

## From the Back Verandah

I suppose this column should be subtitled *A Hurried Rundown on Who the Heck Was and What Ever Happened to The Lovely Miss Aimi Macdonald*. I'm referring to the blonde who draped herself decoratively but almost always mutely around painted signs in the 1960s TV series *At Last the 1948 Show*.

Yes, her role was almost entirely silently aesthetic, just as David Frost's was largely that of front man to link together the main mayhem being perpetrated by John Cleese, Tim Brooke-Taylor and Marty Feldman. I doubt if Aimi uttered 50 words in the whole series, but lest you imagine her as nothing other than a dumb blonde, I'm here to reassure you that her career since has been a lot more seriously vocal, though surely no

less attractive.

It was, by the way, Feldman and Cleese who saw her in a West End cabaret and persuaded Frost to include her in his show. The r. is h.

That history includes a part in the 1970 movie *Take a Girl Like You* (from the Kingsley Amis novel) that starred Hayley Mills and Oliver Reed.

On stage Aimi has appeared in *Barefoot in the Park* and *The Mating Game*. She has also won acclaim in the title role in *The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie*, quite an acting change for the girl who first made her name 30 years ago on TV as a non-speaking sex object.

— Fizzgig

### Bikwil Addresses

*Comment & contributions:*

Bikwil,  
18 Pembury Ave.,  
NORTH ROCKS. 2151.

*Email:*

trogers@wr.com.au

We welcome PC disk submissions (Word 2/6/7/97, TXT formats).

*Back Issues Are Still Available*

# BIKWIL

*The Newsletter of Quiet Enthusiasms*

Editor: Tony Rogers

ISSN 1328-7842

No. 7

May 1998

## Milestone One

I remember writing in this space in Issue 1 and wondering just how long *Bikwil* could really survive. By the look of the pile awaiting publication these days, I needn't have worried. Here we are, still around after a year. Many thanks to all of you who've sent material.

In that first call for contributions I emphasised *Bikwil's* only restriction, that submissions

be mainly 'positive towards', 'in praise of', 'quietly enthusiastic about'.

Since then I've had several conversations with readers on that very topic. We all seem to have sceptical attitudes today. I know I do — I've done the Seligman Pessimism Test. So, for me *Bikwil* is a

useful foil to my own cynicism. I suspect it is for other contributors, too.

A gentle reminder. There are only three issues to go to the Wagner extravaganza. I've received a few submissions already, and some promises. Nevertheless, there's room for more, so . . .

Keep that original doggerel rolling in, too. As H.G. Nelson has warned us, too much is barely enough. And look, if there's one thing *Bikwil* lacks, it's art works. You artists out there know who you are, and so do I. Down on bended knee I go again. How about a cartoon or three?

## What's Inside?

An Unsolicited Testimonial	2	In the Gentle Season	11
A Word in Your Pink Shell-like	3	Down Limerick Lane	12
Ah Me Mum!	4	Web Line	14
Where Three Ways Meet	8	Sonnet à Trois	15
Quintessential Quirky Quotes	10	From the Back Verandah	16

## An Unsolicited Testimonial

Over the past few months I have been soaking up your newsletter's contents with loving care and attention, and let me tell you without equivocation that it stinks through and through.

It would be ridiculous to assert however, that the news is all grim. At least one can say that the smell does at least vary from issue to issue.

In issue two, for instance, I can vaguely detect the stench of diseased crayfish, while two issues later I am vividly reminded of the putrid piquancy of the catastrophic compost heap my grandfather kept, unaerated, during his seven-year sojourn in good old Nyasaland.

Number five deserves to become internationally famous; it positively (and breathtakingly) reeks of Danish cheese in a Paris sewer. Number six, on the other hand, is a grievous disappointment and will probably be better quickly forgotten. The best it can do seems to be a feeble aroma of burning flesh.

For a unique olfactory experience, however, I cannot too highly recommend issue three. What a loathsome mixture! Never in my born days have I come across such a subtle combination of so many evil-smelling effluvia. From every line there emanates a continuous trail of foully odoriferous words and phrases, not even as little as two percent of which any proboscis in the known universe could ever otherwise be expected to get a whiff of in a lifetime.

Yet in all honesty I am obliged to confess that many of these bouquets eluded me for several days, and a couple of the more exotic scents for the best part of a month. Nonetheless, it pleases me to announce that by dint of pains-taking research into dozens of Babylonian perfume catalogues, and thanks to an almost superhuman effort of nasal imagination, those mysterious odours are now at last identified and recorded for the nostril of a hopefully grateful fragrance-conscious posterity. All will be revealed in my shortly-to-be-published in-your-face dissertation *Noses and What Gets up Them*.

Meanwhile, *Bikwil*, happy first birthday!

Yours in essence,  
Olivier de Cologne

## Sonnet à Trois

[ Dreadful Doggerel No. 2 ]

A naughty nude  
Laughed, "Aren't I rude,  
Dancing round the park?"

A portly prude  
Gasped, "I'm not wooed  
By nastiness at dark."

"Perhaps," the brazen nude replied,  
"I'm just a bashful blushing bride."  
"More like an exhibitionist,"  
The prude in admonition hissed.

As if on cue, the groom appeared,  
Naked save for goatee beard.  
"Is this some kind of talent quest?"  
Enquired the prude, with proffered chest.

— Hambone

## Web Line

If there's one information area that the Internet lends itself to admirably it's that of travel and tourism. This issue we'll take a quick dekho at three Australian tourism sites, and perhaps in later issues investigate further afield.

While not exclusively a travel site, *About Australia* is quite a respectable place for information on tourism in Australia. Arranged logically by state, it tries to give adequate data on each city or town covered, but I should stress that not every town or locality is yet present, since the site is still growing.

So far coverage for Western Australia, for example, consists of a general description of the state, followed by tourist information on Perth, Albany, Broome, Bunbury, Carnarvon, Derby, Fremantle, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Mandurah, Margaret River, Monkey Mia, Pemberton and Rottnest Island.

A particularly satisfying site is *Fairfax Walkabout*. At present,

only Queensland and the NT have been completed, but coverage of these seems very full, with many photos. Its subsections are:

This is Australia (history)

Travellers Tips

Books & Maps

Australian A-Z (history, attractions, accommodation, eating for over 1400 towns)

Magical Mystery (unusual places)

Travellers Tales (your chance to praise your favourite destinations).

NSW readers may be reassured to know that the NRMA has its own Internet site. Last time I dropped in, apart from some featured "deals of the month", the emphasis was on the Great Ocean Road, Western Australia's Southwest, Thredbo in Summer, the Blue Mountains, the Holiday Coast and the Hunter Valley. You can also browse a list of a dozen localities.

For those readers dedicated to the abolition of the automobile, railway travel will be addressed in *Bikwil* in due course.

— TR

### Internet sites referred to above:

<http://www.about-australia.com/about.htm>

<http://www.walkabout.fairfax.com.au/>

<http://www.nrma.com.au/travel/index.html>



## A Word in Your Pink Shell-like

In the November 1997 issue I discussed acronyms, and this has prompted jeneric of North Sydney to question the origin of "yuppie". Doesn't it derive from "Young Upwardly-mobile Professional Person", rather than from "Young Urban Professional + p + ie", as given in my column?

Actually the former interpretation is the one I myself would have quoted, had I not checked (in the 1990 *Macquarie Dictionary of New Words*). I suspect, too, it's what 90% of people at any dinner party would say. Now that jeneric has raised it, I've researched this whole matter further — in Nigel Rees' *Why Do We Say . . . ?* (1987), the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed. 1989), the *Oxford Dictionary of New Words* (1991), and the *Macquarie Book of Slang* (1996).

Between them, these five tools give all sorts of fascinating ancillary info — such as examples in print dating back to 1982, extensions like "Yupspeak" and "yupmobile", as well as the crucial explanation of how the confusion probably originated.

All concede that, although strictly speaking its derivation is "urban professional", "yuppie" has too long been interpreted as "upwardly mobile professional/person/people" for that meaning to be discounted. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of New Words*,

At first (1982-4) "yuppie" competed with the form "yumpie" (which included the "m" of "upwardly-mobile"), but this form was perhaps too close to the verb "yomp", with its military route-march associations, to succeed.

So it looks as though counter-gravitational movement is here to stay, even to the extent of these analogous creations:

buppie (= black . . .)

guppie (= gay (US)/green (UK) . . .)

woopie (= well-off older person)

glam (= greying leisured affluent middle-aged).

After the '87 stock-market crash, however, a reaction inevitably set in, and we got things like "yuffie" (= young urban failure), and the one jeneric is partial to, "puppy" (= previously upwardly . . .).

jeneric also offered another acronym that's new to me but apparently a favourite with travel agents booking cruises, "lolita", which stands for "Little Old Lady In Trendy Area".

— Harlish Goop

## Ah Me Mum!

We went up to Sydney town,  
Me Ma, me son & me,  
To see the lights of Sydney Town  
Familiar to son & me.

But me Mum had other notions  
& was, & had taken all her potions  
For a city filled with EVIL  
But she longed to see it so!

So we took her well intended  
To an old Manly Pub extended  
With toots and baths and showers  
And the beach across the road!

The night waves truly woke her  
And she swore some bloody joker  
Was pulling all the ground around  
As the heaving swells did break!

Oh she put her toe into it —  
And was worried when she knew it  
That the Ocean swept away  
Her footage on the sand!

So son and I just held her,  
And she laughed and joined right in!  
Loving the sea waves crashing  
Till one caught her on the chin!

Soaked and wet and laughing  
We washed our feet in passing  
At the old tap on the walk  
So many people knew!

A Tasmanian, at home in Tasmania  
Met a Scotsman, on tour of Australia:  
“When I ask of your region,  
You say you’re Glaswegian,  
So shouldn’t you come from Glasmania?”

If you come from the town of Newcastle,  
Novocastrian’s your tag on the parcel;  
If you come from Enzed,  
Be heppy and gled,  
Novozealian as a name is an astle.\*  
(\* With apologies to a well-known opening batsman.)

— landoc

A young lady who came from St. Peters  
Had a girth that was measured in metres;  
When viewed from the rear  
It was patently clear  
She was one of the world’s greatest eaters.

A young secretary buffing her nails  
Said, “You know you can bank on the Wales;”  
My boy-friend’s a teller,  
A lovely young feller,  
My interest in him never fails.

A chap from my old alma mater  
Had trouble with personal data;  
As he went down the aisle  
Someone wiped out his file,  
And left him persona non grata.

A fractions young child on the plane  
Kept shrieking Again and AGAIN.  
I said, “I know it’s not nice,  
But can’t we pack him in ice,  
And salvage what’s left of my brain?”

— NonesuCH

## Down Limerick Lane

The derivation of the word "limerick" is a bit obscure, even for the great *Oxford English Dictionary*. After reminding us that Limerick is the chief town in the Irish county of that name, the *OED* continues:

Said to be from a custom at convivial parties, according to which each member sang an extemporized 'nonsense verse', which was followed by a chorus containing the words "Will you come up to Limerick?".

H.W. Fowler helpfully gives us a specification of the limerick's form:

A nonsense verse in the metre popularized by Edward Lear in his *Book of Nonsense* (1846), of which the following is an example:

There was a young lady of Wilts,  
Who walked up to Scotland on stilts;  
When they said it was shocking  
To show so much stocking,  
She answered, 'Then what about  
kilts?'

But although Lear started it all, as originally used by him the limerick's last line was almost always a variant of the first or second, not a completely different and startling idea as today's version has it. Lear's usual format — there are a handful of exceptions — goes more like this:

There was an Old Person of Hurst,  
Who drank when he was not athirst;  
When they said, "You'll grow fatter,"  
he answered, "What matter?"  
That globular Person of Hurst.

I understand that Kingsley Amis took a disdainful view of this anticlimactic repetition in Lear, but according to Quentin Blake, editor of a recent collection of all Lear's nonsense, Lear "intuitively . . . [knew] what was best for him". The more modern version Blake describes in these words:

The traditional limerick, as it went on to develop, comes to a smart conclusion which is clinched by the final line. There's often a momentary twinge of anticipation as you sense the rhyme ahead — an effect which the dirty limerick in particular is glad to make use of. Lear forgoes that — it's not his kind of humour at all.

After all, Lear *was* writing for children.

You'll have noted already that the third line is sometimes given as a single line with an internal rhyme, sometimes as two separate lines. The rhythmic effect remains the same, however.

What follows are some limericks concocted by a couple of non-Irish Bikwilians. Furthermore, I have been requested by our editor to encourage other readers to submit as many limericks as they like to *Down Limerick Lane*. For legal reasons, better keep them original.

— Harlish Goop

But she was sure it was intended  
That from such a thing extended  
She'd get tinea or AIDS,  
Or germs of so and so!

Next day, son took her into Town,  
Across the ferry treat!  
I had given him instructions  
On routes and buses' functions, and how

to get the Red Bus to save me Mother's feet!  
Of course he all ignored it — & Mother had to walk it  
Up Pitt Street at Lunchtime &  
Oh me Mother! She's no cow!

She WOULD look in all the windows —  
& bugger where intended all the others ended  
'Cause she was not familiar with City life or  
Pedestrian traffic flow.

She'd gone to buy a dress of fancy City stuff  
And ended up by telling City Lunch crowds,  
"Enough's a bloody 'nuff."  
"You look like swarms of SHEEP!"

"All to left & right to right — don't shove me like that!"  
So she hit him with her hefty bag — Poor son had given up!  
His Nan was barely seven stone  
But sights of City seen,

She couldn't believe that Aussies  
Could be so doggone mean!  
Son hastened her to the great shops of dresses plenty,  
& After 700 she reckoned they was made up for a FANCY!

But back to the pub asplendid —  
 She came with arms extended, full of oysters  
 And prawns and breads — all from down the road!  
 So as we all did eat it — me Mother kept us "up"

with Tales of City Woe,  
 "Ignorant as SHEEP!" she cried.  
 & for the rest of week thereafter, me mother was the martyr  
 Of all the Manly's shops, & to no more PITT ST. would she go!

Sure she loved the Manly Ferry  
 & rode back & forth, for four days in a row,  
 Son was patient, but suspended and rode with her every go!  
 I think just to be certain she didn't go back

to the City's to and fro!  
 And for me all I intended, was to get some sleep  
 And sun and surf and sand  
 Till he bought her home safe & hand in hand!

She tried on shoes & fancy clothes at all of  
 Manly's great Bazaars!  
 So shopped & definitely gotten fat,  
 A full week later — we came back, with nothin' but a Hat!

First we stopped at my friend Ellie's  
 & had lovely cheese & fruit, of Blue cheeses bestest Toffs!  
 Still Mother had to natter (later!)  
 That the cheese looked totally & absolutely off!

So dogged & passed by angry truckies  
 Runnin' it in convoys of 12 by 44  
 Me darlin' Mother talked me home  
 Some 250 miles or more!

## In the Gentle Season

I feel it most in autumn:  
 this lengthening shadow of my day.  
 Autumn's gold is mellow,  
 no spendthrift heat that burns  
 the hours and exhausts the heart.  
 The essence of its tempered light  
 instills a strength which grows  
 through quietness and sustains.  
 More than half my span has gone,  
 undisturbed by holocaust or harm:  
 quietly as shed leaves  
 the paid hours have fallen,  
 so many and some misspent.  
 No point in counting loss.  
 Pointless, too, to make complaint.  
 I am not deprived. Gently  
 in the mellow wash of autumn gold  
 I think of my day's past hours  
 as blown leaves lightly turned  
 by nothing more but nothing less  
 than chance and change: inescapable  
 subtle airs. So I feel it most,  
 always in the gentle season:  
 uninhibited the long limb  
 of memory turns the mould  
 of old leaf fall to reclaim  
 the morning of my life and all  
 its promise of unpaid gold.

*I know not with what weapons World War III will  
be fought, but World War IV will be fought with  
sticks and stones.*

*Albert Einstein*

*The Left in Canada is more  
gauche than sinister.*

*John Harney*

## Quintessential Quirky Quotes

*Justice must not only be done, it must  
be seen to be believed.*

*Beachcomber*

*Here lies Aretino, Tuscan poet  
Who spoke evil of everyone but God,  
Giving the excuse, 'I never knew Him'.*

*Anonymous*

*Try everything once except incest  
and folk dancing.*

*Sir Thomas Beecham*

Till just about at Binalong,  
Well she just had to go!  
& forty lots of truckies near the Church  
Saw me Mum's knickers — white as snow!

Son had slept all through it  
I'm sure he saw his doom —  
Until we reached my Crossroad —  
& again me Mum did boom!

Not ANOTHER of those bastards!  
Another truckie, yes for sure!  
And I don't think ANY of us breathed  
Till me key was in the door!

Now generally me Mum is gentle &  
You'd never hear her swear  
But mention visit Manly &  
Gents! Just hit the floor!

So all way up and all way down  
The town of Cootamundra  
You can talk all you like  
Of City Life Up Under.

But Mother says it just ain't safe  
With all those mad truckies passin',  
Then she'll tell ya blow for blow  
Of roads too small for passin',

& top it up with yarns of trains de-railed as well  
& for all these feats — you'd NEVER  
Go again or leave a Country Town  
So forget Forever tryin' — to show me Ma around!

## Where Three Ways Meet

(In March we began our *Where Three Ways Meet* column. In the same issue Fizzgig introduced us to a engaging bit of Victorian history about Frances "Daisy" Brooke that came as a bit of a surprise to some readers — albeit a pleasurable one.

It has whetted your appetite for more, we reckon, so this time *WTWM* has a high Victorian quality. Not necessarily of the prurient kind, mind you, or even in every case originating in England — just a few things from that period of offbeat interest. A fascinating era, the 19th century, one which is now almost as well documented down its narrow back streets as along its broad thoroughfares. Hope the following idiosyncratic items appeal to you; they certainly piqued our interest here. All were contributed by a reader who insists on being known as Old Vic.)

First, meet young Captain Ewart Grogan. He loves a girl, you see, but her family regards him as a hopeless cove who will never amount to anything. Least of all to a suitable husband for their daughter who can keep her in the manner they deem her to deserve.

So what sensational exploit can a feller pull off in 1889 to persuade them to reconsider? Shoot a few tigers? Shoot a few rapids?

Grogan's solution is neither of the above, but just as dramatic. He travels down to the Cape of Good

Hope and proceeds northwards on foot, his destination Cairo.

You'll be relieved to learn that his 4,500-mile walk across Africa did duly impress his girls' parents. For not only did he win fame and fortune from the publicity associated with his astonishing stunt — more importantly, he won the girl.

Next, let's turn our attention to "Tiny", daughter of Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, Governor of Madras. Rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty in the 1880s might have had its advantages, but there were drawbacks, too. Listen while she tells the lengths to which she and her friends had to go during long boring dinners:

We invented a great many dodges for making dull people talk. I am supposed to have coined the immortal question, "Do you like string?" And I think it was I who invented the alphabet game, in which one began, say, "Do you like apples?" and had to get the conversation to badminton or the Balearic Isles without being observed.

Apparently in the last game they indicated their progress to each other across the table by collecting in front of them a discreet pellet of bread for each letter achieved.

Now let's look in at the 1889 Paris Exposition. At the time,

cities all over England, not to mention Europe and America, vied with each other to put on the most spectacular showings of the products of human enterprise. Regarded as beginning with the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851 ("The Great Exhibition") — though in all strictness, it wasn't exactly the first big public show — these displays were not without their critics, William Morris, to name but one.

Paris in 1889, of course, could boast something really special — the Eiffel Tower, and who would want to denounce that splendid edifice? Guess who? A group of concerned French artists and writers, who counted prominently in their number Guy de Maupassant and Alexandre Dumas. They expressed their sentiments to the Minister of Commerce as follows:

Is this the horror that the French have created in order to impress us with their vaunted taste? . . . We loathe the prospect of a dizzily ridiculous tower dominating Paris like a gigantic black factory chimney.

Next we head for the playhouse. When you went to the London theatre in those days, you went to the Lyceum to see Henry Irving (1838-1905). The dominant English actor of his time, Irving was renowned for his Shakespearean roles (Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Shylock) as well as

Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*. From 1872 till 1902 he starred with the equally famous Ellen Terry (1848-1928), and in 1895 he became the first actor ever to be knighted.

All well and good, but what's of intriguing note in our present context is that his long-time manager and partner in running the Lyceum Theatre was a certain Abraham Stoker (1847-1912). The feller who wrote *Dracula*.

Victorian England is also remembered — with bemused fondness — for its many dispensers of advice for housewives. Mrs Beeton you'll know. The name Alexis Soyer will also be familiar, if only through TV's *Pie in the Sky*. What about taste-maker Mrs Haweis, prolific on all manner of things, like her *Art of Beauty* (1880) and *Art of Housekeeping* (1889)?

Her husband, Reverend J.R. Haweis, wrote a lot too. He is best known for unforgettable remarks like these gems of advice for parents of daughters, on the usefulness of that increasingly common Victorian household object, the piano:

Just as Latin grammar strengthens a boy's memory, so the piano makes a girl sit upright and pay attention to details.

A good play on the piano has not infrequently taken the place of a good cry upstairs.