

Member Profile ~ Robert Plant

I was born in Staffordshire, England on 19th January 1949. My father ran a pottery business from a factory in Stoke on Trent, manufacturing fine bone china. I was sent away to boarding school at the age of 8 and then Wrekin College at the age of 13. It was here that I met the Queen in March 1967. I was head of one of the Houses and we were all introduced to her when she visited the school. It was rumoured that she was looking for a school for one of her sons, but I don't think anything came of it. During my schooling, I was attracted to the sciences, studying Maths, Physics and Chemistry at "A" level. I decided I wanted to study mechanical engineering and was successful in obtaining a place at the University of Birmingham.



This was a very intense course – it was said to be 4 years jammed into 3, so there was not much time for anything other than study. One of the requirements was to seek appropriate practical work during the summer long vacation. I was lucky to secure around 8 weeks at Rolls Royce cars at Crewe. I worked in the car repair section, where owners of any Rolls Royce or Bentley cars ever made, could get them repaired, totally rebuilt or serviced. It was here that I learned that *"a Rolls Royce does not break down, it just fails to proceed"*!

At the end of the 3 years, I graduated and was offered a place within British Leyland. This was in 1970, before the British car industry started its decline. I joined Triumph motors in Coventry as a graduate apprentice. In the early 70s, most manufacturing was done "in house", so initially I spent some time in the engine machine shop, engine assembly, body trim and final assembly, just to get a feel of what was involved. I also spent some time as the personal assistant to the Managing Director, working on special projects. I then moved into production as a foreman and was responsible for setting up cars for the tough (in those days) emission control requirements for the USA, specifically California, where most of the sports cars were destined to go.

In 1977, I moved to Castle Bromwich (outside of Birmingham) as a cost reduction analyst. This was where Jaguar cars had their press shop and body assembly. The Jaguar XJS also had a state-of-the-art paint shop, which was located in the building that used to produce Lancaster bombers during World War 2.

In 1979, I applied to work for Lotus cars – they had just won the contract to be the design authority for the DeLorean DMC 12. The cars were to be built in Belfast, thanks to a grant from the Northern Ireland Development Agency, being designed by Lotus in Norwich on the east coast of England.

The Lotus factory was built on a USAF base, with the old runways forming part of the test track. My role was the engineering co-ordinator, basically liaising between all the various disciplines to ensure everyone was on the same page.

It was a bit like working in a toy shop, as Lotus had purchased many exotic cars as comparison test beds. These were available if you needed to run an errand!



The job entailed travelling to Belfast every week to report progress. We flew by chartered plane from Norwich to Belfast and back in one day. The DeLorean factory was built on reclaimed land between Catholic and Protestant communities, each having their own entrance to the site. This was during the Sectarian troubles, so it was not unusual to have British soldiers patrolling the site.

The unfortunate timing of the car's release during the first Gulf war, sealed its fate. Production ended in late December 1982, shortly after DMC filed for bankruptcy. The total production reached only about 9,000 units.

Lotus, of course, started to drastically reduce its workforce. I was moved to work on internal Lotus models, but decided it was time to start a new phase of my career. I applied for a role as Bid Manager at Plessey, a large electronics company headquartered in Ilford, Essex. Plessey manufactured a large range of military equipment, including the invention of the aircraft black box (which is actually orange) that is used on all civilian and military aircraft. After a few months, I was posted to Portsmouth where a new avionics division had been formed. I later re-located to work on Project Raven, also near Portsmouth.

It was during this time that I met a colleague at Plessey, who was also a racing driver in his spare time. He was looking for a mechanic, so we teamed up, travelling all over the country. The car was a Clubsports (the category designation), which used a formula Ford engine in a space frame chassis. It was a fairly straightforward car to work on, but with racing tyres, was also quite quick. It gave me the chance to travel to Zandvoort in Holland in 1986, working with another driver in the series. We came away with 1st place!



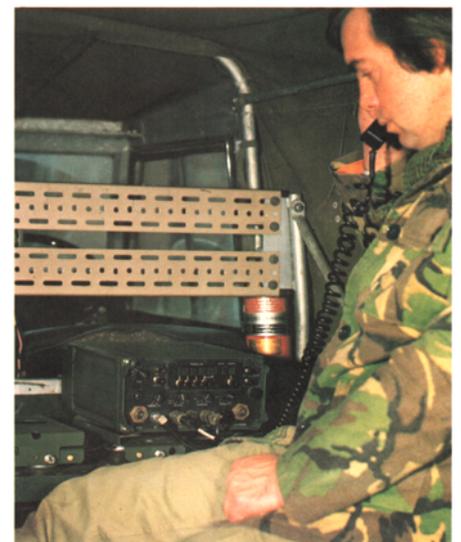
Project Raven was initially two development contracts for HF and VHF radios for the Australian army. My role was to "price" the production offer. It was an interesting concept because, as Plessey was the design authority, it was the only company who could bid. This was called a single action tender which was subject to full government cost investigation to ensure that the

Commonwealth of Australia was getting a fair price. I travelled to Sydney initially in 1985. The process went on for some time, until a contract was signed in May 1987 for around \$220,000,000.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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As well as the 2 main radios, there were a suite of ancillaries to suit manpack and vehicle configurations. The radios had anti-jam technology, hopping across frequencies several times a second, so there was a whole frequency management facility which generated the algorithms and distributed these to the radios in the field. A special facility was set up at Meadowbank to manufacture the multi-layer printed circuit boards and to assemble the equipment. This was back in the day when Australian content and being self-sufficient mattered. The contract included providing sophisticated field and base repair facilities.

So I relocated to Sydney, firstly as a temporary resident, then getting my permanent residency in May 1989. There was a great deal of travel, as our parent company and major sub-contractor were located in the UK. It was during this time that I discovered a problem; my namesake, the lead singer of Led Zeppelin, had been deported for some misdemeanour so every time I tried to get back into the country, I had to prove I wasn't the Rockstar. When I came to obtain my Australian citizenship, there was also a problem, you were supposed to stay in the country for a continuous period of time to qualify, but of course I kept leaving on business, albeit only for short periods of time. We found a way around this because I was actually on Commonwealth of Australia business, which was an accepted exemption. So, a letter from Army acquisition solved that and I became an Australian citizen on 5th September 1991.

The relationship we had with the Army was excellent and the Project was largely successful. The relationship with our Parent Company (which was also our major sub-contractor) was not so great. They were running out of work in the UK, so tried to reduce our content of work in Australia, even though the Australian content was contractually defined. This led to a very strained relationship, which ultimately became quite personal.

In 1992, I was head hunted to work on the ANZAC ship Project. The A\$5 billion head contract was, at the time, the largest defence contract awarded in Australia. A company called Stanilite, which was part of the winning consortium, was looking for a Project Manager to run the internal and external communications portion of the programme. Again, lots of travel – the design authority for the ship was Blohm and Voss, located in Hamburg and the Prime contractor was part of the Transfield group, located in Melbourne. Two of the 10 ships were for New Zealand, so we had to achieve New Zealand content as well as Australian and to do that, we opened an office in Auckland where some of the design was conducted.



At the end of October 1992, I married my wife, Helen. We had met on New Year's Eve in 1989 in Sydney. She has always provided great support and a constant companion since then, often accompanying me on business trips, when we could add on some holiday time.

One of the contractual requirements was for our company to get accreditation from the US derived Cost and Schedule Control Systems Criteria (CSCSC). This was really important as we would be paid on *Earned Value* +. We were only the 5th company in Australia to achieve this. Again, a very interesting but complex project which was largely successful.

In 1995, I was approached to join AWA. It had been awarded a substantial subcontract on TAAATS (The Australian Advance Air Traffic System) to design and deliver the communication system. There are two flight



information regions (FIRs) separated by an approximately diagonal line running from the northwest near the border with Indonesia to the southeast near Sydney. There are two Air Traffic Service Centres (ATSCs), one in Brisbane and another in Melbourne, each responsible for providing air traffic control services to their FIRs. Four Terminal Control units at Sydney, Adelaide, Perth and Cairns provided the link between the “on route” control and visual contact from the local towers. The Brisbane Centre is responsible for the FIR northeast of the line, and the Melbourne Centre for the FIR southwest. The total area under TAAATS control is 11% of the earth’s surface. Because of the nature of the service provided, there had to be failsafe back-up systems to both power and the communication links to the pilots.

In addition to Air Traffic Control, AWA operated in many other sectors, including telecommunications. Plessey South Africa was interested in acquiring the Commander Phone system, so bought out the company. In 1998, they decided to divest themselves of most of the other divisions so, for the first time in my life, I was made redundant. However, word soon got around and I was offered a role at ADI, running a suite of defence projects. ADI had acquired Stanilite when it went into liquidation, so some of these projects were in poor shape.

Then began a period of consolidation, running a portfolio of Projects including Communications and Navigation systems on the Huon class Minehunter, constructed in Newcastle; communications systems on the two Hydrographic ships built in Cairns; numerous subcontracts on the \$1Bn Frigate upgrade Project; the voice sub system on the ADATS project (Australian Defence Air Traffic System). Yes, they had a stand-alone system, run by Ratheon. One of which was to provide night vision for the gunner and driver on the Leopard Main Battle Tank.

When I joined ADI in 1999, it was still a government entity, awaiting privatisation. This happened at the end of 1999, being sold to a joint venture of Thales and Transfield. Because of the large amount of American intellectual property that ADI used, selling the ADI to a French company was not politically acceptable, hence the inclusion of an Australian company in the joint venture. Transfield was always the silent partner and was interested in selling its share. This didn’t happen until 2006, when the time was right. Even so, the sale had to be approved by the Foreign Investment Review Board and the US State Department, with a very comprehensive overarching deed put in place. With the company moving into sole ownership of Thales, there was a major reorganisation to integrate the old ADI with the other Thales wholly owned companies already in place in Australia (Underwater Systems, Training and Simulation and Air Traffic Systems). The division I worked for disappeared and I faced another period of uncertainty, but not for long. I had a reputation for being a strong critic of the Information Systems in place, so I was asked to become the Chief Information Officer for the new entity, Thales Australia, tasked with integrating many disparate systems into a “fit for purpose” capability. Not having any formal IT experience but relying on my knowledge of what good business needed, I started the third phase of my career. It was an interesting job. Thales in Australia had around 3,300 employees across some 45 sites, many of which were very remote. We were a prime target for cyber-attacks and so had many constraints imposed in the deed, such as having to have the IT infrastructure physically located in Australia. I found it an interesting and rewarding job, not without its politics. With dual reporting, locally to the Operations VP and internationally to the Group CIO in Paris, there was often a conflict of interest. Some of the achievements included setting up a primary data centre at Sydney Olympic Park, a secondary disaster recovery data centre in Canberra, rolling out a new ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system to support the Hawkei vehicle and OneSky Air Traffic Projects (both in excess of \$1Bn). Again, plenty of travel to Thales’ HQ in Paris, as well as other major sites around the world. I have lost count of the number of trips I made to Europe.

In 2019, having reached the age of 70, and having worked for nearly 50 years, I thought it was time to retire. After a last trip to Europe to say my goodbyes. I finally stopped work at the end of July 2019. Once I had retired, I needed some diversions to get me out of the house. I have always had an interest in making things, having studied both woodwork and metalwork at school. While at school, I built a couple of canoes, the first one from a kit, and the second one from scratch. During my time working, my woodworking was mainly comprised of repairing things around the house – no time for any major projects. So, I decided to approach the Berowra Men’s Shed. However, at that time they did not have a permanent

home, instead working out of someone's garage. My wife knew Paul Wylie through the Turrumurra Bridge Club, and he suggested I approach Hornsby Woodworking Men's Shed, which I did, joining in September 2019



My first Shed project was a couple of planter boxes as an introduction to using the machinery on offer. In 2020, I was mainly involved in making toys to be donated to the Shed's charities. Last year (2021) I built a couple of bespoke bookshelves for some friends. These had to fit into a narrow corridor.



I certainly enjoy the fellowship at the Shed each week and the chance to improve my woodworking skills while giving something back to the community through the toy making. I was happy to support the Committee by becoming Vice President in 2020.



Like all good plans, things have so far not worked out as planned in retirement, thanks to COVID and health issues but hopefully there is light at the end of the tunnel.

I was proud to have been recently elected President of the Warrawee Probus Club.



Helen and I reside in Berowra, where we have lived since 1990. We do not have any children, so have been able to travel extensively over the last nearly 30 years. My interests include travel, photography, woodwork and watching motor racing - our honeymoon took in the 1992 formula 1 Grand Prix in Adelaide! We both play Bridge, though lately that has just been on-line, due to COVID.

Robert Plant

A Word About Our Sponsors

In April, we were visited by two of our major sponsors.

1. We Can Bank on Bendigo



Bendigo is a community bank that includes the Adelaide and Rural banks.

“Our vision is to be Australia's bank of choice. We aim to achieve this by helping our customers and the communities in which we operate to be successful.”

Sharon and Michele were welcomed to the Shed on 5 April. They were most interested in the toy production, meeting the members and some of the machinery used. The pictures below tell the story.

We have been using Westpac's banking services since inception but have now switched our banking and term deposits to Bendigo. We have benefitted financially from our association with the bank and donated a rocking motorbike to them late last year as a fund raiser.



Dear John and David,

It was great to spend some time at the Shed this morning - to meet you and some more of your members and to see where all the hard work happens. Thank you again for making Michele and I so welcome.

Speaking for all our staff, we love what your Shed does for the community and we look forward to continuing the great relationship we have built over the last couple of years.

With kind regards,

Sharon Franke Community Development Manager

2. Magpies Waitara

Community is important to Magpies, Waitara and we are dedicated to providing financial and in-kind support to local charities, sporting organisations and not-for-profit community groups.

Each year, we participate in the NSW Club Grants scheme, which is one of Australia's largest grant programs, providing more than \$100 million each year to a variety of worthy causes across NSW.

In 2020/2021, we proudly donated \$132,630 to our community.



The Shed has benefitted from this program for many years, justifying the inclusion of Magpies as a sponsor.

On 22 April, we were visited by Andrew Veldon, Magpies' CEO, accompanied by Alanna Jordison, Magpies' Marketing Consultant. Despite our long association, the Club was not aware of the Shed's involvement with the community and its charitable toy making. So, the visit was really opportune for us to show examples of our work and our policy to use recycle timber.



A couple of weeks later, Alanna sent me a promotional story on their visit to the Shed which will be emailed to their members, see following page. I enquired about membership demographics: "Magpies has over 12,000 total members whose age range is 18-65+. A high concentration is aged between 40-83 and, of those, there are slightly more male members than females."

Our Visit to Hornsby Woodworking Men's Shed

Recently I was extended an invitation to visit the Hornsby Woodworking Men's Shed. Magpies Waitara has supported this great community organisation for many years through the ClubGRANTS NSW scheme.

The members of the Shed spend much of their time making wooden toys which are gifted to Wesley Mission and The Salvation Army, Hornsby prior to Christmas each year and they are already very busy preparing wooden toy trucks.

Each year, Magpies Waitara participates in the ClubGRANTS scheme, which is one of Australia's largest grant programs providing more than \$100 million each year to a variety of worthy causes across NSW. In 2020/2021, Magpies Waitara proudly donated \$132,630 to community and sporting organisations. The ClubGRANTS round for Category 1 funding for 2022 is now open, for more information go to: (<https://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/community/services/grants>)

If you're interested in getting involved in this wonderful local community group, you can visit their website (www.hornsbymentshed.org.au) for more information. Membership is open to both men and women from age 15, subject to the individual's capacity to work with the equipment and adhere to safety measures. Membership is \$100 per year which provides you with access to the Shed and its equipment up to 6 days a week. The Shed is also always on the lookout for donations of good quality woodworking timber. If you have any you would like to donate, please contact the Men's Shed on 0481 485 824.

Thank you to the Hornsby Men's Shed team for welcoming me, keep up the great work and we look forward to continuing our support of this great community group.

Andrew Veldon

CEO, Magpies Waitara



"Today was a Difficult Day," said Pooh.

There was a pause.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.

"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."

"That's okay," said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing, really," said Piglet. "Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either."

"But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be here for you, Pooh."

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs...he thought that his best friend had never been more right."

A.A. Milne

Sending thoughts to those having a Difficult Day today and hope you have your own Piglet to sit beside you.



3. Bakers Delight Helps Keep Communities Connected



Many of our workshop morning teas are enhanced by trays full of buns, donated by Bakers Delight. Michael Hannagan picks them up from their store in Hornsby Westfield. To reciprocate, I asked them to provide a promotional article, see the following page.



As a family-owned business, made up of many smaller family businesses, Bakers Delight has been committed to supporting their local communities for more than 40 years.

Every day and in many ways, franchisees like James at Bakers Delight Hornsby, play an important role in keeping their communities connected through local groups like ours. Whether it be donating bread to local sports clubs and schools or giving away bread to charities and farmers for their stock, the Bakers Delight team is proud to be there. Bakers Delight makes decisions about opening new bakeries based on extensive market research and business analysis, to ensure each business will be a part of its local community for the long haul.



This results in an authentic relationship with the community, employing local people, supporting local clubs and schools and delighting local customers with great service and products.

This kind of support instils in James a sense of pride, in the community, in his business and in the brand he represents. This cascades down to the bakery staff and creates a happy work environment for all.

One of Bakers Delight's most recognisable community partnerships is with their 'breast friends', Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA). This year marks 22 years of supporting this important not-for-profit organisation for which Bakers Delight has raised over \$22 million.

It's just one of the many ways that Bakers Delight is helping to keep communities connected, one bun at a time.

Wesley Mission Donations – Post Christmas Feed-Back

In the last magazine, I attempted to capture the excitement and appreciation of the good people from Wesley when they picked up our donated toys. It's always a heart-warming experience for us. We asked for some feed-back to complete the story and here it is.

Hi David, it was lovely to meet you at the Thank You Morning Tea last month.

Please find attached some photos of our staff during the Christmas period with the gifts, and also some stories from our families. Thank you again for your generous donations each and every year.

Kind Regards, **Prue Ghali** | Wesley Mission



Christmas Stories

Story One

One Mum who has been struggling financially was able to give her children the gifts that they asked for. The little girl was so excited to see the Barbie and has been cuddling it since receiving it. One of her siblings received a wooden hobby horse. They were delighted to ride on it and have been sharing it with their siblings. The baby received a teddy bear that was almost the same size as them! Mum really appreciated receiving these gifts for her children when she was struggling financially, as meeting her children's wishes at Christmas would have been impossible otherwise.

Story Two

We have been working with an Aboriginal family who have been facing some health challenges recently which have impacted their ability to work. This family loves the outdoors; camping, fishing, horses and being 'on country' in the bush. Sometimes when our worker visits, the children will be wearing riding boots. The youngest daughter loves horses, when she received the wooden horse for Christmas she shouted "OMG, I love it! It's better than my plastic horse". The children were grateful for the gifts from the Men's Shed. Mum was very happy with the gifts and said, "These will last us a long time, you don't see these being made anymore, they are old school, I will be able to pass these down to my grandchildren".

Story Three

The dolls in the toy cradles were a favourite with one of our families and our worker has been asked on various visits to play dolls with the children.



Jim Kelso's Recent Visit to the Shed and My Father's Wartime Legacy

by *Philip Hirshbein*

Jim has the distinction of being the oldest member of the Shed "I'm the same age as the Queen you know". We honoured him at the last Shed Christmas party with life membership.

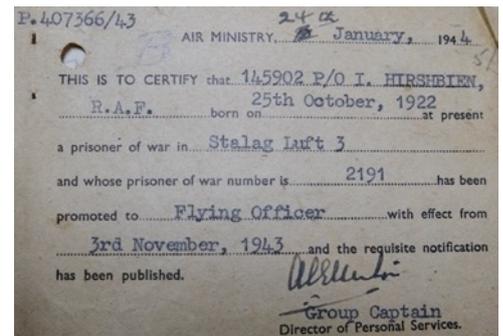


He rang me in mid March to ask for a lift to the Shed. He has lost the sight in one eye and relies on a walker to get around, "otherwise, I'm OK".

It's been several years since I had been to his house and I knew that that living on his own was going to be a challenge, so I was glad to hear that his daughter had moved in. This benefitted her because she had been paying rent and it meant that Jim could stay in the family home.

Knowing of Jim's interest in history and, in particular, the Second World War, I brought in my father's war time log for Jim to have a look at, while in the Shed. The log was written after my father's aircraft was shot

down and he captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war in camp Stalag Luft 3.



Jim was impressed with the portraits both of my father and by him (see below), which had survived quite well over the years. Also attached are some

memorabilia - his souvenirs of that experience.

The writing was in pencil which had faded over 80 years so I found it more difficult to read than my earlier recollection of some decades ago. Jim had obviously given this some thought because he rang me a few days later to suggest that I seek advice from the Mitchell library on how to conserve what was left, something that Jim had done with some old family photographs. I will also try scanning it, using computer programs/filters to increase the contrast.



The log is very detailed and really gives the reader the feeling of those final war years, commencing with my father's capture and three years as a prisoner of war.

An extract follows of his account from being shot down, his capture and arrival at his final destination, POW camp Stalag Luft 3.



"I was shot down on the night of August 10th (1943), just one day after my first marriage anniversary. I bailed out from approx. 800 ft, swung twice before hitting the ground quite hard. The aircraft had blown up as I was descending. I was approx. 100 yds from it. I rested in a corn field then began walking. Eventually, tiredness overcame me and I fell asleep in a potato field, screened by a hedge and some trees. I awoke at about 9 am to feel a boot prodding me, unfortunately, it belonged to a member of the Luftwaffe who, together with a comrade, were standing over me with rifles."

He was in Belgium, near a small village and was taken back to the wrecked aircraft and shown the bodies of his other crew members.

August 11

“About 8.30 pm, I was ordered to get into the back of a lorry that contained 4 coffins which were removed and an RAF Sargent joined me.

After travelling for about an hour the lorry stopped in a fairly big town while the guards went to get some refreshment. A Belgian came up and made signs asking if I was hungry, I answered in the affirmative. He came back a few minutes later with two big sandwiches, 2 raw eggs, a box of sugar and 2 bottles of lemonade which we accepted most gratefully. We then started again and travelled for several hours before arriving at a long low building. We were taken inside to a large room. Here I was questioned again, my few possessions taken from me and a makeshift bed was made for us on the floor. We were given two blankets which I crawled under to fall into a deep sleep”.

August 12

“Upon awaking, I couldn't quite where I was, then it suddenly dawned on me and I started thinking what my wife and family must be feeling as they would have been notified that I was missing. I could only pray to God that they would take the news calmly, hoping that I would be safe.

Our guards were fairly decent to us as they offered us cigarettes after a lunch of half cooked potatoes, a vegetable stew and some of his own lemonade.”

August 13

“We were told the night before that we would leaving early the next day to go on a journey. After a hasty breakfast, we were marched down to the railway station. We were in high spirits for we thought we were going to a P.O.W. camp but this was not to be because, after a journey of about 4 hours, we alighted at Brussels station. There we were nearly mobbed by civilians who threw flowers and smiled, however the Germans put a large guard around us and we were marched to a lorry which took us to a large building surrounded by a very high wall. We learned

later that this was Brussels prison. We were led off to cell No. 52 which was very foreboding, with a solid steel door, at least 6 inches thick. I enclose a picture I drew, looking towards the door. You can imagine my feelings to be shut up like an animal. Our cell was 15 ft long by 10 ft wide, I paced up and down for a while then consoled myself and began to talk to the sergeant. By this time, we were very hungry.



Around noon, our bowls were filled with some kind of vegetable stew. I then took stock of our surroundings by looking through the sole window. There were some houses and a tower with a swastika flying from its summit. At 3.30 pm we were given half a loaf of bread each and a cube of butter. The ersatz coffee we emptied down the sink. The day passed slowly until, at 6.00 pm we were allowed to come out and have a, welcome, shower. I had not had a proper wash since leaving England. We were not given much time, there was no soap or towel, just a piece of cloth a foot square. We were hustled back to our cell and heard the door being double locked. In bed by 9.00 pm. I didn't sleep well after the experience of the past few days.”

August 14

“We didn't leave the cell but were excited to observe, through the window, two air-raids. The Germans lowered the swastika and replaced it with machine guns, on the tower. We passed the time playing “Crap” with an improvised dice and newspaper for money.”

August 15

“Another day like the 14th.”

August 16

“We were very expectant that today we would be leaving for P.O.W. camp today but began to despair. Then at 7.00 pm our door opened and we were ordered out. I questioned the guard who confirmed we were being sent to the camp. We travelled to Brussels station and awaited the train to Frankfurt. We travelled all night.

The train was packed with German soldiers going on leave. A brilliant full moon lit up the passing landscape and I could see the great damage and devastation everywhere.”

August 17

“At 9.00 am we arrived at Frankfurt, very tired, thirsty and hungry and kept in a room with 20 other POWs until 12 noon. We were then taken to a train and, after one hour’s travel, alighted at Oberusel. Then, a tram took us to a reception depot where we were each called into a small room, asked to strip naked, then thoroughly searched. I was put in a small room with 5 other men and only 1 bed and blanket. Only meagre daily rations were served, such as 2 thin slices of bread spread with syrup and coffee for breakfast. They were terrible conditions, but we could do nothing about it.”

August 18

“I, together with 20 others, were taken off to the “Cooler” where prisoners were interrogated. I was put in a tiny (9ft. by 6ft cell with only a bed, table and stool. Not long after, a white-haired man came in and said that he had a Red Cross form for me to fill in which contained such questions as Squadron no., Name of Aircraft, Target etc. I saw at once that this was a trick and just gave my name, no. and rank; at this he got into quite a temper and threatened me with all sorts of punishments. I stayed there for 3 days.”

August 21

“Today, I was transferred to the camp where I had my first square meal, wash & shave since I had been shot down. You can imagine the contrast to the harrowing trials of the past 11 days, to speak to people in one’s own language and to eat decent food provided by that excellent organisation, the Red Cross. I shared a room with 7 U.S.A.F. men and we spent the day until lights out, getting acquainted.”

August 22

“I had slept well and, after using the bathroom facilities, spent the rest of the day eating excellent meals and walking around the Camp which contained well kept vegetable and flower gardens. In the afternoon, a crowd of us went to the playing field for a scratch game of football.”

August 23

“I learned that we would be going to the main Officers’ Camp, Stalag Luft III, on the next day. I wrote my first card home to my wife, acquainting her of my safety and good health.”

August 24

“We had a large meal around 4 pm and were told to prepare for the forthcoming journey. We were given a Red Cross parcel and some German rations then marched to Oberusal Station. I discovered that we were to travel for 2 days and nights in a convoy of covered cattle trucks. The Captain in charge told us that he had given orders to the guards to shoot anyone that tried to escape. I shared the truck with 19 other chaps and we used straw bales and lamps to make the forthcoming trip as comfortable as possible. There were four Luftwaffe guards, armed with machine guns. I chummed up with Graham Spencer and Bill Hickson and began to recount each other’s adventures as the journey to Stalag Luft III started.”

August 25

“After a restless night, due to the noise, cold and discomfort, our journey continued with only regular stops for breaks.”

August 26

“This was the last day of our trip; we reached Sagan, the location of Stalag Luft III, at 12 noon and alighted. About 80 of us marched into The Vorlager of the central compound where we were searched, photographed and had our fingerprints taken. At about 1 pm, we entered the central compound and, with great joy, I briefly met P/O Gosling, a member of my Squadron before being hurried to Block 52. There we met some RAF officers who helped us form a Mess, consisting of 8 RAF Officers. This involved cooking for ourselves and constructing cooking pans out of Red Cross tins. We elected a cook rations officer and then took stock of the surroundings. We were in a large compound, 400 by 480 yds, surrounded by a double fence

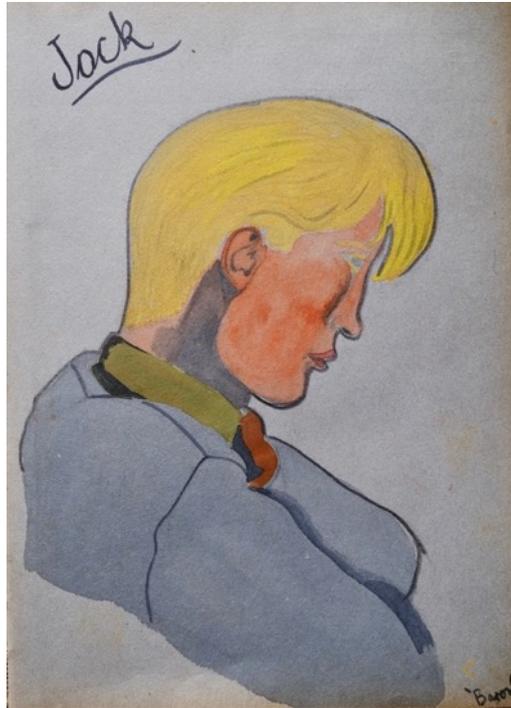


of barbed wire 7 ft high. There were 5 observation towers with fixed machine guns, manned by guards with rifles who continually watched the movements of the prisoners.

We had to be in our hut by 10 pm or risk being shot. The compound was patrolled by guards with police dogs. So passed our first day in the Central compound of Stalag Luft III.

3 weeks passed while the Mess constructed cooking pans and got to know each other's character.....”

My father's account of the remaining time that he spent as a POW will be continued in a future issue. Following are, what I consider to be, the most impressive part of his record; the illustrations contained in his Log. Some have survived very well. On most you can read his artist persona “Baron”, a practice that he maintained in his painting throughout the rest of his life.



thickness of the ply and shelf thickness to the relevant ply panels. Ensure that the straightest side is placed against the SawStop fence, to make a parallel cut. For narrower ply, such as the roof, the Makita 300 mm compound mitre saw can be used.

Mark out frame positions on the ply panels, as pictured at right. Drill screw holes, spread glue, clamp framing to ply then screw from the outside, recessing the head about 1 mm so it can be filled, prior to painting. Starting with the back, then the sides, as picture at right.



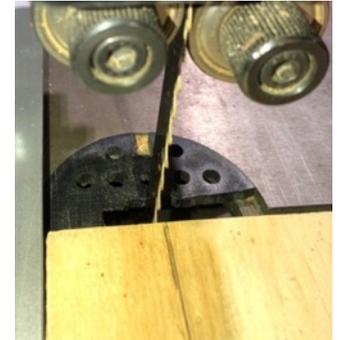
B) The Shelf

After assembly of the body, determine the location of the shelf,

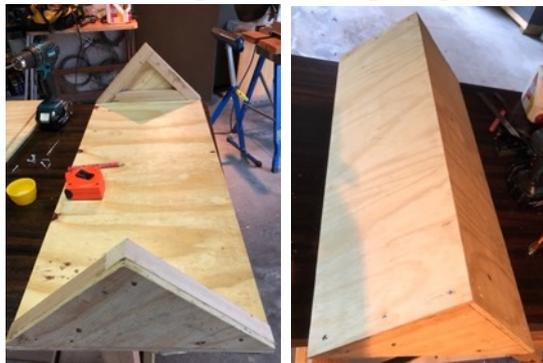


from the plan and mark the position of the shelf support frame on the inside of the back panel then extend to the sides. Drill the screw holes from the inside at the centre of the frame lines, then spread the glue. Position the frame (I needed my wife to hold it in place) while I screwed from the back.

Measure the internal rectangle above the shelf frame and cut out on the SawStop. Determine the corner cut-outs (in my case 25 x 30 mm) required for the shelf to fit around the frame. Mark the dimensions with a combination square, at the four corners. NB because of the limited throat on the bandsaw, you will have to mark the cut-out on alternate sides. Use the marked lines to set the bandsaw fence to blade distance. This allows common cuts to be made, ensuring accuracy of the fit. Don't attach, at this stage.



C) The Roof - I've found that the easiest way to start is with the gables. It is a right angled, isosceles triangle (2 equal sides), since, as we all know, the sum of a triangle's angles is 180 degrees, the other 2 angles = 45 degrees. See photo at right. From the plan, determine the span of the roof. It should extend at least 10 mm from the body. Taking a sheet of square ply, turn it 90 degrees to form the roof apex, then



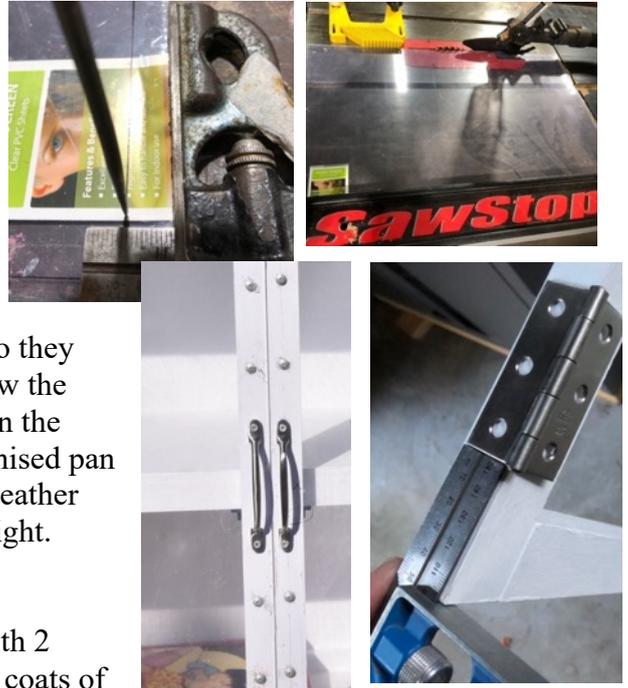
measure equally down each side until the base measurement is achieved. Set the Makita 12" saw to 45 degrees to cut along the base line. Repeat for the other gable. Then cut the ply for the roof to the width of the triangle sides and length as plan. Cut the frame to fit inside the triangles, flush with the edge. Attach the side cladding, then base, I added an internal centre frame for rigidity. See photos at left.

D) The Doors – Select timber to suit the size of the doors, allowing for the strength added by the 5 mm perspex panels. The fit of the doors is critical so the frame at the front of the library body must be square and the door timber must be straight and flat so that it sits against the frame. Measure the external edges of the door frame; each door is half that width by the height.

5. Assembly

The Roof – keep separate until on site, to reduce the weight. Make screw holes inside the body, at the 4 corners, to align with the roof framing, then check for external alignment over the doors, sides and back before screwing into place.

The Doors – Cut the perspex on the SawStop (at a slow rate of feed to avoid melting it), using the doors as a template for setting the fence distance to the blade. Using a combination square, an awl and a ruler, mark the screw hole positions prior to drilling (slightly oversize) holes in the perspex. I found that aligning and clamping the two sheets enabled the holes to be in register. Attach 4 - 25 x 75 mm weatherproof hinges to the edge of the door frames, using a combination square for even spacing, see picture below right, then position the doors on their frame so they are a flush fit, especially where they close together and screw the other leaf of the hinge. Fit magnetic catches for each door on the underside of the shelf. Then attach the perspex, using galvanised pan head screws, ensuring that the internal edges form a good weather seal to the doors. Finally, attach the handles, see photos at right.



6. Finishing

Painting – It has been my practice to paint inside and out with 2



coats of a white undercoat/primer/sealer then have the final decoration done by the kindergarten. I found it easier to paint the shelf separately to painting inside. Paint the doors and allow time to thoroughly dry prior to attaching the perspex panels.

Varnishing - I used cedar on the roof and, after fine sanding and dusting, I finished it with 4 coats of an external varnish for extra waterproofing. See before and after pictures below.



Bunnings' Role



Pictured at left are myself and Ben Colman, Bunnings' Activities Organiser, on 25 May, with a well laden trolley of donated materials. Ben was very helpful and generous, encouraging me to load more materials, especially marine ply, than needed for the current project. I appreciated his assistance in loading them into my car, as I had recently had a cataract operation so was on light duties.



On 30 May, I had my other eye operation so production ceased for a week, on doctor's orders.



Presentation Day

Finally, following its completion, I arranged with Ben and Jessica to deliver the library on 16 June. The location is quite close to the Shed, on the corner of Sefton and Dartford Roads. I arrived early so I could attach the roof and the handles. It was a lovely winters day with the class being held outside awaiting the official opening of the library when the children fill it with books. I gave a speech about what we do at the men's Shed and Ben talked about Bunnings. We both referred to our respective roles in engaging with the community. I was presented with a "thank you" card, drawings done by the children and a small present. I hope that the following pictures evoke the positive mood of the day.



Hi Philip,

Thanks very much for the photos.

The library was a rewarding project to be a part of and it was great to work with the Hornsby Woodworking Men's Shed.

A touching story about your daughter too and I'm certain that book you donated to the preschool will be greatly appreciated.

Maybe we can work together on another project before too long.

Best Regards,

Ben Colman Bunnings Activities Organiser

17 May 2022



Vincent Allan on Violins

Vincent is a new member who works in a violin shop in Epping. His address to the Members' meeting on 22 April was all about the history and construction of violins and violas. I asked him to summarise that presentation so that all members can have the same enjoyment of this fascinating topic.

Vincent agreed to provide me more information about the history and construction of these instruments. But it did not arrive in time for publication.

So, stay tuned.



The **Traditional Tool Group Sale**



Piles of donated old tools are a common sight around the Shed. Often, a clean and sharpen is all that is needed to present them in a sales-worthy condition.



Kevin Wallace is a member of the TTTG and has been restoring these tools in preparation for the sale that was held on 20 February. He provided the following photos and reported: *“We made \$2812.40 nett, after expenses of \$200.00 for the 4 tables.”*



Ian Joins the DURAL MEN'S SHED

Long-time Shed member, Ian Stewart recently announced his intention to leave our Shed and join Dural Men's Shed, which is only five minutes from his home at Glenhaven. He asked to remain on the Cutting Edge distribution as a way of keeping in touch. We are interested in learning more about local Sheds, with a view to forming a relationship and benefit from our complementary activities.



I knew that there was a Men's Shed at Dural, and I was urged to go there so, when the virus closures finished, I did. The Men's Shed is an outreach of the Dural Baptist Church. I was able to register for the Shed online, which I did, and I found out some of the history of the Shed, and a few of the activities that could be undertaken there. Like the HWMS we're members of the Australian Men's Shed Association.

Unlike the HWMS, we don't admit ladies.

The Shed was started in 2011, and the woodworking section is on the lower level underneath The Centre, which is not only the Church, but also an indoor sports facility focussing on football and netball. There are also outdoor football teams as a part of the scene, too.

A substantial car show has also been run on a yearly basis, (except for the two virus years), and it's hoped to start this show again, perhaps this year.

One of the first activities in which I thought that I would involve myself at the Shed was called White Lion, where every Friday wayward boys and young men would come to the Shed for introductory teaching in woodwork and mentoring, but unfortunately, the programme ceased due to the onset of the virus. There was a bus dedicated to this service, too.

The woodworking section is perhaps not quite as good as Hornsby, but for me it's more than adequate, given that I have a good shop at home, and I need little of the gear there, just as with Hornsby shed.

Our machines include two table saws, four band saws, two drop saws, a 20" thicknesser, a 10" jointer-thicknesser, a hollow chisel morticer, seven lathes (a new one came this week (12/05), drill presses, numerous belt and disc sanding machines, and combo sanders, and two router tables. Given my experience, I have been asked to oversee the operation and maintenance of two machines and help with instructing users of any



machine with safety tips or technique improvement. I also try to help with machine set-ups if there is any problem and I am able to do so.

Another of the Shed's facilities is a very comprehensive metalworking section in another building on the site. There were all types of metalworking machinery – folder, milling machine, lathe and welding facilities of all types – oxy, electric stick and TIG & MIG, a spot welder, and forge for blacksmithing. There is some great talent here.

A bonus for me was that the special welding needed a quality air supply, such that I was able to use it to spray any items that I wanted to do with furniture-grade lacquer enabling three coats to be done in a day, weather permitting, of course, since they didn't have a spray booth. Metal items were also sprayed there, as some of the men had panel-beating talents, and one even built model cars.



There is a hoist for car servicing and allied to that was an arrangement with students from Galston High to have some introduction to motor mechanics.

Another major activity involves removing kitchens from a retirement village's villas when they are renovated after a client moves out. We then take them down to the bushfire-ravaged areas of the south coast and give them to folk who are trying to rebuild. We are now becoming involved in flood victim assistance, goods for Lismore and furniture for Afghani refugees.



We also undertake commissions for other clients as they become available, such as building windmills for the Easter Show – the towers of which were made of wood and the fans of steel – these made by the metalwork section. You may have seen them sometimes near water tanks at Homebush.

We also have a laser and electronics expert, another who specialises in hand made jewellery, and a 3-D printer, too, so a wide variety of skills. There are some members who seem to me to just come along for a chat, which is also OK.

Another bonus for me is that the Shed is five minutes from home.

So, for the reasons above, I find that the Dural Men's Shed fulfils my needs for such a facility and then some, hence my not renewing my Hornsby membership.

Yes, perhaps there could be opportunities in the future for some co-operation on a project or two, but our focus is different to HWMS – we do have a lot of activity within our community – local retirement villages, local schools and the Women's Refuge and even Parklea Jail.

Ian Stewart

Is It Time For Another Member Outing?

For some time now, your Committee has been considering another outing, now that it is safe to go out in groups. Quite a number have been considered but none have been seriously considered, at the time of going to print. For those of you who participated, the trip to Garden Island, in October 2017, was a stand-out success. Members and their guests were invited. There was a reasonable cost which covered a hired bus that left from the Shed. It was comprehensively reported in the Shed magazine at the time, as my photos below illustrate.



I have listed below, some of the more interesting contenders researched in recent months. Please let me know if any are of interest to you or offer your own suggestion. *Philip*

1. The Riverboat Postman Tour Friday, 25 March, 10 am

Hornsby Council is pleased to invite Seniors aged 60+ to join us on The Riverboat Postman Tour for a wonderful day out. It is a 3-hour trip along the Hawkesbury River, starting and ending in Brooklyn which is easily accessible by train to Hawkesbury River Station. The Tour includes morning tea at departure and a Ploughman's-style lunch at midday. **Cost:** Free.



2. Henry Bros Saws

“Australia’s most versatile saw company. If it cuts, slices, dices, chips or chops Henry’s can supply it or sharpen it”.

It is located just off the Windsor Road at Vineyard, a few Ks west of Rouse Hill. We had a very enjoyable outing there in July 2004. Long-time employee, Brad, (he is still there) took us on a tour and we saw some very large bandsaw blades being manufactured. We finished with a great BBQ that one of our members organised.



3. Navy Harbour Cruise

Would you like to know more about Royal Australian Navy (RAN) activities and facilities in Sydney Harbour from 1788 to the present, especially during WW II?



You are invited to join the Naval Historical Society of Australia for a three-hour cruise west of the Harbour Bridge. The Society is a non-profit organization run by volunteers to preserve and honour our naval history. The sites you will see and learn about include HMAS Waterhen, Cockatoo Island, Spectacle Island and



Snapper Island.

4. Demonstration Of Guitar Making

Steve Toscano's school is located in



Hornsby. He says, "Happy to be involved.

What I've done in the past for such groups is a short demo/talk and QnA session at my workshop.

I can host upwards of around 40 people at a time, but anything over about 20 gets a little cramped."

5.



Established by Richard Parsons in 1987, Canalpie Timbers and Design creates a wide variety of solid timber custom designs with emphasis on using sustainably sourced and recycled timber as raw material. We undertake many different commissions, offering fine

furniture and cabinet work, staircases and solid timber joinery.

Salvaged logs from the rural and urban environment are an important resource, converted with exceptional care and consideration of their individual qualities and various potential end uses. Architects, commercial and domestic clients have the opportunity to see unique pieces realised, combining top quality workmanship and materials.

I contacted Richard about a Shed visit, last year and he said "That will be fine for you guys to arrange a workshop/mill visit with me when we are permitted". The address is, 65 Hill Top Road, Tennyson, NSW

6. Hornsby Model Engineers

Home of the
GALSTON VALLEY RAILWAY

We are a Model Engineering Club, near Hornsby NSW.

We have an extensive 5" gauge miniature railway, with a main-line length about 1 km, and running through a delightful natural bush setting. Rides are available on our monthly Public Running Days. We also have a large G1 layout which is being developed with scale buildings and which is a 'must see' when you visit. Our most valuable resource is a very keen membership interested in many different aspects of model engineering.

Member, Mark Restuccia is a member and he recommended the railway as a very worthwhile visit.



Woodworker's Journal - Recent Extracts

Weird Woodworking Words



Last week I used the term bodger, which is someone who turned wooden legs — typically for Windsor chairs and most often out in the forest. A friend of mine told me it was a new word for her, which got me thinking. Our craft has some odd terms that most of us take for granted. Dado comes to mind as well as rabbet (that's rebate to our Brit friends).

Actually, bodgers were one of three craftspeople who built chairs, with benchmen and framers completing the trio (this was news to me). As I poked around for other archaic woodworking terms, I found another trio of note: nave, spokes and felloes.

As I have never made a wooden cartwheel, the terms nave and felloes were new to me. Some terms that I have used but also forgotten are arris, fleam, in the white, mullion and joyner. Seems I am a bit of a word nerd. [Rob Johnstone](#).

Drill Bits Handy For Routing Setups

By reader, submitted Feb 2022

When I need to set a precise bit height at my router table, I take two drill bits with diameters that match the router bit height I need. I lay both bits down on the table so they're parallel with one another and on either side of the router bit. Then, with the router bit raised higher than necessary, I rest a small scrap on the top cutting edges and on one of the two drill bits. I lower the router bit slowly until the other edge of the scrap touches the second drill bit. At this point, I know my router bit height is dialled in correctly.



Fortress of Solitude

Looking at the world scene these days, I am reminded of the saying, "It is a curse to live in interesting times." While I am inspired by the grit and will of the Ukrainian people, at the same time, I'm feeling terribly saddened by the suffering and death they are dealing with at present. A few trips around the sun allows you to gain perspective and the reports from Ukraine help me to view my life's problems in clarifying light.

At times like these, I confess that I find refuge in my workshop. There, my mistakes are manageable and the illusion of control is easy to find. While turned bowls and chopsticks will not save the world, they can help make my corner of it a little better. Count your many blessings, one of which is this wonderful craft of woodworking that provides solace in difficult times.

Turning Multitool Into A Timber Buffer

By reader, submitted April 2022

I needed to polish a coat of paste wax on several cherry-and-walnut pencil boxes I had made as Christmas gifts last year (you can see one in this photo). So, I covered the triangular sanding pad of my oscillating multi-tool with a thick sweat sock and used it as a makeshift buffer. In no time at all, this method produced a very smooth satin finish.

