

Extracts from THE HIGHWAYMAN

February, 1972 (August follows)

THE HARBOUR REVIEW (Sydney Harbour Bridge Toll Office)

This article is brief because it was written during our half-hour lunch break.

As I write, the two intellectuals of the office Allan Moorcroft (Grade IV) and Michael Young are wrestling over a hot game of chess, with so many men on the board it is hard to see just who is winning. Methinks they are posing. Allan has been notified of some pleasing examination results for Stage 11 of his tech. course, but because of his extreme modesty refuses to let us give more details.

Mike Young (who has just taken a Pawn, he missed the Queen) has also done well in his educational pursuits completing (in 1971) Stage IV of his Transport Course. He is now concentrating on his Water Polo and moderate drinking not to mention his work! Which is always up to date even if there are "not enough hours in the day", as he has been known to say.

Don Wilkins, perhaps the hardest man in the office to write about because he in his top storey office (with a grand view of the Bridge) remains surrounded in mystery. Overseer of the organisation he rules with a silvercupronickel hand. Sometimes when passing by his office strains of extremely well cassette-taped music can be heard above the normal grinding of tuneless Muzak which prevails and provides us with pleasant respite.

Ken Dibley (Grade V11) who is in absentia at the moment (being off duty) is doubtlessly working on his favourite weekend pastime "The Rockpile" as he lovingly calls it, which by the sound of things is a second Sturts Stoney Desert, in his backyard. Despite Ken's absence the office ship sails on unruffled continuing in the spirit of his guidance and careful watch over office affairs.

Kevin Basman also is in absentia (he has some illness which has deprived him of the pleasure of coming to work today). He's in charge of statistics (extremely vital!) as far as traffic is concerned. Kevin has recently gone the way of all men, yes he has married his childhood sweetheart (he is a native of Sydney!) from Griffith. He is going to set up house soon in a D.M.R. residence and we are all expected to be invited to the housewarming.

Roger Skinner "King" of the Booked Tolls (a name lovingly bestowed on him) works furiously in his corner all day, growing his hair and wearing out the seat of his pants. Roger (it seems to us) comes to work to earn money to go Snow Skiing in the winter months and is a fanatical devotee of the sport (also he is No. 1 Poseur Extraordinaire!). When he is not skiing he plays (oh well, you know how it is) guitar, but has not yet been able to give that concert on top of the Toll Gates as was his ambition according to our last article in "The Highwayman".

Bob Reilly with Mike Young, form the Timekeeping (the not so vital heart of the office according to the Administrative Staff) Section. Bob works hard most of the day chatting up young ladies on the phone! His pursuits have lately been thwarted by an appendicitis attack (on Christmas Day what luck!) We leave the definition of work up to your own discretion. Bob also works part time at growing his hair with little success, and doing whatever they do in his local area (he lives at Potts Point).

Dick "Stirling Moss" Chapman (yes, he is still branded) is the best Office Assistant we have, and spends his days driving money around. He frequently goes on jaunts overseas (to the Toll Gates, Milsons Point). Dick

also is a bit of a skier, spending two weeks of the year amidst the high snows and can be seen skiing around Perisher Valley. He spent his Christmas vacation (unsuccessfully it would appear as he is still at work) panning for gold in the Goulburn District.

Not to forget the typist, Anne Gurney, who is the only girl in the midst of some ninety males. But despite her surroundings she maintains her sense of balance by learning to ride a surfboard. Anne perseveres, working conscientiously at her own task and deserves credit for her amiable manner in this lonely outpost.

So you have it the "All Stars" work on in their lonely stronghold (the "Barons Castle") and despite the overwhelming odds and volume of work pressed upon us, we continue to remain the most efficient Office/Section (no one seems to want us) in the State. And while the world sleeps, the Toll keeps on going onward, ever onward unto Glory. #

August, 1972

THE LEPER COLONY

(or a basic education of the Department at Play)

Where have all the characters gone?

Not so many years ago a Section based on the third floor of the now "old" building was dubbed the "Leper Colony" and pangs of fear were felt by all those clerks with accounting aspirations that they may become a member of the dreaded untouchables.

It was a firm belief by all cleansed clerks that banishment to the colony was punishment for any transgression. Those who placed attachments not in chronological order, had too many supplementaries, or fell to the "sweeping" hoax perpetrated by senior record clerks, cringed with fear at the thought of becoming a leper.

Remember the "Silver Fox", a tough task master who seriously studied from his huge desk and dictaphone contenders for banishment. Record clerks would straighten at the booming call of "Oh . . . John . . . would you please come here!" and scurrying feet could be heard when the first sign of Silver was sighted from the peepholes near "miscellaneous".

Reaching 3rd floor my first impression of the colony was that of disbelief, a long row of juniors busily sorting, stamping to the tune of "here come the saints" and examiners ostrich-like buried in pink and surrounded by 59's, machine-like fingers of mathematical genius checking and ticking examiners' masterpieces, and at the head Mac and Leo cracking the whip. I was directed by a bodgie type called I think Ernie to the master and received the inevitable lecture amid whizzing objects and piercing screams of wounded workers as they sat down on hastily placed pin cushions.

My first job as a leper was to sort seemingly millions of numbered forms and place them into blue shoe boxes. However, the most important aspect of my job (as I was told by a chap called Herbert) was the collection of morning teas, lunches and unofficial afternoon teas. This proved to be most enjoyable and sometimes profitable, the thrill of meeting other lunch boys at the "Blue Room" and "Mark Foys" was a daily treat and the joy of purchasing mysterious orders like ice cream sandwiches and short circuits quickened my education.

The passing of nearly two years (it seemed like ten) saw me a fully-fledged junior leper. I was an expert at sorting, stamping and pinning forms, - an expert at avoiding dastardly practical jokes, and pretending to be working (an honour sought after by many clerical brothers) and was also instructed in the playing of the many

forms of practical jokes on seniors. One joke I'll never forget was one played by the king of jokers, a chap called (I think) Ken. A piece of nylon fishing wire was attached to a date stamp proudly owned by Mac and at the other end Ken. Shrieks of delight punctured the morning as every so often a tug would cause the stamp to move mysteriously along the table thus bringing glazed expressions to the face of Mac and frantic attempts to track down the cause.

After numerous moves of the colony we settled into a select location behind the Rec room. By this time the honour of a senior leper had been bestowed upon me and I plunged myself into the exciting pastime of signing my name 100 times a day. New skills had to be learnt now and the education of "snotty nosed juniors" was most paramount; how to place pin cushions, paint telephone ear pieces, cause flash fires and ring "Joe McInerny" were taught by masters like "Horse, D.G.A., Herbert, Fats, and a chap called I think E.C.C.S."

The destruction by water bombs of chinese coolies as they decapitated ducks and cats, the suspension of brief cases and two worded telephone conversations were fantastic schemes devised by the master of all, Horse. His main trick however was to at all costs be up to date, this was achieved by many devious means, a flash rubbish bin fire, Her Majesty's Mail, and two parallel lines were several.

Alas, clean clerks were infiltrated to cure the leper image and a slow victory over the

dreaded disease was gained. The disappearance of Horse, the Ghost, a remarkable chap who would materialise at 9.00 a.m. via the air conditioner, H.J. the bookies friend, E.C.C.S. the chap with a wind problem, and Munster the jokers dream heralded the demise of the colony as a haven for hard working, sober minded, intellectual accounting experts.

I was sad but glad to have become cured, sad at the thought of no more loganberry pies and Chinese meals at afternoon tea, no more bombings in the loo and no more imaginative late excuses, and glad to have been associated with so many wonderful characters, to have obtained many exciting skills and to have been earmarked by black ink when answering an inside telephone call.

Oh . . . where have all those wonderful characters gone!

By a leper made good.