



Newsletter Editor, Bill Davis  
PO Box 3111  
CAIRNS QLD 4870  
Ph: 043 240 1965  
Email: Davis@shirbil.com



# Under the Clock

Issue 77 – Dec 2011

~ Patron: Doug Duxbury ~



## West Beach, Adelaide—Vindicatrix Reunion 2011



Proud winner of the Sea Chest  
Rod Disspain



Brian (Biggles) Toogood  
and lovely partner  
Valerie McCabe



What's under your  
Kilt lad?



Terry & Maureen Hales

## From the Secretary

At our October meeting, all Vindi boys who are financial members received a car sticker. They were either handed to members present at the meeting or posted to them. The committee hopes that this surprise gift has given all members the joy of assisting the Association to advertise and spread the name "VINDICATRIX". We still believe that there are many Vindi boys out and about who do not know that Associations in Australia and worldwide exist. Recently, we had a Vindi boy Alan Lawrence who spotted Fred's car with the car registration plate frame which reads "VINDICATRIX 1939-1966". Alan is now our member and we warmly welcome him onboard. We trust that all members who have received their car stickers have now displayed it on the inside of a car window.



A group of us have now returned from the SA Down-under Reunion 2011. We enjoyed the reunion and had a great time meeting up with old friends and meeting new ones. The reunion was a great success. Many thanks to the SA Vindicatrix for their wonderful hospitality.

Vindi Queensland's Committee has volunteered to host the 2012 reunion. This was decided at the Reunion Committee meeting held on 4th November at West Beach, SA. We are sure that our members will be happy with our decision. It is hoped to be held in the Gold Coast/Tweed area, which will make it easy for inter-state/NZ members to be able to fly to Coolangatta. The committee will be working on it and all details will be available in early 2012. So lads start saving!

As 2011 is drawing to its close and we already half way through our Vindi financial year, may I make a final request to those who have not sent the subscriptions for 2011-2012 to do so **NOW**.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you for your support over the year and we wish all Vindi boys and girls a Happy Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year.

Kim Cohen  
Secretary/Treasurer

## New arrival at Sharpness?

The Instructor noticed a new recruit and barked, "Get yourself over ere! What's your name then?" "Paul," the new recruit replied. "Look, I don't know what kind of bleeding-heart pansy bull-shit they're teaching in schools today, but I don't call anyone by his first name," the Instructor scowled. "It breeds familiarity and that leads to a breakdown in authority. I refer to my recruits by their last names only Smith, Jones, Baker etc. Do I make myself clear?" "Yes, sir!"

"Now that we've got that straight, what's your last name?" The recruit sighed "Darling, my name is Paul Darling." "Okay, Paul, go and get yourself a haircut ....."



## West Beach, Adelaide Vindicatrix Reunion 2011

**Friday 4th November at the SA Sea Rescue Squadron.** With 90 odd Vindi lads and partners in one room it was bound to be noisy, intense and good fun. Tony Iles, host and MC kept thing moving with jokes entertainment and raffles. On the Saturday "Meet and Greet" evening an array of wet foods was available to diners with bread rolls and cake display on each table. After, a much surprised audience we were regaled with a "Bagpiper" Pipe Major Ian Small who later gave a talk about his instrument and took requests. A royal member of the Qld branch was more interested in what was under his kilt though. The evening was dispersed with raffle sales and draws, background music and a magnificent western sunset over the sea with many Oooh's and Ahrrr's.

**Saturday 5th November.** With an earlish start for those who played up the night before we boarded luxury coaches for a "Mystery Tour" of Adelaide environs, first a cursory drive along West Beach, a drive not suited for coaches with the narrow road and tight roundabouts. We then headed to Mount Lofty the highest point in the area with breathtaking views and morning tea. From there we traversed the winding Adelaide hills to Hahndorf for souvenir shopping if required or/and lunch. The alluring charm of the village of Hahndorf - classified as Australia's oldest German settlement, sited amongst century old cork elms lining the main street of stone cottages and curios. The commentary was first class as was the coach, this was most evidentiary with the tarpaulin muster of tips.

Back at 2pm and a rest (for some) then back at 6pm for the formal dinner. This was held downstairs at the Squadron in the Barcoo Room. A splendid three course meal was served by a very professional staff. After dinner the special cabaret singer was Winston Kay, with his talented group playing through the evening for dancing. More raffles and more prizes and to end with an auction for Bell Ropes made by Rod Orrah NZ and Marlin Spikes by Jim Fullerton, Qld. At the end of the evening Tony Iles presented each Vindi boy with a Lighthouse candle and a small black box which held the allusive "Golden Rivet" donated by Brian (Biggles) Toogood. Not to end there though was a special table draw to win a hansom handmade wooden anchor on a stand (table decorations made by Mick Suffield carpenter extraordinaire).

**Sunday 6th November.** Sunday morning was a "Time for Reflection" service taken by Winston Kay, we then had a BBQ lunch organized by the Functions Manager Barry Pollard. Branch photos were then taken with the event wrapping up at around 2.30pm. Barry did mention that we were a very well behaved likeable lot and he would be happy to have us any time, he even said he would get the boats out for us next time!

The party continued though through the week with group dining outs and BBQ's during the evenings for those staying on in the holiday mood with a Penfolds wine tasting in the Barossa Valley and much site-seeing and shopping happening. I close in thanking South Australia Vindicatrix in hosting a most successful reunion and a special mention to those many helpers that make these reunions happen. Well done.

*See you all next year in Queensland for the  
12th Down-under Reunion*



Don & Betty Sangster NZ



Allan & Jean Burrow



Al & Gladys Glasson



Les Claydon  
NZ

The Creasey Family

More photos at:- [www.sa.vindicatrix.com](http://www.sa.vindicatrix.com)

## Len's Story - Part 4

### Coochie Mudlo Island

The 'Carefree', which was to be my home for the next year, was a well-constructed 45' counter stern ex-pleasure boat. She had a long foredeck of white beech planking with seams and pitch fillings. The cabin was low, extending to about 12' from the bow, with opening windows and hatch on top. The interior was all varnished; four bunks, the engine box served as a table, small galley and toilet, four portholes which were only opened at anchor. The stern had long bench seats for stowage and for sleeping. Centrally placed was a large ice-box. The deck was self-draining and any fishing water was drained through a hose and out of the scuppers. The stern had a raised permanent awning for shade and with drop-down blinds.

The engine was a six cylinder Chrysler petrol motor, water-cooled with copper keel pipes for cooling and a salt-water-cooled exhaust which burbled away pleasantly when running. The lights were battery powered but sparingly used – kerosene lamps otherwise provided the light when required.

Bill's mum spoilt us with prepared meals which we firstly iced down and then re-heated.

My introduction to stake net fishing: imagine a heap of corks, ropes and net about 4' high and all 600 yards of it piled into the stern of a 14' flat-bottomed net boat with a 4' roller at the stern. For propulsion you stood up and rowed by pushing the oars. You could sit down if you wanted to but at night you had to 'see' where you were going. These nets were kept draped over two round poles about 18' apart – corks one side, leads the other. Monotonous hours were spent mending the nets, if you knew what you were doing. No lacing up; the holes had to be correct and neat. This skill was developed through practice and tuition by skilled fishermen.

Stake net fishing basically involved tying one end of the net to the mangroves at high water, rowing the boat out and finally ending up with the other end also in the mangroves. Stakes were of small mangrove poles about 8' long and 2" diameter with the bark removed so they were smooth. At low tide we surveyed the bank looking for the lowest point such as any gulleys or drop-off points. Stakes were pushed in to mark them. The tides governed the depth to set to set the net by using the available tide tables. The object was to contain any fish left behind the net when the tide went out. To create the barrier after setting the net at night (usually at midnight so low tide was in the morning) the net was rowed out from the mangroves and an oar marked with rope was used to find the right depth. The nets were over-lapped and then you pulled yourself back along them pushing the mangrove stakes in at set intervals on the outside of the net, just twisting the rope around the top of each stake. At low tide, in daylight of course, we rowed in after a couple of hours sleep to pick up the fish. The stakes, in theory, made a netting fence about 8' high.

We had lots of competition for our fish; crows munched on any fish caught high, picking the eyes first and then the bellies. We had a single-shot .22 rifle which we used to shoot at them. I threw and left my shirt over a stake once and Bill shot it by mistake – so many interesting things to recount. There were also sea-horses caught in the net, and whelk-like shells with oysters growing on them.

On one occasion we still had water within the net and Bill told me to be careful as the trapped fish were tailor. Not knowing any better I then tried to grab them and got bitten for my trouble; another learning curve in life – once bitten, twice shy? Mud crabs: back in Paignton, Devon, I spent a few trips going

out to Start Point on the Browse Brothers' crabbing boat. The crabs we caught were docile and could be handled easily unless you stuck your finger in their claw, tapped it on the back and invited it to close the claw. Here things were different: a crab of similar dimensions confronted me and I thought it looked appetising, nice and green in colour, as I went to pick it up. The claws then raised up and clash, clash, he stood on his back legs and wanted to have a go at me. I didn't know how to handle and capture it, a skill I later acquired in my life, so I shot it between the eyes and crab was on the menu that night.

All of our fish were placed in boxes, taken back to the Carefree, washed and iced down in our large ice-box. By this time the tide had started to make and we had to retrieve the nets. Some small fish had also become entangled so we stood, one leg on the side as we pulled it back into the boat and released them. Usually a foot of water was enough to retrieve the net and poles. On one occasion I was concentrating on pulling a small fish out of the net to throw it over the side when, on looking up, there was a great big, maybe 12', tiger shark, jaws wide open, just 3' from the back of the dinghy. The dorsal fin jutted 18" high out of the water. I've seen many sharks at sea, caught them on meat hooks from the tankers, but never that close. I hit it on the snout with the oar as it tried to get me and the only thing that saved me was the fact that the water was so shallow and he couldn't propel his jaws out of the water to grab me. After 3 or 4 goes it turned and swam off. Years later, when I was in Papua New Guinea, seven school children were taken in knee-deep dirty water near the Sumerang River. The school was Talidig and their emblem or flag depicted a shark. No lesson learned after the first one was taken – it took six more deaths before swimming was banned there.

One time when we were anchored near Stradbroke Island Bill told me of a blue lagoon shown on the map. We set off, no shirts, only shorts and bare feet – we never wore shoes for a year. At the lagoon we found it loaded with ducks. 'Gene Autry' took out his trusty .22, laid down and took aim. Of course I had lain right on top of a green ants' nest, the gun went off, the ducks took off, and I took off into the lagoon water. Lesson learned: don't lie down on an ants' nest. I think it took Bill ten minutes to stop laughing.

### School Holidays

Bill had an adopted sister at boarding school, I think in her final year. We were also getting a guest for the coming three week school holiday. I was told we had to be more appropriately attired, to clean up the Carefree, extra provisions were acquired, kerosene for the freezer and fridges. The outside shower was painted; new planks placed on the floor, the outside dunny cleared of spiders and disinfected.

We then picked up these two very attractive 17 year-olds. I was OK; I guess 19 years of age, living on a desert island. Remember the song, '*I was the only man on the island, 150 native girls, I'm the King of the Coral Sea...*' Our island had no girls and God had sent these two attractive and well-endowed girls to save us from our isolation. Bill and I were like two randy dogs but my foster father Bruce, in his deep voice, spoke and said, 'Just be a gentleman'. He had a look in his eye which meant 'don't you touch my daughter or you will end up as crab pot bait'.

It was difficult. We all swam inside the railway line enclosure, had dinghy races, sunbathed on the beach, had picnics, moonlight sailing on the Carefree (it was a motor sailer), and other young people joined us. We thoroughly enjoyed our break from fishing and timber-cutting. I did sneak in a cuddle

or two on those moonlight sails but was a gentleman in the long run. How did that song go again, 'Hey Number One girl sweep the shack, Hey, Number Two girl scratch my back... I'm the only man on the island, and so on...' There is another lesson here but I'm not too sure what it is.

### **Brisbane Show 1949**

The annual Brisbane Show was a must for the Phillips' family so in August we set sail in the Carefree, past Cleveland and up the Brisbane River as far as the Botanical Gardens. Bruce must have had some influence as we tied up to the Water Police jetty, next to Water Police Headquarters. I found this a bit disturbing as I was still a ship's deserter. I even met a Scottish accented police sergeant – "How are ye, lad?" he said. I didn't blink, just smiled and kept going, up Edward Street. Mr Phillips pointed out his old work premises where he ran his jewellery business. Bruce told a story about an apprentice who was sent to pick up a box of screws. He was given a two-wheeled trolley to go up to a wholesale depot in the valley – a bit like the merchant navy stories to trick the new chums. This lad trudged off pushing the trolley and on arrival was given a small box of screws half the size of a matchbox. It was a long walk back in the hot sun but he 'turned the screws' as you might say by catching a taxi, putting the trolley inside and returning in style. On arrival back he rushed inside and said, 'would you please pay the taxi. I was so exhausted pushing such a large box I was forced to hire a cab!'

Bruce was a member of the male only Tattersalls Club, very exclusive. I once got in the front door, but no further.

The Brisbane Show was always held when the westerly winds blow, dry and dusty. There was an endless display of farm produce, machinery and food. The best part was the wood-chopping and cross-cut saw competitions. Bruce said Bill and I should train for next year's event. We were fit, and good at it, but we had other things to do than waste our time on something only held once a year. We all spent three more days in Brisbane. I went off on my own after the first day, to the movies where I met up with a girl I'd first met at the Seamen's Dances. Her father had introduced me to eating sand crabs before I jumped ship. Brisbane had many restaurants where the staple menu was steak and eggs or mixed grill and chips, followed by apple pie and ice-cream – about 6/- (60c) including coffee and rolls. Trams were everywhere; a line was marked down the centre of the pavement and when walking you had to keep to the left. It was very crowded in those days.

The picture theatres were great; one in particular, The Regent, was magnificent with a large staircase, marble walls and decorations. An organ rose up at interval when music was played while ice-cream girls sold them, as well as cigarettes, from trays. You could smoke your head off in those days and it got very smoky inside. Each seat had its own ashtray on the back of the seat in front of you. There were always two feature films plus news and shorts. It was a half-day if you wanted to sit out the whole show. There were restaurant facilities as well.

We called into the Brisbane City Hall, very impressive. The public toilets were underground in the Square, tiled, with an Attendant to pay. He cleaned them and watched over the place – no problems there, nor any graffiti.

Holiday over and back on the Carefree to Cleveland where we fuelled up, filled the water tanks, bought 20 slabs of ice at the Fish Board and went back to work.

### **Timber Cutting**

Coochie Mudlo Island had previously been cleared of any

really large trees however there were trees remaining that were suitable for logging and subsequently to be sawn into planking and posts. Bruce Phillips' plan was for young Bill and me to fell, top and bark these trees, which would then be pulled by tractor to the beach, rafted and towed to Victoria Point before being trucked to Cleveland where the sawmill would cut it up. Some was returned to the Island but most of this timber was sold to cover costs, and I would get paid for my effort.

Our equipment consisted of three types of axe – Brades, Plumb and Kelly. The trees being felled were iron-bark, bloodwood and cypress pine. The Kelly axe was a long slim blade, good for cutting pine. The Brades cut the bloodwood and the Plumb was good for either hardwood or bloodwood. Iron wedges and mauls were used to open the tree if a saw jammed. We also had two crosscut saws, one for hardwood and one for pine. Two bare-footed and bare-chested lads set out early one morning in the crisp, clean air, with Mr Phillips supervising and checking each tree to be felled. He worked out the position and direction to be dropped, where the branches were heavier to try and get the tree in a clear area so we could top it, bark it with bars and measure its length and circumference for future payment.

We had to scarf each tree, cut a wedge out of it on the side where it was to fall. The wedge had to be precise, deep enough so that the tree didn't split and fall back on us. It was hot, sweaty work, the mossies were active and leeches and snakes were everywhere. Being bare-footed, Workplace Health and Safety today would have stopped us on the spot!

One particular day we had a hang-up when our tree fell on top of a smaller one. So that the bigger tree could be grounded I went in with the Brades axe and flailed away at the smaller tree. Crack, crack – get out of there! I ran, holding the axe, straight into a wait-a-while which is a thorny vine that should be avoided. As I ran I slid the blade of the axe right along the wait-a-while and sliced into my big toe. The scar remains today – a big lump where the bone was cut. It was bandaged up then back to work. Tough, or stupid? Another lesson learned – wear boots when cutting timber.

In the bush on the hill directly above the beach shack was a cleared area where Mr and Mrs Phillips were to build their permanent home. The plan was to use mainly cypress pine which has that lovely, knotty look when varnished and is also termite resistant. Mr Phillips had a plan to use a T-model Ford to turn a sawmill blade to cut smaller trees to make 4"x4" posts or bigger from any suitable branches. We had a look at the vehicle which was just a rusty mess but the engine and cone-type gear box were OK. The test was made one day when a tickler box which was in the shack was fitted. Petrol added somewhere, the handle fitted – no thumb around the handle as a back-fire could break the thumb. After a few cranks the engine fired. It was amazing, smoke everywhere!

Years later I returned to Coochie for a visit and the T-model was by then in its own shed. It was now multi-purpose running a generator, a twin-bladed shaper planer and saw blade. There was a long leather or canvas belt flapping away with another home-made slip clutch belt driven off a rear wheel. Lesson learned: ingenuity is vital in the bush. Don't rely on others if you can do it yourself. But, if you don't know anything about engines, get an expert. It costs a lot more in the long run if you stuff it up (like when you adjust your motor mower, car or whipper snipper today). Leave some things to the experts.



## Colourful Characters

### Percy Grout



I was born in 1934 in Orpington Kent. Moving due to the blitz to Knatts Valley, Kent and went to Eynstord school though didn't start school until I was seven due to the school being full of evacuees. When the war finished we moved to Essex, my parents I'm sure had gypsy blood, always moving. I've lost count of the schools I went to. My last school was at Walton-on-Naze. My parents then had a fish and chip shop at a village some miles from school. When I left school at Christmas 1949 I sent for papers to join the RN. My stepfather was WW1 navy and was always talking RN so I naturally wanted to join. When the application forms arrived my parents refused to sign them so I was forced to work on a large local farm, there being no other work around. I hated it, low wages, hard work and no future.

Then things changed, my school mate Rex Flynn's father was a stevedore for Shaw Saville in London and he took Rex and me for a day around the docks. Going aboard two ships, both old coal burners, the 'Mahia' and 'Fordsdale', we asked some crew members how we can get jobs aboard these ships. They told us to apply for sea school training through the Shipping Federation and the rest, as they say, is history. I joined the TS Vindicatrix in Sharpness in October 1950, Rex a year after.

My first ship was the 'MV Henzee' two months down the Meds, we took military supplies to the British Army at Aquaba, of Laurence of Arabia fame. The British Army was stationed on the border between Israel and Jordan, supposedly to keep the peace. I would never have dreamed that over 50 years later the UK Ministry of Defence would award me a Merchant Seaman's Veterans Badge for that first trip. My next four trips were on the 'Wiawera' to NZ and Australia. Deck Boy to SOS, first port in NZ was Timaru. Again I would never have imagined that one day I would live in Timaru yet I did from 1976 until I moved to Tassie in 1995 permanently.

My next ship was Elder Dempsters 'Calgary' - West Africa, USA Poland and Denmark. I had told my parents that one day I was going to live in New Zealand or Australia. On the trip home from Copenhagen I received a letter to say they had sold up and were leaving on the 'Dominion Monarch' for New Zealand. I tried to work my way over but no luck. So I joined the 'Tekoa', NZSCo thinking I would "skin out" in NZ, no such luck. She was an old rust bucket laid up in Falmouth, we did thirteen months, Australia, USA, Bermuda, Noumea, and never saw NZ. The worst ship I was ever on and I did do 25

years at sea. Keith Trevour from Brighton and I joined together as SOS's and had sailed together before we conned on the 'Tekoa'. The ship had some company men on her, all they knew were NZSCo vessels and the NZ run. We couldn't believe the bullshit flags etc, like the RN. I was logged in the Brooklyn "navy yard" for being on the gangway wearing a SSA jersey and not an NZSCo.

My next ship was two month down the Med and my first trip as an AB on the Ellerman and Papayanni 'Egyptian'. Then three month on the Shell tanker 'Caprinus' then coastal on the 'Napier Star', and three months on 'Esso Southampton'. During this time I had saved up and managed to get a passage on the 'Ruahine' to Wellington in 1955. My parents had by then moved to Lyttleton on the South Island.

I joined the NZ Seaman's Union on arrival and my first ship was the Inter Island Ferry 'Rangitira' sailing from Wellington to Picton and return. I sailed on the Kiwi coast until about 1958 then went on the wharf in Lyttleton along with many ex seamen. Quite a few, I have since found out were Vindi boys like myself.

Living in Lyttleton I was involved in the waterfront Fist Aid division, was a volunteer ambulance driver and was one time Group Sea Scout Leader. I was the first AB involved with the saving and restoring the Lyttleton Tug, which is now quite well known and some of our Vindi members have had a trip on her at the Christchurch reunion. We begged, borrowed and stole to get her sailing during the Christchurch Commonwealth Games and proud to say successful.

Prior to getting Lyttleton Tug shipshape etc. there was plenty to do as we had to get her ready for passengers. During the Commonwealth Games, with shipping contacts, we got rope, paint and no doubt the engineers got some things also. Coal was a big expense and was supplied from Greymouth by rail, not sure what mine it came from, could have been the one which had the terrible tragedy last year, don't know though.

We had to have a deck and engine survey. I did the deck one, as you would know at sea, that's the mate's job. But I saw the local marine surveyor and asked what was required. He had us overhaul everything like boat falls etc. Since we had enough fire extinguishers etc. the surveyor said we should have a "Fireman's Uniform" that's what his book said, so it had to be, also a pair of leather gauntlet type gloves.

I asked one of our local volunteer firemen Charlie if we could borrow his uniform for a couple of hours and explained why. He said we could, but he needed it back that night for a parade. So I duly laid out Charlie's neatly pressed uniform for the surveyor when he came down. He said "I will be back in a couple of hours and I want to see the auxiliary steam fire pump working". This was an addition we had to have to carry passengers, it was acquired from an old west coast hospital.

As luck would have it we had steam up but not much. So I told our fireman the pump had to send water quite a way, not sure how far, he said "I can't get enough steam up today for that unless I open another valve," which was separate from the fire pump. So we laid out this hose and when the surveyor came I had the hose hanging over the side, he said are you ready? I said "yes if you just hold the hose" I'll go and yell down to the engine room for steam. Through the sky light I gave Les the sign and he partly opened the main line or something as engineers do and the surveyor was wrapped, plenty of pressure and in fact he had trouble holding on. We naturally didn't tell him what we had done. He was happy and so were we.

The leather gauntlets, which we provided neatly folded for his

inspection were his, he had left them in the lifeboat, in the morning and he did not recognise them and I did not tell him.

We sailed every day during the games carried many passengers and many athletes. Also Prince Charles' Royal Navy Batman - Prince Charles was in port on a naval ship.

Just prior to sailing we had to take the mast out, it was wooden and had it checked for dry rot. No problem, a harbour board crane driver volunteered his time. Sceptics said we could not manage it, we did, no problem. We looked under the foot of the mast for the traditional coins of the realm which would have been 1906, but, we should have known, having been built in Scotland, there wouldn't have been any there, there are now though "Kiwi ones." When we took the mast out it had never been out.

After I went back to sea I used to sail on the tug. On my leave one day, I was home, and was asked by the skipper, who happened to be a neighbour, and master of the Interisland Ferry 'Moari' if I would do the evening cruise with them, they were an AB short. When I went aboard that evening I found they had a full crew so I took the tickets. While heading down the harbour we sighted a flare and found a yacht in trouble and towed her back. Next day the local newspaper rang me for details of what happened etc. They asked what my job on her was; I said quite innocently, I was taking the tickets. He said, oh like a purser, not thinking I said yes. When the article came out I was described as "Percy the Purser" I was not amused.

In 1976 my marriage finally broke up and I went back to sea and moved to Timaru in 1988. I was in the first NZ group of seamen to be sent to Tasmania to the Australian Maritime College to be "recycled" into IR's (Integrated Ratings). That is to make AB's into Motormen and vice versa. In theory AB's could go below and do engine work and motormen could come on the deck. Most of us hated it and knew it wouldn't work.

After I moved south to Timaru I was Bosun for many years on a coastal RoRo on a weekly service, Dunedin, Lyttleton, Auckland. The Coastal Trader she was called and belonged to New Zealand's then State Shipping Line. She was bought originally from Finland. She was the first Kiwi ship to go to Singapore to be jumboized, that is cut in half and lengthened. I was in the crew that took her to Singapore but the crew who bought her back had all kinds of problems, faulty workmanship i.e. electric cables not joined, many many things needed to be redone in Auckland.

After she had been on the run a few weeks we had a major engine room fire off Timaru as we headed north late one night. A fuel line fractured causing a major engine room fire. Lucky our fire control system worked. We had to wait for a tug from Timaru to tow us in, also for a paramedic as one of the motormen had a heart attack and sadly died. After the tug took us in we invited the tug crew aboard for a drink and then met Vic Gray an AB on the tug, who is a Vindi boy and by now well known to many of you. Vindi boys turn up in all sorts of places.

I was talking to the skipper of a ship I was on in NZ, he told me he was a Vindi boy, Roger Smith. I think he sailed mainly with Port Line here in Tassie. Many years back my wife and I met two mainland tourists from Coober Pedy and invited them to stay the night, they came from the Channel Islands originally, he (I can't remember their names) was an opal miner and happened to mention he had gone to a sea school called Vindicatrix, what small world? The longest times or trips I was on a ship were both thirteen months, the 'Tekoa' previously which I have mentioned the worst ship 'The Lady

Vilma', Australian Offshore Service supply boat/tug was the best, good pay, good food hard interesting work. She was an Australian supply boat working in NZ towing the American drill ship around from drill site to drill site around New Zealand's east coast. We had a Skipper, Mate, two Engineers, four AB's and an AB cook. Thirteen months, joined her in Nelson, paid off in Singapore after we towed the rig, across to the Australian East Coast, up the Barrier Reef past Timor, great trip.

I met my late wife Gladys in Launceston, Tasmania so we lived partly there and partly in NZ. I finally gave up the sea and moved to Tasmania and got a job as the night duty officer at the Maritime College Campus. Having been an adult student there helped me get the job. I stayed there for six years and only left because of my wife's health. I was also, during the day, a support worker for handicapped people.

My duties as a Night Duty Officer at AMC was for a shift from 10pm to 4am you look after the student residences. They come to AMC from up to twenty four countries, studying all things nautical and fishery. As well as seagoing courses AMC do ship management, if it has anything to do with ships the AMC teach it.

One night duty officer was on at a time, week on and week off. We were like father confessor for homesick and sometimes lovesick students, needed to know the recommended "Dens of Iniquity" etc. Drugs are completely banned on campus of course, plus excessive noise, no visitors after 11pm, no noise after midnight etc. so students could study in peace. I also carried a piece of point line in my pocket to help the struggling would-be seafarers with knots. One thing I was asked a couple of times "What's the best cure for sea-sickness" my answer was "Terra Firma." Another I was often asked as they knew I was an ex-seafarer was, the old one "I suppose you have a girl in every port?" of course the standard reply was "No I haven't been to every port!"

Now well retired I drive voluntarily for the St John Community Care and also drive for the Voluntary Family Car organisation (VFC) taking people to Doctor's etc. Apart from the voluntary work I enjoy reading and travel. I go back to NZ occasionally to visit family and friends and also to the mainland (Aust). I consider myself lucky, I have enjoyed good health, seen a lot of the world, lived in two of the best countries on earth. I don't have much contact with the UK now having been out this way over sixty years. I am "colonised" I'm an Australian citizen. Since being out this way I have always been and strongly believe in being a trade unionist.

Being a seaman for most of my life belonging to Vindicatrix Queensland means a lot to me though I can only attend meeting occasionally, but do support the reunions most strongly. Reading the newsletters also gives me much pleasure and thank the Editor, Bill Davis for this.

From my few months on the farm as a boy I have always disliked farmers. To me they are like super-powers, want big profits and have no care for their workers. In conclusion I am not anti-royalty but am a strong believer in Australia becoming a republic, as it will one day, but possibly not in my lifetime.

I'm proud of being a recipient of the Australian MN Service Cross for long sea service, awarded to ex-MN Australian citizens and as far as I am aware no other country has recognised long service of seamen.

Percy Grout 2011

## Fishing stories hard to believe.....



This is just one of many stories of daring do of an intrepid fisherman Tony Harben, President of the WA Vindicatrix Association.

Here he is in action with the one he caught in July 2011 at the 80 Mile Beach, North West, WA. It weighed 32lbs and was 1.2 meters long. Margie his wife cut 23 good sized fillets from it.

The pelagic monster a Sturgeon below was caught on the Swan river just near the Fremantle bridge a few weeks ago. It weighed in at over 453kg (1,000 lbs) and measured out at 3.38m. It was 1.42m around the girth and took over 6½ hours and 4 dozen beers, for the 4 guys taking turns at the reeling it in. Tony Harben did a fantastic job of playing the fish to the end (5th right) and claiming the catch. The catch was viewed by many on the bridge and along the river front, when landed a huge cheer went up with from the onlookers and many photos taken as proof.

Any Sturgeon over five feet has to be released unharmed and cannot be removed from the water. They are brood/breeding stock and probably older than most of us. This one is maybe 100 years old.



## UK - MN ships to carry ARMS

British merchant ships sailing off the coast of Somalia will soon be able to carry armed guards to ward off pirate attacks, Prime Minister David Cameron said recently. Britain is one of only a few countries with major shipping fleets to currently ban armed guards on its vessels, alongside the likes of Japan, Greece and the Netherlands.

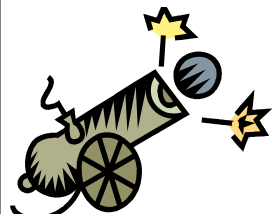
However, owners of ships from other countries are increasingly putting guards onboard as national navies struggle to combat Somali piracy in the vast Indian Ocean, a problem which is costing the world economy billions of dollars a year. In an interview with the BBC, Cameron said that Britain now planned to license guards to carry firearms on ships.

“The evidence is that ships with armed guards don’t get attacked, don’t get taken for hostage or for ransom and so we think this is a very important step forward,” Cameron said. “The fact that a bunch of pirates in Somalia are managing to hold to ransom the rest of the world and our trading system I think is a complete insult,” he added.

The planned exemptions to Britain’s strict firearms laws could allow guards to carry revolvers, automatic weapons or even rocket launchers on board. A spokeswoman for Britain’s Home Office (interior ministry) said that a licensing scheme would start within a month, and that the weaponry allowed would be “appropriate and proportionate”.

Licences would restrict use of the weapons to off the Somali coast, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. Britain’s Transport Ministry said it expected around half the 200 British ships which sail through those waters to want to use armed guards.

Somali pirates, operating from the shores of the lawless state in the Horn of Africa, have raked in millions of dollars a year in ransoms from scores of hijacked ships from around the world, including oil super tankers. Last month the shipping industry called on the United Nations to create an armed military force to be deployed on vessels to counter the escalating menace from the armed seaborne gangs.

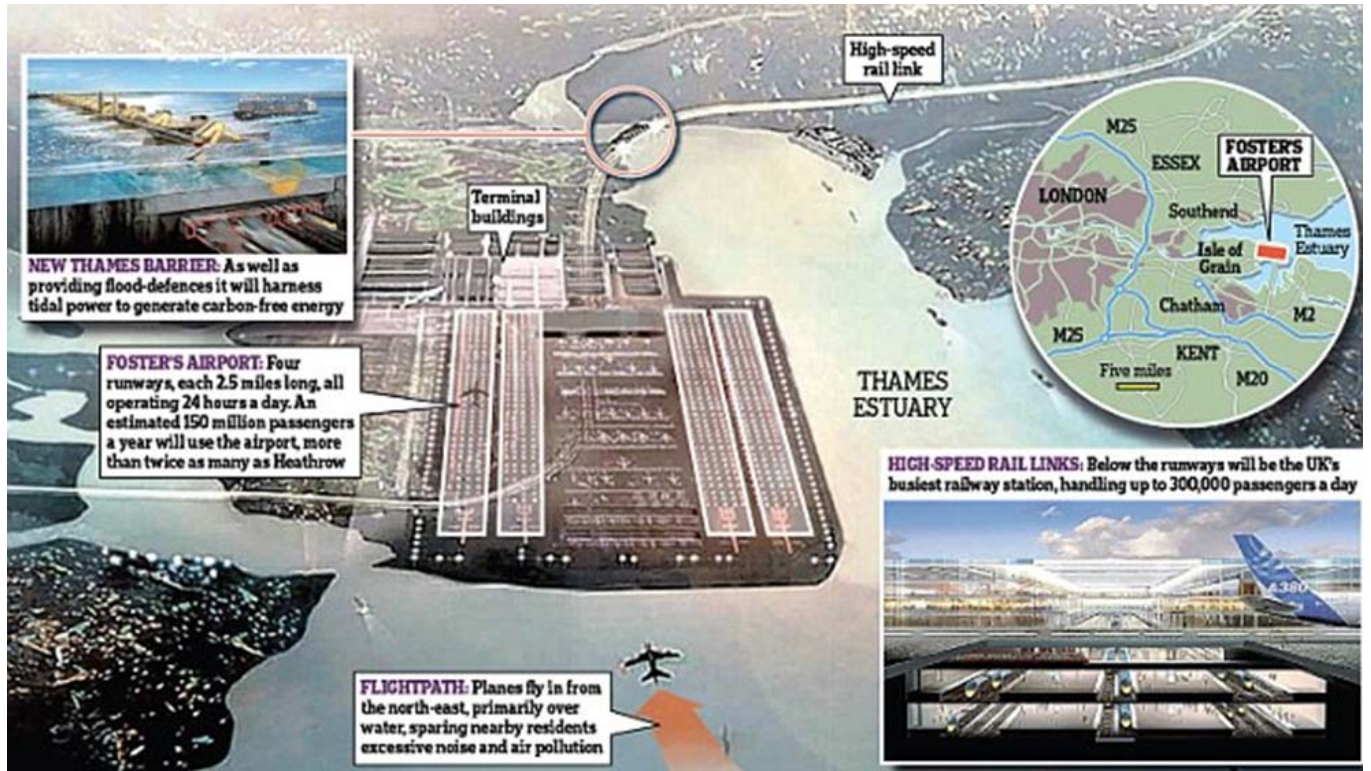


Better armed and increasingly violent pirate gangs are set to ramp up attacks in the coming weeks in the Indian Ocean as the monsoon ends. Around 17 ships are currently being held by the pirates who can operate hundreds of miles from the Somali coast. Negotiations often take many months before the ships and crews are released for ransom. The Socotra 1, a Yemeni-owned ship, was seized on Christmas Day 2009 and is still being held

The Independent

## Will world's biggest airport be built on the Thames? Lord Foster unveils plans for £50bn site that will handle 150m passengers a year.

Rival to Mayor's 'Boris Island' plan, it would run 24 hours a day and be more than twice as busy as Heathrow. A railway station to be built under the new airport would be the UK's busiest, handling 300,000 arrivals and departures a day.



Critics say nearby gas storage and container port mean it is the 'daftest ever' airport plan for the area as results of a crash would be explosive. Medway Council accuse Lord Foster of never having visited. It would be the biggest airport in the world. Jutting out into the Thames Estuary, it would serve 150million passengers a year – more than twice as many as Heathrow – and operate 24 hours a day.

The Thames Hub will have a high speed railway station under it running across the UK and into Europe. Recently, plans were unveiled for the four-runway airport on a sparse strip of land on the Isle of Grain, in Kent. Designed by architect Lord Norman Foster – who created the new Wembley Stadium – the airport would be a modern-day feat of British engineering built on reclaimed marshland. It would include the UK's busiest railway station, handling 300,000 passengers a day.

Planes would fly in from the north-east, primarily over water, greatly reducing the number of homes that would be affected by aircraft noise. With the Government having admitted in August that London's main airports will reach bursting point in 2030 – and a third runway at Heathrow having been ruled out – backers of Thames Hub insist it offers a splendid solution.

But they have yet to convince everyone, especially people living in the area. Councillor Rodney Chambers, leader of Medway Council in Kent, said: 'The Isle of Grain is home to one of the world's largest liquefied natural gas terminals, with a fifth of the UK's gas supply offloaded by container ships and stored there. 'We have looked at Lord Foster's plan and he appears to want to place his fantasy Isle of Grain airport on top of the LNG plant and a power station. It beggars belief.' (Strange no mention of the SS Richard Montgomery the bomb ridden wreck).

Lord Foster said: 'We need to recapture the foresight and political courage of our 19th century forebears if we are to establish a modern transport and energy infrastructure in Britain for this century and beyond. We can do it here.'



The airport's backers claim that if the Government supports the scheme, sovereign wealth funds and wealthy foreign investors will stump up the cash to make it a reality. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, declared his support for the plans, despite them rivalling his own vision for a 'floating' airport in the Thames Estuary. A spokesperson said: 'He is delighted that a distinguished figure like Lord Foster agrees that the answer to Britain's aviation needs lie in the [Thames] estuary.'

Daily Mail

## The MS Johan van Oldenbarnevelt/TSMS Lakonia



The MS Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was built in Amsterdam and launched on August 3, 1929, completed on March 13, 1930. She was powered by two propellers and two Sulzer diesel engines and had a maximum speed of 19 knots. The ship was 609 feet long and measured 19,040 gross tons. Originally she could accommodate 770 passengers: 366 in first class, 280 in second, 64 in third and 60 in fourth class. She could also carry as many as 360 crewmen. The ship had seven passenger decks and could carry 9,000 tons of additional cargo.

She was originally operated by the Netherland Line, and sailed between Amsterdam and the Dutch East Indies for nine years. Along with her

sister ship, the Marnix van St. Aldegonde, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was the largest Dutch ship at the time she was built. She was the eighty-ninth ship ever built for the Netherland Line. The ship was built as a luxury liner. Famed artist Carel Adolph Lion Cachet and sculptor Lambertus Zijl designed the ship's teak and marble interior, as well as her many statues, mosaics, tapestries and chandeliers.

**World War II service.** At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was chartered by the Holland America Line and re-registered in Batavia, Indonesia. She was used as a cargo ship on the Batavia to New York City route. On January 20, 1941, she was registered as an allied troop ship, and was converted for duty at the Harland and Wolff shipyard. Managed by the Orient Line, she could carry a maximum of 4,000 troops. Her port of registration was Willemstad, Curaçao. After servicing India, Singapore and Penang, she finally returned to her home port of Amsterdam on February 13, 1946.

**Postwar Service.** After a refitting, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt returned to service on the Amsterdam – Batavia route in 1946. Indonesians were fighting for their independence from the Netherlands at this time. The ship ferried Dutch troops returning home to Europe from Indonesia for several years. By 1950, the political climate in Indonesia had become so unstable that the ship was withdrawn from the East Indies service. She was switched to the Amsterdam – Australia service and departed on her first voyage to Australia on September 2, 1950. She serviced Australia and New Zealand for the next twelve and a half years, with occasional service to Canada and the United States.

The Australia run was an instant success, and in 1951, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was put into dry-dock in Amsterdam for refitting. She was refurbished to carry 1,414 passengers in a one-class configuration. Her lounges were restored to their original state of luxury, and additional passenger facilities were installed. Eight lifeboats were added, bringing her total number of boats to 24. On January 23, 1952, the ship left for Australia and was forced to return to Amsterdam after four small fires were discovered on board. The fires were quickly extinguished. Arson was suspected, but no suspects were ever arrested.

The Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was refitted again in 1958 at a cost of AU\$800,000. The refitting was carried out by the Amsterdam Dry Dock Company and took three months to complete. Accommodation was reduced to 1,210 passengers. Three luxury suites were added, as well as a nightclub, cinema, gift shop, promenade lounge and second swimming pool. All public rooms were refinished and restored. The main mast was relocated to atop the bridge, and the decks were extended aft. Her funnels were heightened, given rounded tops and painted yellow and black. Her black hull was re-painted grey.

The ship was assigned to her new port, Southampton, England, on April 2, 1959. She offered round-the-world service, making stops in Australia, New Zealand, Bermuda and New York City. She was now marketed as a cruise ship, instead of a passenger liner. The Johan van Oldenbarnevelt left on her last round-the-world voyage for the Netherland Line on June 30, 1962. She arrived in Sydney, Australia on February 3, 1963 and was decommissioned by the Netherland Line that day, ending a 33-year career for that shipping line. She then sailed for Genoa, Italy, and arrived on March 7, 1963.



**As TSMS Lakonia.** On March 8, 1963, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was sold to the General Steam Navigation Company of Greece. Her decks and public rooms were re-named and the aft swimming pool was enlarged. Twelve additional cabins were built, and air conditioning was installed throughout the ship. Her hull was painted white, and her tonnage grew to 20,314 tons. Most importantly, the ship's name was changed to TSMS Lakonia. The ship was operated by the Ormos Shipping Company (also known as the Greek Line) and offered service from Southampton to the Canary Islands. She departed Southampton on her first voyage as Lakonia on April 24, 1963. She proved immensely popular,

and the Greek Line planned 27 cruises for 1964. From December 9 to December 13, 1963, she underwent another minor upgrade. A new pneumatic fuel injection system was installed. Cabins were redecorated, and the kitchen and pantry were completely remodelled.

**The Last Voyage of the Lakonia – Deadly Christmas Cruise.** Forty seven years ago, passengers on the cruise ship Laconia were promised “a marvellous Christmas cruise to sunny Madeira and the Canary Islands.” The brochure read – “Have your holiday with all risk eliminated. Enjoy a holiday you will remember for the rest of your life.” When the fire broke out on December 22, 1963, the promise of a risk-free holiday proved tragically ironic, though the promise of a unforgettable holiday, no doubt, became regrettably too true. One hundred twenty eight people died in the Lakonia fire and its aftermath. Given the recent news that the CO2 fire fighting system on the Carnival Splendor failed during the fire aboard the ship in November, the story of the Lakonia remains timely. Notably, AMVER, (Atlantic Merchant Vessel Report) coordinated the rescue by directing five merchant ships to the burning ship. The first ship arrived within four hours of the first distress call

Two nights before Christmas, the ship was in a festive mood. In the main lounge, Captain Zarbis was judging costumed contestants at a Tramps’ Ball; first prize a bottle of white wine had just been awarded to a 13-year-old girl in beatnik tights when alarm bells started to ring. In the ship’s cinema, where Bob Hope was cavorting on the screen with Anita Ekberg in ‘Call Me Bwana’, the audience at first thought that the ringing bells were part of the film’s plot. But the smell of smoke soon convinced them that something was amiss. Other passengers who had gone to bed early were not yet fully aware of the danger. No fire instructions were issued over the loudspeaker, and the alarm bells stopped ringing so quickly that many people thought it was only a drill.

At 12:22, shortly after Captain Zarbis gave the order to abandon ship, the last mayday message was flashed: ***“S O S from Lakonia. Last time. I cannot stay any more in the wireless cabin. We are leaving the ship. Please help immediately.”***

More than 3,000 miles away, the distress signals were picked up by a U.S. Coast Guard station. The Lakonia’s position was immediately fed into an AMVER computer, which plots the location, course and speed and records such information as whether a doctor is on board of some 850 merchant ships in the North Atlantic. Within moments, the computer’s memory drums typed out the names of five vessels within 100 miles of the Lakonia, and urgent messages were flashed to them to proceed to the stricken liner. The five were the Argentine passenger liner Salfa, the Belgian merchant ship Charlesville, the British freighters Montcalm and Stratheden, and the Brazilian freighter Rio Grande. Some were already on the way, having picked up the S O S on their own radios. The R.A.F. at Gibraltar hurriedly organized a flight of rescue planes.

At Lajes Air Force Base in the Azores, the U.S.’s 57th Air Rescue Squadron also swung into action. Shortly after the Lakonia’s last message was received, four C-54 rescue planes swung out over the Atlantic toward the flaming vessel, 3 hr. 30 min. flying time away. The planes were loaded with 42 life rafts that could carry 600 persons, 400 blankets, food and survival packages, flares of 300,000 candlepower, and six paramedics who could jump into the ocean to help passengers, if necessary.

On board the Lakonia, the nightmare was all too real. With the loudspeaker system not operating, there was near-anarchy on deck. Officers issued contradictory instructions, and crewmen milled around unsure of what to do. Screams filled the air in half a dozen different languages. Unable to comprehend the crew’s cries, passengers took charge of small groups and tried to lead them through the thick smoke to their boat stations. Pressed against the rail were scores of passengers in every variety of dress nightgowns, pajamas, tramp costumes and evening clothes.

The water was 64 deg, but many of the children and the elderly passengers were soon dead nevertheless. As dawn broke, the rescue fleet, now swollen to some 20 vessels, looked out on a vast scene of lifeboat debris and bobbing bodies. Despite the calm seas, it was not easy to pick them up. The rafts and lifeboats kept banging into the windward side of the waiting merchantmen; hour after hour the arduous task continued, until at last all the living and dead were hauled aboard. On the Salta, which picked up 478 people from the sea, cognac and blankets were passed out to the shivering survivors, but the crush was so great that soon there was not enough of either to go around. The British aircraft carrier Centaur picked up 55 bodies, then dispatched a helicopter to the Lakonia to see if anyone was still on board; from the vessel, a British officer reported that the liner was a burnt-out hulk. As the rescue ships sped from the scene toward the port of Funchal in Madeira.

**The Aftermath.** A total of 128 people died in the Lakonia disaster, of which 95 were passengers and 33 were crew members. Only 53 people were killed in the actual fire. The rest died from exposure, drowning and injuries sustained while diving overboard. Most of the dead are buried in a Gibraltar cemetery after an autopsy which was carried out in a cavern workshop of 1st Fortress Squadron, Royal Engineers.

One passenger who jumped from the ship cut her throat on her life jacket. After being rescued by the Montcalm, her injuries were treated by another passenger, Dr. Alan Leigh. Largely due to this incident, cruise ship passengers are now instructed how to hold their jackets if jumping from a height.

Crewmen from the British aircraft carrier HMS Centaur were able to board the Lakonia on December 24, once the flames had died down. Most of the bodies were recovered by the crew of the Centaur. By this time, the Lakonia was a charred, smoking hulk. Her superstructure had partially collapsed amidships, and the bridge and aft decks had caved in. There were holes blasted near the bow, and the ship was listing 10 degrees to starboard.

The Norwegian tugboat Herkules attached a tow line to the Lakonia at 5:30 p.m. on December 24. The Herkules, along with the Portuguese tugboat Praia da Adraga and two other tugs, set off for the British base at Gibraltar with the Lakonia in tow. Her list grew more severe each day, and at about 2:00 p.m. on December 29, the Lakonia rolled over onto her starboard side. She sank stern-first in only three minutes. The ship went down 230 miles (370 km) southwest of Lisbon, Portugal and 250 miles (400 km) west of Gibraltar.

### **Not a very Happy Christmas**



### No known species of reindeer can fly

1. There are 300,000 species of living things yet to be classified, and most of these are insects and bacteria. Although this does not COMPLETELY rule out flying reindeer, the chances for it yet to be discovered are pretty slim.

2. There are 2 billion children in the world. But since Santa only appears to handle the Christian children, that reduces the workload to 15% of the total - 378 million. At an average rate of 3.5 children per household, that is 91.8 millions homes. One presumes there's at least one "good" child in each.

3. Santa has 31 hours of Christmas to work with, thanks to the different time zones and the rotation of the earth, assuming he travels East to West. This works out to 822.6 visits per second. This is to say that for each Christian household with good children, Santa has 1/1000th of a second to park, hop out of the sleigh, jump down the chimney, get back into the sleigh and move on to the next house. Assuming that each one of these 91.8 million stops are evenly distributed around the earth, we are now talking about .78 miles per household, a total trip of 75 and a half million miles. This means Santa's sleigh is moving at 650 miles per second, 3000 times the speed of sound. For purpose of comparison, the fastest man-made vehicle on earth, the Ulysses space probe, moves at a poky 27.4 miles per second - a conventional reindeer can run, tops, 15 miles per hour.

4. The payload on the sleigh adds another interesting aspect. Assuming that each child gets nothing more than a medium sized Lego Set (1 kilo), the sleigh is carrying 321,300 tons, not counting Santa, who is invariably described as overweight. On landing, conventional reindeer can pull no more than 175 kilo. Even granting that "flying reindeer" could pull TEN TIMES the normal amount, we cannot do the job with eight, or even nine reindeer. We need 214,200 reindeer. This increases the payload, not even counting the weight of the sleigh, to 353,430 tons! Again for comparison - this is four times the weight of the Queen Elizabeth!

5. 353,430 tons travelling at 650 miles per second creates enormous air resistance. This will heat the reindeer up in the same fashion as space craft re-entering the Earth's atmosphere. The lead pair of reindeer will absorb 14.3 QUINTILLION joules of energy per second ... EACH! In short, they will burst into flame almost instantaneously, exposing the reindeer behind them, and creating deafening Sonic Booms in their wake. The entire reindeer team will be vaporized within 4.26 thousands of a second. Santa, meanwhile, will be subject to centrifugal forces 17,500.06 times greater than gravity. A 12kilo Santa (which seems ludicrously slim) would be pinned to the back of his sleigh by 4,315,015 pounds of force.

In conclusion:- *If Santa ever DID deliver presents on Christmas Eve ..... he's dead now!*

**One beautiful December evening** Huan Ch and his girlfriend Jung Lee were sitting by the side of the ocean. It was a romantic full moon, when Huan Cho said "Hey baby, how about playing Weeweechu." "Oh no, not now, lets look at the moon" said Jung Lee. "Oh, c'mon baby, let's you and I play Weeweechu. I love you and its the perfect time," Huan Cho begged. "But I rather just hold your hand and watch the moon." Please Jung Lee, just once play Weeweechu with me." Jung Lee looked at Huan Chi and said, "OK, we'll play Weeweechu." Huan Cho grabbed his guitar and both sang.....

*Weeweechu a melly Chlistmas,  
Weeweechu a melly Chlistmas,  
Weeweechu a melly Chlistmas,  
and a happy New Year.*



**A Russian couple was walking down** the street in Moscow one night, when the man felt a drop hit his nose. "I think it's raining," he said to his wife. "No, that felt more like snow to me," she replied. "No, I'm sure it was just rain," he said. Well, as these things go, they were about to have a major argument about whether it was raining or snowing.

Just then, they saw a minor Communist Party official walking towards them. "Let's not fight about it," the man said. "Let's ask Comrade Rudolph whether it's officially raining or snowing." As the official approached, the man said, "Tell me, Comrade Rudolph, is it officially raining or snowing?" "It's raining, of course!" he replied, and walked on. But the woman insisted, "I know that felt like snow!" The man quietly replied, "Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear."



Paddy says to Mick, "Christmas is on a Sunday this year." Mick says "Let's hope it's not the 13th."



It was Christmas and I was standing in a bar in Cairns, North Queensland and this little Chinese guy comes in and stands next to me. I said to him, "Do you know any of those martial arts things, like Kung-Fu, Karate or Ju-Jitsu?" He says "No, no, no why the fluck you ask me dat, is it coz I Chinee"?



"No", I say's, "It's because you're drinking my beer you yella toady slanty eyed little Prick....."

**ALL MONIES, for whatever reason to be paid to the Treasurer  
(Cheques & PO's made payable to Vindicatrix Association Queensland - ONLY)**

President, Fred Joughin  
104/31 Kruger Parade  
REDBANK QLD 4301  
Ph: 07 3814 0293  
Email: badgerden1@hotmail.com

Vice President, Brian Hunt BEM JP  
241/2 Falcon Way  
Tweed Heads South NSW 2486  
Ph: (07) 5513-0178  
Email: eandbhunt@aapt.net.au

Secretary/Treasurer, Kim Cohen  
Ruby Gardens - 222/225 Logan Street  
EAGLEBY QLD 4207  
Ph: 07 3287 5182  
Email: kimmy47@people.net.au

**Vindicatrix Queensland web site - [www.qld.vindicatrix.com](http://www.qld.vindicatrix.com)**