Its goal moved one step closer after the university on Wednesday partnered with US-based genetic engineering company Colossal Biosciences.

The partnership will allow the Melbourne research team to access more DNA editing technology and a group of world-leading scientists, research leader Dr Andrew Pask said.

The Hemsworths are among the investors backing the Melbourne project.

"Our family remains dedicated to supporting conservationist efforts around the world, and protecting Australia's biodiversity is a high priority," Thor star Chris Hemsworth said in a statement.

"The Tassie Tiger's extinction had a devastating effect on our ecosystem and we are thrilled to support the revolutionary conservation efforts that are being made by Dr Pask and the entire Colossal team."

The Melbourne research lab is looking to

tailor reproductive technologies such as IVF to Australian marsupials, while Colossal will use its gene-editing technology to reproduce thylacine DNA.

"We can now take the giant leaps to conserve Australia's threatened marsupials and take on the grand challenge of de-extincting animals we had lost," Dr Pask said in a statement.

"A lot of the challenges with our efforts can be overcome by an army of scientists working on the same problems simultaneously, conducting and collaborating on the many experiments to accelerate discoveries.

"With this partnership, we will now have the army we need to make this happen." [Link]



Joella Rodney Flanagan's winning design was pictured at The Granites in Meekatharra. by Nicholash Wasarirevu

### Sneaky students ...

[Source: ABC Midwest & Wheatbelt, Jeremy Jones, 1 Sep 2022; and thanks to Judy P.] An eye-catching pair of sneakers sitting in the desert is the end product of a weeklong celebration of kids and their culture in WA's Mid West.

Meekatharra District High School students put their creative skills to the test as part of the town's inaugural sneaker competition.

The project was the brainchild of mental health clinician Nicholash Wasarirevu, who said the competition was inspired by Australian streetwear convention Sneaker Land.

"One of the things I loved about Sneaker Land was that it created a platform for young creators, and creatives from diverse and cultural backgrounds to come together and just share their talent and connect," she said.

Students received a pair of sneakers and worked together every Friday to paint the shoes while also talking about mental health, culture and identity.

An eye-catching pair of sneakers sitting in the desert is the end product of a week-long celebration of kids and their culture in WA's mid-west.

Ms Wasarirevu said the project also reflected the theme of this year's NAIDOC Week.

"It was inspired by the 2022 NAIDOC themes to 'get up, stand up and show up' for our young people in Meekatharra and remote communities, and to amplify young local artists' voices through art," she said.

"It's very important that we shift from Western models and promote and acknowledge connection to culture, community and land. "That was one of the highlights I was able to see in this project."

Competition winner Joella Rodney Flanagan said she wanted to reflect Meekatharra in her artwork. Read more at: [Link]

### Stay tuned

We're still investigating the status of Vegemite in Canada. Watch upcoming issues of *The Southern Yarn* for updates.







## Soaking it up in Auckland

[Source: and thanks to Peter M.] Cities need to become more 'spongy', and Auckland is leading the way.

Tangled mats of muddy vegetation line the footpaths of Underwood Park, a narrow stripe of green winding along a creek beneath the small volcanic cone of Ōwairaka (Mt Albert) in Auckland, New Zealand. In the water, clumps of sticks and the occasional plastic bag are marooned on protruding rocks and branches.

A winter storm swept through the city overnight, dropping heavy rain, and Te Auaunga (Oakley Creek), one of the city's longest urban streams, has overflowed its banks.

"But that's supposed to happen," says Julie Fairey, chair of the Puketāpapa local board, who is showing me around Underwood and the neighbouring Walmsley Park.

The connected parks are designed to collect excess stormwater, soak it up like a sponge, and slowly release it back into the creek. The debris left behind is evidence this "secret infrastructure" is working, Fairey says. The two parks are flanked on both sides by public housing developments. "This stuff is designed to flood so that the houses don't," she says.

It wasn't always this way, Fairey tells me, as we watch a black shag drying its wings on a rock. Less than a decade ago, the waterway was a concrete-lined culvert that ran through seldom-visited muddy fields. When it flooded, water sloshed into the surrounding suburbs. It collected engine oil, sed-

iment and rubbish and sucked this unhealthy mixture out into the city's famous harbour, rendering the beaches unsafe to swim. Read more at: The 'spongy' cities of the future - BBC Future



Credit: Nga Ma

## Uh, oh

[Source: Dept of Conservation - Te Papa Atwabai] The common brushtail possum, *Trichosurus vulpecula*, was first introduced to New Zealand from Australia in 1837 to establish a fur trade. This release was unsuccessful and a second release 20 years later at the same Southland location was required for them to establish. Possums have a significant impact on many of New Zealand's natu-

ral ecosystems. They occur in high numbers and their own predators, such as feral cats, do not have much effect on controlling possum population size.

Leaves are the main part of their diet, but possums are opportunistic omnivores. They eat buds, flowers, fruit/berries and nectar, which means they compete with native birds and reptiles for food sources. The growth and life-cycle of a tree or plant is significantly affected when all parts of it are eaten. Possums also have 'favourites' such as rātā or kamahi trees, leading to an even greater impact on these species.

In 1993, possums were filmed eating the eggs and chicks of kākako and this evidence changed many people's views of their threat to wildlife. They eat invertebrates, including weta, and are significant predators of New Zealand land snails such as Powelliphanta. They often occupy holes in tree trunks for their nests, which would otherwise be used by nesting birds such as kākāriki and saddlebacks.

Dairy and deer farmers have the added worry of possums spreading bovine tuberculosis. The value of economic loss in primary production for damage and control of possums is in the tens of millions. [Link]

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## The Role of Catalinas in Australia's War in the Pacific

[Source: Australian War Memorial, Hugh Cullimore, 13 December 2019]

It is often said that the Consolidated PBY Catalinas were to Australia what the Supermarine Spitfire was to Britain. With an ability to fly long hours at a low altitude at a slow pace (ideal for mine placement), it was one of the most important Allied aircraft of the Pacific War.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Australia's premier flying boat squadron, No.10 Squadron, was in the United Kingdom taking delivery of British-built Short Sunderland aircraft. With the outbreak of war, however, the squadron remained in Britain at the request of the British government for the duration of the war. This loss of No. 10 Squadron saw the need for a new flying boat squadron in Australia. No. 11 Squadron was formed on 25 September 1939, equipped with a small selection of Supermarine Seagulls and Short Empire flying boats.

Due to a shortage of long-range flying boats available to Australia from the United Kingdom, during the first half of 1940 Australia looked to the United States to supply modern flying boats. The American solution was the PBY Consolidated Catalina, beginning with the PBY-5, then PBY-5A variants.

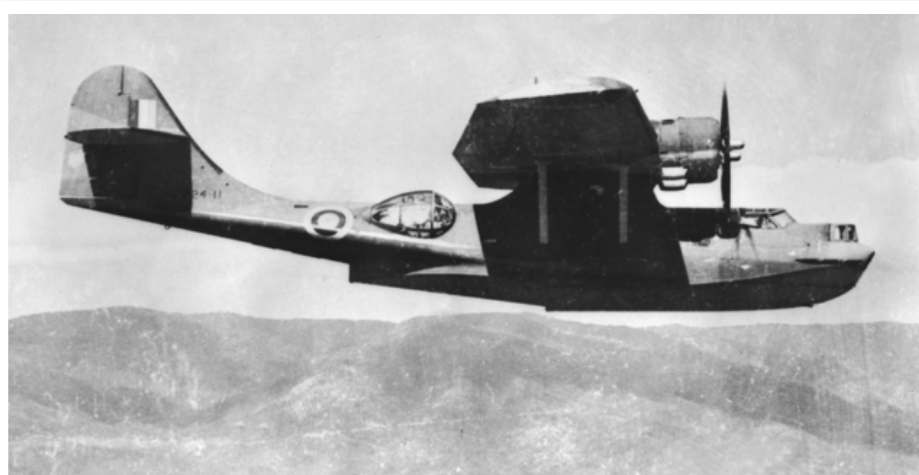
No. 11 Squadron was equipped with 6 Catalinas in 1941, becoming the first Aus-

tralia squadron to fly the "Cats" as they were commonly known. With the establishment of No. 20 Squadron on 1 August 1941, five of No. 11 Squadron's original six Catalinas were transferred, leaving the squadron with a small remaining fleet of Short Empire flying boats (the precursor to the Short Sunderland). With the delivery of new Catalinas in November 1941, No. 11 Squadron replenished its fleet. The two squadrons retained a strong working relationship, with joint ventures including searching for survivors following the sinking of HMAS *Sydney* (II). Until 1943 combinations of crew and aircraft belonging to the two squadrons would often interchange as need arose.

Initially based at Port Moresby, in the early months of 1942 the squadrons made bombing runs over newly-acquired Japanese territory, particularly Rabaul. Warrant Officer Albert Bates describes some of the bombing runs that took place in early 1942, describing difficulties such as fatigue, enemy gunfire, and the aircraft's likeness to the Kawanishi H6K Japanese float plane. After a bombing mission to Tulagi on 26 June 1942, a Catalina came under attack from an American Navy Grumman Wildcat, the crew

of which mistook the Australian aircraft as being Japanese, citing the red centre in its RAAF roundel and its likeness to the Japanese roundel. This would ultimately lead to the RAAF changing their roundel to a blue circle with a white centre. Following the identification of the vulnerability of the Port Moresby Catalina base in June 1942, both squadrons were relocated to Bowen, south of Townsville.

As Catalinas were not the fastest aircraft, they were perfect for such activities as mine-laying. Their strength lay in their ability to fly for extended periods. After the fall of Singapore, in 1943 a QANTAS-operated commercial mail run was set up between Perth and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka) with specially-modified Catalinas. Catalinas and their three man crew would often be airborne for up to 30 hours, with the record of 32 hours, 9 minutes completed by the "Vega Star" which departed Ceylon at 8 am on 30 August 1943. This record still remains today, some 76 years later. Fights of 20 hours or more were common among some squadrons, leading to the motto adopted by several Catalina squadrons "the first and the furthest". There is more at: [\[Link\]](#)



### Canadian capers

Vic Richardson's 1932 Australians were playing in high wind at Moose Jaw in Canada and it was decided that chewing gum should be used to keep the bails in place. Sammy Carter was keeping wickets and whipped off the bails for a lightning-quick stumping, only for the umpire to refuse to raise his finger until the bail, hanging by a long piece of chewie, actually hit the ground!

In another match, the officiating umpire was standing several feet wide of the stumps. 'You couldn't possibly be able to give an lbw decision from there,' suggested the team's champion Don Bradman. 'You wait and see.' The young Don did not have to wait long. Sure enough he was given out lbw and trudged off, wishing he'd kept quiet.

[Source: "Favourite Cricket Yarns", Ken Piesse, 2014]

*cricket yarn* pulling your leg-before-wicket



Join us in person for a variety of club events over the coming months, including restaurant visits, meetings, the Christmas party and casual get-togethers.



## Early Royal Visits

### AUSTRALIA

Royal visit of Queen Elizabeth II at Wayville, South Australia – watch the amazing choreography here (Judy P was one of the young primary school dancers): [Link]



### 1954 Royal Tour of Queen Elizabeth II ...

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and H.R.H. Duke of Edinburgh receive prominent citizens at the landing pontoon in Farm Cove, Sydney. The Prime Minister (Mr. R.G. Menzies) is in the background. February 3, 1954. [Source: State Library NSW]

Queen Elizabeth II was the first, and to date, the only reigning British monarch to visit Australia. When the 27 year old sailed into Sydney Harbour on 3 February 1954, she practically stopped the nation. Her arrival at Farm Cove, where Captain Arthur Phillip raised the British flag 165 years before, attracted an estimated 1 million onlookers in a city with a population of 1,863,161 (1954 ABS Census). Those who couldn't be there in person could listen to ABC radio's nationwide coverage of the historic occasion. Amalgamated Wireless Australia (AWA) helped make history when it filmed the Queen setting foot on Australian soil and relayed the footage to the Spastic Centre in Mosman – thus the royal arrival became the first televised event in Australia.

The 1954 royal tour was much anticipated. Planning had commenced in 1949 for King George VI (Elizabeth's father) to visit Australia and New Zealand. However, a coded telegram received in October 1951 relayed the disappointing news that due to the King's ill health and an impending operation, he would be unable to visit the antipodes as planned.



Her Majesty The Queen, Elizabeth II,  
21 April, 1926 - 8 September, 2022

Instead, the then Princess Elizabeth and her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, would come in his place. Her Royal Highness was at a safari lodge in Kenya, en route to Australia in 1952, when she received the news of her father's death. She made haste back to England and by the time she came to Australia in 1954, the princess was our queen.

At the time, the royal tour of 1954 was the single biggest event ever planned in Australia. It was organised in the days before email, facsimile and mobile telephones. Official printed programs stated that all those responsible for an event were to synchronise their watches with the ABC time signals at 9am each day. During the Queen's eight-week tour of Australia, the only glitch was an outbreak of poliomyelitis in Western Australia, which saw the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, intervene to insist that the royal party sleep on SS Gothic and eat only food prepared on the ship (Ferrier, 1954, n.p.).

The fierce February sun did not prevent Her Majesty from wearing her elbow length white gloves and decorative hats. Though the Australian sunlight is glaringly bright compared to England, she was rarely seen in sunglasses.

The royals visited 57 towns and cities during the 58 days they spent in Australia. They traversed the country by plane, train, ship and car from Cairns in the north, Broken Hill in the west to Hobart in the south. Their children, then Prince Charles (aged five years) and Princess Anne (aged three years) did not accompany them on the exhausting trip.

During their ten days in New South Wales, they attended 28 major programs, with events scheduled for the morning, afternoon and evening. Queen Elizabeth's days

varied from the cultural – watching a surf life-saving demonstration at Bondi Beach, to the civic – addressing 107,000 school children at three outdoor venues, and to the constitutional – opening a session of parliament. The crowds were tumultuous, the press was effusive in its praise and every street the royals paraded along was festooned with decorations. [Link]



Royal Visit of 1953–1954

### NEW ZEALAND

[Source: New Zealand History] For those New Zealanders old enough to have experienced it, the visit of the young Queen and her dashing husband, Prince Philip, to New Zealand in the summer of 1953-1954 is a never-to-be forgotten event. Those who were children at the time recall the Big Day, marked for months in the calendar, when they dressed in their posh clothes, pinned a royal tour medallion to their chests, collected a butter box to stand on, a Union Jack to wave, and perhaps a periscope to look through, and set out to see the Queen.

Perhaps three in every four New Zealanders did see her, as the Queen visited 46 towns or cities and attended 110 separate functions. One woman saw her 30 times. Crowds turned up hours before she was due and wait patiently for the split second when she drove past. At Tārau, a community of 600 people, there was a crowd of 10,000. At the Ellerslie and Trentham races, crowds turned their backs on the horses to gawk at the royal box.

People went to extraordinary lengths to show their devotion. Sheep were dyed red, white and blue; in New Plymouth both bowling club members and the local pony club formed themselves into the shape of an E. Screens were erected to hide unsightly buildings, and citizens were instructed when and how to plant blue lobelias, red salvias and white begonias. Hardly a car did not sport a Union Jack, hardly a building in the main cities was not covered in bunting and flowers during the day and electric lights at night. This was a remarkable event.

In the Māori language, The Queen is known as Kotuku, which means “the white heron”, a cherished bird rarely seen in New Zealand.

## Drongo

I was quite familiar with drongos (the feathered variety) in Brisbane. So I was pleasantly surprised to find them also in the Top End when I worked in Darwin for a stint in the early 70s.

Drongos are mostly black or dark grey, short-legged birds, with an upright stance when perched. They have forked tails and some have elaborate tail decorations. They feed on insects that they catch in flight or on the ground. Some species are accomplished mimics and have a variety of alarm calls, to which other birds and animals often respond. They are known to utter hoax alarm calls that scare other animals off food, which the drongo then claims.

There are 30 species in the family. The spangled drongo (*Dicrurus bracteatus*) is the only drongo to be found in Australia, where it can be recognised by its black, iridescent plumage and its characteristic forked tail. The “spangled” part of its name refers to the spread of “stars” (white spots) on the neck and upper breast plumage. It arrives in Queensland in late spring and breeds high in an isolated tree, producing three to five young each year.

The spangled drongo displays uninhibited and sometimes comical behaviour as it swoops and perches in search of insects, small birds, and occasionally, small skinks. When it seasonally visits urban areas, it is easily tamed by throwing small pieces of raw meat into the air, when it will accurately swoop and catch them midair.

Although the bird is often silent, it sometimes makes astonishingly loud, complex, and entertaining calls that may sound like a “sneeze”. The spangled drongo is an amazing mimic, taking most of its vocabulary from the sounds heard in the vicinity and weaving them into a song.

The word drongo is used in Australian English as a mild form of insult meaning “idiot” or “stupid fellow”. This usage derives from an Australian racehorse of the same name (apparently after the spangled drongo) in the 1920s that never won, despite many places. The word drongo has been frequently used among friends and can be used in a casual or serious tone. [Source: Wikipedia]



## Reader Feedback

From **Dennis Woodford**: regarding the bogong moth. Where I grew up in Bobinawarrah was not far from Mt. Bogong - Victoria's highest mountain. It was a large round mountain, and those who had developed a nice, round belly proudly called it their “Bogong muscle”.

Dennis also sent in this beautiful little Blue Wren photo, taken by his old Bobinawarrah school mate, **Al Gibb**.



## Board of Directors

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THE DOWN UNDER  
CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.  
Station Main, PO Box 1655,  
Winnipeg Manitoba Canada R3C 2Z6

[info@downunderclub.mb.ca](mailto:info@downunderclub.mb.ca)  
[www.downunderclub.mb.ca](http://www.downunderclub.mb.ca)  
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