# THE 29<sup>TH</sup> BEEFSTEAK SAND BURGUNDY CLUBS CONVENTION DARWIN 1<sup>st</sup> to 3rd JUNE 2012

Jill and I were once again pleased to represent Nital Club at the Convention, our 20<sup>th</sup> in succession and so we are "Old Hands".

#### **PRELUDE**

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May in Melbourne was cold, wet and windy, very much normal with the approach of winter. We caught a train to the city and dined at Geppetto, researching the venue for our July AGM. Afterwards we stayed overnight at Formule 1 in the centre of the city. By 7.20 next morning we were at the Southern Cross Railway Station to catch the Overland to Adelaide, the first part of our journey. We spent that evening enjoying a dinner party and staying with Jill's sister and brother in law in North Adelaide.

## GETTING THERE: OR THE CONVENTION BEFORE THE CONVENTION SUNDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY TO TUESDAY 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY

We were dropped off at the railway station by 11 o'clock and joined the long queue to get our luggage on board. Almost immediately we saw faces we recognised. Adelaide Club member and travel agent John Auld had coordinated the bookings and arranged for us to wear distinctive Burgundy coloured lanyards so that we could be easily recognised as B&B members. 31 travelled from Adelaide with a further 26 members due to join us at Alice Springs.

We were soon on our way, being farewelled by several Adelaide Club members who were to join us later. I thought that President Brian Lilley might have been one of them but it proved to be incorrect as he and his wife Sue and several others had an exclusive private carriage! There was a bit of good natured joshing about the General not fraternising with his troops! Most of us travelled in Gold Class and there was soon a throng gathered in the Lounge Carriage where we drank a complimentary glass of sparkling wine and learnt some of the history and features of The Ghan. Dining facilities were excellent and we enjoyed some memorable meals in the Queen Adelaide dining car which held about fifty people at each of two sessions. Most of us opted for the second sitting when we could linger over a post dinner drink in the Lounge. Not surprisingly, each night we were the last to leave.

On Monday after travelling through country which looked in good heart we crossed the wide and sandy but dry Finke River, arriving at Alice Springs around 2pm for a four hour stay while cars were unloaded, engines serviced and cabins cleaned. Short scenic trips were available or a walk to the town, a short distance away. The Wellington contingent, which had been on tour, joined the train here. Their club name is worthy of military exploits and it was not long before we felt as if we were facing fresh troops! The lounge car was packed and the bar staff all but overwhelmed. Somehow they managed to soldier on without running out of glasses. Like a football final after the minor round, the intensity had gone up a notch.

Our second sitting for breakfast on Tuesday finished at nine o'clock, just as we arrived at Katherine for a three and three quarter hour stay. The local "Never Never Ladies" (what a wonderful name for a Club, with its double meaning) were out in force to greet us and I found the corner of their banner thrust in my hands for many group photographs. There were several options to fill in the time and we made a short visit to Katherine Gorge which we had

not seen for many years. A late lunch was served when our journey resumed and we arrived in Darwin around sunset. Buses carried us to our accommodation. After settling in we searched for a restaurant. Chris and Anne Thomson from Adelaide Club were dining at "Duck's Nuts" and they invited us to join them. The crispy baked barramundi was delicious.

Wednesday was a quiet day but at one stage I found myself in "Cloud cuckoo land". When buying a bottle of wine at the Supermarket I was asked for photo identification. Not even I would claim to have worn the years so well that I could pass for under 18 years of age. That was not the reason. Each licensed premises has a banned list pointedly not called a black list, of persons ineligible to buy alcohol. Not surprisingly, it is hopelessly ineffective.

On Thursday evening a group of fourteen of us from Sheoak Hill, Nital and Yarrawonga/Mulwala clubs got together for dinner at "The Hot Rock" restaurant where we ate and drank well in convivial surroundings. The restaurateur received warm applause when he carried fourteen glasses in one hand to the table.



Jim, Jill, Peter and Jan Johnston at the start of our journey on The Ghan





14 glasses in one hand!

### FRIDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> JUNE THE CONVENTION BEGINS

Registration at the Holiday Inn began at 1pm. When we arrived it was in full swing with members enjoying cheese and fruit platters and a range of wines for tasting from Ad Hoc winery. Wines included were:

- NV Sparkling The Riddler Pinot Noir/Chardonnay W.A.
- 2011 Straw Man Sauvignon Blanc Margaret River
- 2011 Nitty Gritty Pinot Grigio Pemberton
- 2011 Cruel Mistress Pinot Noir Great Southern
- 2010 Etcetera Cabernet Merlot and The Rest Margaret River
- 2010 Cherubino Shiraz

We had collected our registration packs and convention booklets and had time to inspect their contents prior to the Opening Party. They had slightly different contents totalling:

- Local tourist information and pamphlets
- One specially prepared convention stubby holder
- Booklets "The Wonders of The Top End" and "The Wonders of The Red Centre" by Sebina Lange donated by Jude and Tony Pickering
- Books (all signed by their authors): "Looking for the H Chord" by Monte Dwyer, "A War at Home" by Tom Lewis and "Top End" by David Hancock.

Our Convention Handbook included a welcome from President and Convention Chairman Jason Schoolmeester, Convention Programme, Places to Visit, Restaurants, Dress Code, Lists of delegates, useful telephone numbers and Convention Supporters: Rockbare Wines and Crocosaurus Cove.

#### OPENING PARTY 6.30 TO 11.30 PM

We walked to Crocosaurus Cove, located in the heart of the city. On arrival staff members cradled various reptiles including lizard, crocodile and snake for our inspection and even a gentle pat as we made our way to an area a little too small to cope with 200 plus people. The few tables and chairs were soon filled and so most of us had no other option other to "eat on the hoof" if unable to find a little spot at one of the few stations where a glass of wine could be stood. So many people in such cramped conditions emphasised our presence in the tropics and it was soon uncomfortably hot.

There were multiple food stations at which delegates queued. After a glass of Mojo Chardonnay/Pinot Noir NV Brut Cuvee from Adelaide Hills the first food station was reached. Australian prawn cutlets served with tropical mango and coconut salsa were being offered served in a paper cone. Adjacent were sumptuous Coffin Bay oysters topped with lemon grass and coriander dressing served in their shell. 2011 Mojo Sauvignon Blanc went well with the seafood. We next tried bush tomato butter chicken and 2008 Coriole McLaren Vale Nebbiolo Rose.

By this stage we had already caught up with many delegates whom we have known over the years. It was good to have a chat with Bob Brinkworth (Burnside) and his wife Janet (Alexandra). We have been guests at their clubs dinners and I was interested in a professional looking coloured programme of Burnside Club's recent weekend away on Kangaroo Island. There were welcoming speeches from Jason Schoolmeester, Darwin Mayor Katrina Fong Lim, who officially opened the convention, and Brian Lilley. One of the highlights of the evening was the inclusion of examples of grain and grass fed Angus beef supplied by T&R Pastoral Pty Ltd, Murray Bridge South Australia <a href="www.tandrpastoral.com.au">www.tandrpastoral.com.au</a>. As we were hearing about the beef Bob Brinkworth suddenly collapsed from what we learnt later was a heart attack. Bob's convention finished at 7.21pm and he spent the rest of the weekend in hospital. Throughout the weekend we were kept informed of his progress and when Jill and I called on him at the hospital the following Monday he was having further tests with a planned trip home the next day. At the time of writing he is doing well. But I am getting ahead of myself, back to the convention.

Both the grain and grass fed beef cuts were delicious, but not easy to handle as neither proper plates, nor knives nor forks were provided! The reds, 2011 Mojo Shiraz and 2008 Torpedo Rocks Cabernet Sauvignon from Margaret River drank well with the beef and the Torpedo Rocks was particularly suited to the savannah lamb which was also being served. Tropical fruits and various cheese selections completed the meal and our choices of Vertigo 2008 Adelaide Hills Riesling and Bird in the Hand Clare Valley Honeysuckle Riesling had a touch of sweetness about them which complimented the cheese and fruits. By night's end a few of us at last found chairs on which to sit but conversation was effectively drowned out by the noise from the group "Jazzamatazz".

The general consensus of delegates seemed to be, "If only we could have enjoyed all that lovely food and wine peacefully seated at tables with proper plates, knives and forks."



#### SATURDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

We were invited to gather for coffee at Crowne Plaza 9am before the Business Session began at 9.30. For non members there was an alternative activity of a bus trip to Parap Village Saturday Market. Brian Lilley opened proceedings by introducing General Secretary Craig Thornquest, Vice President Paul Kershaw and Past President Peter Johnston. There were 239 at the convention representing 39 clubs. Apologies were accepted from Michael Martin and Bob Brinkworth. Minutes of the Wellington Convention 2010 were distributed.

Brian handed over to Craig to cover administrative matters. Main points were:

- Website a work in progress being continually improved. Now the main source of information following the discontinuing of "B&Bulletin" www.bsb.org.au.
- Handbook now to be issued as Calendar Year. Still in hard copy owing to confidentiality.
- Branch Affiliation fees will see a nominal increase of \$10 and late fee \$50 for local clubs and half those figures for overseas clubs.
- There is a detailed explanation of Life Members procedures on website.
- New tie embraced by members as sales brisk.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries 2011/12 Middleback, Beijing, Yarra Falls, Mackay.
- 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries 2011/12 Port Phillip, Caxton, Somerton, Holdfast, The Rocks, Mirrabooka.
- During 2011/12 six new clubs have formed including three Chinese.

Following a coffee break the session continued.

Peter Johnston conducted a website presentation offering support to clubs considering setting up their own website such as our club has done using Lloyd McDermott's expertise www.nital.org.

It is pleasing to see that there are clubs keen to host conventions and entertaining presentations were made, firstly by Yarrawonga Mulwala complete with the haunting song "I'm going back to Yarrawonga" and an animated drinking bull taking a sip from its wine glass  $22^{nd}$  to  $24^{th}$  March 2013 with a trip to Rutherglen on the Monday. There followed Brighton, Lockleys and Burnside jointly for 2014, probably  $10^{th}$  to  $12^{th}$  October and John Bowen Hobart for 2016, probably  $22^{nd}$  to  $24^{th}$  May, their  $50^{th}$  anniversary.

During General Business the possibility of having a convention overseas was raised. It is thought that a Chinese Club would be keen to host a convention. China has not even been on our radar as a country to visit but after a brief but eloquent account from a past Adelaide president Phil Kleinig about the abundant attractions of China and the fine food and French inspired wines, we were instant converts! The years 2015 or 2017 would be good opportunities.

There was some confusion among delegates about the origins of "the duck" that has been turning up at conventions since 2000 in Alice Springs. I have some video, but not sure when it was taken, of the late Rod Beaumont Convention Chairman of Launceston Club for the 1999 Convention explaining its origins and promised to try to find it and send a copy to Adelaide.

After the Business Session we were joined at "The Duck's Nuts" restaurant for lunch by Rod's brother in law David Dick and his wife Margaret. It all seemed very appropriate.

#### SATURDAY GALA DINNER 6.30 To 11.30PM

I must say we all "scrubbed up" pretty well in our evening wear of dinner suits for the men and fine gowns for the ladies. Buses departed at pickup points at 5.45 but it is only a short drive to Star City and we arrived 40 minutes ahead of schedule. It gave me a chance to get a

progressive football score and to take some photographs of the magnificent open air venue while there was daylight. 2008 Blue Pyrenees Methode Traditionelle Midnight Cuvee Chardonnay and Clare Valley Mitchell Peppertree Shiraz were the sparkling wines served from 6.15pm and so we did not have to wait too long. We had a jolly group of ten at our table. It was the only convention function where menus were provided. There was an outstanding blend of delicious food and fine wines. The weather was quite warm and I welcomed President Brian's invitation to the men to remove their jackets should they wish. The food and wines were introduced by the head chef and the Winemaster and the music provided by "Take 2" provided a pleasant background.

It was an outstanding dinner topped off by the silent ritual of "passing the port", a Grant Burge 20 year old Tawny. I had long been taught that it is right to pass port to the left and it must not touch the table. How sad it is that many of our past traditions have "withered on the vine". Speaking of which, we were invited to sample some of the grapes from bunches decorating the perimeter of our dining area. What an excellent dinner it was. Long will it live in our memory.



A happy table of ten.



CHILLED CROCODILE TERRINE WITH
BLOOD ORANGE MARMALADE AND PASPALEY PEARL MEAT
CEVICHE WITH LOCAL MUD CRAB IN APPLE CIDER JELLY
ACCOMPANIED WITH MICRO HERBS AND WASABI MAYO

ROCKBARE MCLAREN VALE CHARDONNAY 2009

Main Course

SEARED AGED BEEF FILLET WITH KING OYSTER MUSHROOM, BLACK FOREST SPECK SHAVINGS, GREEN PEA PUREE, SMOKED KIPFLER POTATO AND PORCINI JUS

ROCKBARE BURVILL SHIRAZ 2006
BAROSSA BABE SHIRAZ 2008

Dessert

BITTER VALRHONA CHOCOLATE MOUSSE TART
WITH STRAWBERRY DISCS, BLUEBERRY MERINGUE TOWER,
WHITE CHOCOLATE JELLY AND SAFFRON DOLLOPS

**ROCKBARE CANE CUT VIOGNIER** 

Cheese

TASMANIAN HERITAGE SIGNATURE BLUE AND CRACKER BARREL GOLD RELEASE VINTAGE CHEDDAR SERVED WITH WATERMELON RIND PICKLE AND WALNUT CRISP BREAD.

**BAROSSA BABE MOURVEDRE 2006** 

COFFEE, TEA AND PETIT FOURS



#### SUNDAY LUNCH 12.30 TO 3.30PM

Owing to a wedding at the proposed venue of "Pee Wee's at the Point" which would have had us unable to linger, the venue was changed to "Il Lido" in the Darwin Waterfront Precinct. We had been asked to make our own way there. The previous night a local member had given us what proved to be very vague directions of how to get there in "easy walking distance". When we finally arrived at about 1 o'clock we had walked about twice the distance that the buses had driven us the night before! The lunch was in full swing but some chairs were juggled and places set for us. The smoked salmon and pitta bread course that we had missed appeared and mine host poured us glasses of 2003 Latache Rose Sparkling wine, 60% Margaret River pinot Noir, 30% Manjimup Pinot Noir and 10% Manjimup Chardonnay. Other wines served with our Aricini balls, mushroom risotto, rocket salad, char grilled steak and fruit salad were Alta Vineyards 2011 Sauvignon Blanc, 2011 Alta Pinot Grigio and 2011 Alta "For Elsie" Pinot Noir Rose, all Adelaide Hills, Rockbare 2010 McLaren Vale Shiraz and 2008 Mount Langi Ghiran Cliff Edge Shiraz. Rockbare wines were available for purchase at 20% off cellar door price and home delivery @ \$15 per dozen.

There were closing speeches with special thanks to the Convention Committee: Jason Schoolmeester, John Bayliss, Darryl Thomas, Michael Scott, Wayne Nicholls and David Wallach. The official photographer was Kristy Edlund. Log in to <a href="http://kristyedlund.photomerchant.net">http://kristyedlund.photomerchant.net</a>. Go to Galleries Password: Darwin. The photos are free of charge and can be downloaded.

During the convention at each function there were six lucky spot prizes of the finest of Grant Burge wines and pre convention there had been five fortunate delegates lucky draw winners of free attendance.

The convention closed after what has become traditional passing of the duck mascot to Yarrawonga Mulwala and expressions of thanks from President Brian Lilley.



Darwin's Jason Schoolmeester and Yarrawonga Mulwala's Peter Bennett

#### **SUNDAY EVENING**

After the convention some delegates chose a sunset cruise on Darwin Harbour, others a visit to Mindil Beach Market while others just kept on going. After a refreshing beer or two we ended up dining about two doors down from "Il Lido" with other likeminded Beefsteak and Burgundians. Thus another enjoyable convention ended. Just as we did, many other delegates took the opportunity of spending some time in the north and our last contact with delegates was with Phil and Joan Kleinig at Mitchell Falls on 16<sup>th</sup> June.

#### DENT IN THE POCKET OR HOW MUCH DID IT COST?

If registering by 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2012 \$1,540 two people.

After 28<sup>th</sup> Feb \$1,760

Cruise \$59 per person

Ghan various with our Seniors' discounts \$2,505 one way.

There was a wide choice of accommodation. We stayed at Mediterranean Studio walking distance to main street \$148.11 per night self contained.

Jim Freebairn