

Byde your time

Age is not for cissies

Currently I am a member of a group to develop the Men's Hut here in Picton. The editor of the local paper, *Seaport News*, operates the levers of power and a redundant railway station was loaded on a monster truck and fetched from some distant point in the Wap Waps to a site here. The hut, although made probably 150 years ago, is of sound timber, only one drawback. The roof was missing and pigeon muck predominated. The main contractors hereabouts bored large holes in the ground and massive timber piles now support the station. After importuning the editor for a key I can go there at times convenient to me and lay hold on piles of old timber which bristle with rusty nails. I use my claw hammer and remove the nails, making the timber useful again.

Further activities for the ancient are forecast. Nowt like being busy to stay busy. Joan suggested it be called LARKs for Lively Ancient Retired Kiwis. I put that to the committee of which I am a member and it was sort of accepted. The chairman of the steering committee is Reg Dawkins (91) who did time in the NZ Army in horrible Asian places and is a powerful man in Freemasonry. He adopted the job of tea lady and trundles along on his mobility scooter with a basket of cookies (revolting Americanism) and the makings of passable tea. He arranged a roof for the old station. The platform is there but not yet assembled.

The purpose of the hut is to strip it of the water damaged linings and insulate and panel it out, first running new pipes and wires. It will accommodate about 40 people sitting in donated armchairs, who will watch a screen on which old films from the twenties will be shown. We have the projector for that time. I think it is illuminated by arc lamp, a pair of carbon rods to make a brilliant light. I am told they can burn the place down if not watched. Who knows? We may find some old dear to play a piano to give the images emphasis. Laurel and Hardy are in the piles of cans with safety film but in another place there are many more cans of explosive film. Talkies came in the year I was born, 1928.

As I was shown round by Carey White, the editor, long tails of ancient cables hung from where the ceiling once was. They vary from twin without earth to being insulated by gutta percha. I remarked that these have a scrap value and, given I can have some, I can make wire ties for kayaks built on the Ken Littledyke stitch and glue system. 'What's that?' he exclaimed, so I told him.

'You can make kayaks that way?'

'Sure can.'

'Hey! Great project!' This club is for ancient men with loads of experience and youths who may, with patient study, become old in their time, where they can do interesting things. No escape, it's *Groundhog Day* for me.

In another part of Picton is the Sea Scouts' hut, quite large and in good condition. The Scouts have a new place. It must be dismantled and brought to a place on the council land near where the station now stands. That will be the doings hut where things will be done, like repairing 200 old thirties radios. Guess what. I did two years in the Royal Signals at Catterick as a radio mechanic, 1947 - 1949. Have soldering iron, will travel. They were called wireless sets! Have you ever looked under the chassis of a 'wireless set'? Thermionic valves, about 3 or 4, sit on top and glow with power. Top cap anodes with 600V DC on them. They have octal or 8 pin sockets. Every pin has its wire which snakes around out of sight until you look underneath.

Condensers can pack a punch, too. Those old sets had a great tone. Here I am, retired, a burden on society (they say), and I return to my youth, still doing the things I did then.

The district council are under pressure to build a covered heated swimming pool. Could it be that I, like Reg Dawkins, on my mobility scooter, will be perched on the bathside ten years hence, encouraging those in the water not to let the poor fellow drown, get him right way up? You know, all those rolling drills and recovery techniques? Many hire double kayaks and set out on the Sounds but few, if any, know a thing about the Inuit. Riverside Oxford and Blackbird Leys baths gibber and gape in my dreams. (Eighty in July.)

There's more, much more. The current lunatic cost of power encourages dreamers to find other ways to generate power. I hope we may find a good diesel motor, link it to a generator producing (say) 5kW and run it on spent chippy oil. Or, even further into the region that Tesla opened, Tunguska and all that, to make an H₂O generator, split water into its components using a radio frequency square waveform of a particular frequency and breathe the resulting hydroxy gas into the diesel.

Power from water is a reality. There are 7M websites on free power. I reckon the oil barons know that they are yesterday's men and are looting the resources before water power shows them oblivion.

Hey! Life ain't arf interesting.

As I scanned the pages of the last issue I was reminded of a riddle Oliver Cock wrote down and gave me decades ago in phoney French:

'Pas d'elle yeux Rhône que nous.'

I disappointed OJC because, instead of trying to pronounce it, I tried to translate it. You know that feeling when you've just cracked a great joke and nobody gets it? A sort of vacancy in the belly laugh department.

I remember the BCU quarterly publication in miniscule print with tiny B&W pix. Brian Skilling's *Canoeing* moved things on a lot.

If I remember rightly, *Canoeist's* progenitor was *White Water*.

I read as far as a brief para on access at Durham. Access is OK round the cathedral peninsula but not below Durham. By that I guess it means Durham weir. Way back in the sixties Durham CC ran a Boxing Day event to Finchale Abbey, five miles +/-, great success for a number of years. The North East Canoeing Association all took part; we had scores on the water.

One year it was in high flood and risky but no problems. Jack Levison was a paddler, too. He was editor of the BCU mag, I forget when. Chris Hare was another.

Robert Southey (1774 - 1843) Madoc, Longman Rees & Orme, 1805 (1812 third edition text used here)

MADOC by Robert Southey THIRD EDITION VOL I 1812

PREFACE

THE historical facts on which this Poem is founded may be related in a few words. On the death of Owen Gwyneth, King of North Wales, AD 1169, his children disputed the succession. Yorwerth, the elder, was set aside without a struggle, as being incapacitated by a blemish in his face. Hoel, though illegitimate and born of an Irish mother, obtained possession of the throne for a while, till he was defeated and slain by David, the eldest son of the late king by a second wife. The conqueror, who then succeeded without opposition, slew Yorwerth, imprisoned Rodri, and hunted others of his brethren into exile.

But Madoc, meantime, abandoned his barbarous country, and sailed away to the West in search of some better resting-place. The land which he discovered pleased him: he left there part of his people, and went back to Wales for a fresh supply of adventurers, with whom he again set sail, and was heard of no more. Strong evidence has been adduced that he reached America, and that his posterity exist there to this day, on the southern branches of the Missouri, retaining their complexion, their language, and, in some degree, their arts.

About the same time the Aztecas, an American tribe, in consequence of certain calamities and of a particular omen, forsook Aztlan, their own country, under the guidance of Yuhidhithon. They became a mighty people, and founded the Mexican empire, talking the name of Mexicans, in honor of Mexitli, their tutelary god. Their emigration is here connected with the adventures of Madoc; and their superstition is represented as the same which their descendants practised, when discovered by the Spaniards. The manners of the Poem, in both its parts, will be found historically true. It assumes not the degraded title of Epic; and the question, therefore, is not whether the story is formed upon the rules of Aristotle, but whether it be adapted to the purposes of poetry. 1805.

It runs to 188 pages but this will do.

Alan Bye