

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY RECORD



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**Please take the opportunity to visit the AVHG web page
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and also the *Australian Veterinary Historical Records*

When you log onto <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/222>

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The Australian Veterinary History is a Special Interest Group of
the AVA (AVHS). All who are interested in any aspect of veterinary
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Australian Veterinary History Group

- Our next meeting will be held with the Annual AVA Conference on 13-16 May 2007 in Melbourne.
- Please tell us what you would like to see and hear.
- We will hold a dinner (always popular) and an AGM.
- Would you like to contribute that paper you want your colleagues to see and hear?

Let's know and we'll book you a time to suit you.

- Would you like an outing to somewhere around Melbourne with veterinary associations?

Let's know, in general or particular, and we'll try to arrange it.

- Would you prefer we again hold a one-day meeting? If so: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday?

Let's know – we'll be glad to hear from you.

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OBITUARY ROBERT INGLIS TAYLOR, OAM

There is delicious irony in that Bob Taylor the most modest of men should receive a Queen's Birthday Honour after his demise. Bob will have a major obituary in the Australian Veterinary Journal. We wish to deal here only with his contributions to our society, our history, and our future.

In the mid seventies of the last century Bob and a group of like-minded veterinarians, decided to formalise history within the Association by forming the Australian Veterinary History Society. Bob was the first President of the Society. The Society commenced with an issue of the newsletter and began holding conferences in conjunction with the Australian Veterinary Association. The newsletter eventually evolved into the present "Record".

At his practice in Harden, Bob began to put together a collection of veterinary artefacts. This was eventually moved to Canberra into storage where it remains. This collection, along with the Max Henry Library, falls within the responsibilities of the Australian Veterinary History Society.

Following Bob's death, the Society discussed means for honouring his memory and has decided that the collection should evolve into a museum to be entitled "The Robert I Taylor Veterinary Museum". Negotiations as to its location are proceeding.

JH Auty
AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OF
THE AVA
MINUTES OF THE 15 TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HOBART, 22 MAY 2006

The meeting convened in Hobart on 22 May 2006 at 5.15 pm.

1. Present: Drs JH Auty R Baker, JT Faragher IM Parsonson, B Robinson and A J Turner.
2. Apologies: Drs B Eastick, KL Hughes, D Johns and D Roe.
3. Minutes of the 14th AGM, which had been published in the Aust Vet Hist Rec July 2005, were taken as read and were accepted by the meeting.
4. Business arising from these Minutes. None.
5. Report of the P resident, Dr JT Faragher, was distributed and accepted by the meeting.
6. Report on Membership & Financial Report of the Honorar y Secretary/Treasurer, Dr JH Auty, was distributed and accepted by the meeting. Dr Turner raised the matter of the discrepancy between receipts for subscriptions and membership numbers. Dr Auty stated that he compared the lists provided by the AVA National office with the mail-out list maintained b y the Honorary Editor, and sent reminders to non-financial members. He said he is reluctant to act with severity given the demography of our members with death and illness.
The meeting agreed that the subscription for 2007 be \$20.00.
7. Report of the Honorary Librarian of the Australian Veterinary History Librar y, Dr R Roe, was distributed and accepted by the meeting.
8. Report of the Honorary A VA Archivist, Dr D Johns, was distributed and accepted by the meeting. Several members raised the importance of retaining, securing and storing the hard copies of the archives of the AVHS.
The President will take up this matter with the archivist and the A VA Board.

**9. Report of the Honorary Editor of the Australian Veterinary History Record,
Dr IM Parsonson, was accepted by the meeting.**

10. Election of Office Bearers

Incumbents

President

JT Faragher

Honorary Secretary/Treasurer

JH Auty

Honorary Librarian

R Roe

Honorary Editor

IM Parsonson

Committee - three members

P Canfield, T Hart,
A Turner W Darmody

The incumbents were re-elected except that Dr Bill Darmody replaced
Dr J F Fisher.

11. General Business

11.1 AVA Historical Collection

The meeting resolved to recommend to the AVA Board that the name of the Collection be changed to the Robert I Taylor Veterinary Historical Collection.

The meeting was concerned that the Collection may be moved and housed under less than optimal conditions in the AVA National office in St Leonards. As the matter had not been discussed with the AVHS, it was resolved to ask the AVA Board to reconsider their decision in favour of a move to St Leonards.

- 11.2** Dr Auty offered to write a short obituary for the Record recognising the outstanding contribution of Dr Taylor to veterinary history generally and to the Society in particular.

12. Location of next meeting of the AVHS

The meeting resolved that the next meeting of the AVHS would be held in association with the Annual AVA Conference on 13-17 May 2007 in Melbourne.

The meeting closed at 6.00 pm
AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY GROUP
PRESIDENT'S REPORT, MAY 2006

My report on the state of this group that was published in the annual report of the AVA, was written five months ago. Two events since then deserve mention.

The death of Bob Taylor has deprived the group and each of us as members of a founding and sustaining force who worked for the long-term benefit of veterinary history in this country. Bob was elected foundation president at the inaugural meeting of the group in May 1991 and established it on a sound and continuing basis with an annual meeting and regular newsletter. He founded and curated the AVA Historical Collection until shortly before his death. We, as members of the AVHS, can best commemorate Bob's life by maintaining the group as a centre for study of Australian veterinary history and by continuing his work to preserve and expand the Historical Collection and the associated Max Henry Memorial Library. There is much to do, but Bob showed us that individuals could do much, so that our profession recognises and values the importance of its history.

The second event that I want to mention is the completion of the project to preserve the Record in an electronic archive. An item on the completion of the project with appreciation of the help and work of the University of Sydney will be published in the next issue of the Record.

The Max Henry Memorial Library still lies mouldering in Fyshwick. After three years, the two bureaucracies of the AVA and the University of Melbourne are still engaged in a pas de deux that we continue to hope will end with the removal of the MHML to the Veterinary School in Parkville. The Historical Collection and much of the AVA archives share the same sepulchre and, we can but hope, will soon find similarly appropriate homes. There is much to do but your committee tries. I give them great credit for their work, which you have heard reported, and for their help.

Trevor Faragher
President AVHS

SECRETARY'S REPORT. 2005

The year was marked by further attempts of Central Office to take over or in my opinion, make more complicated the management of our simple organization. We continue to resist this because we believe in the supreme value of the voluntary principle.

In support of this we suggest that a simple comparison will demonstrate that administration grows on itself.

	1982	2006
Membership	3500	3600
Vets not members	1000 approx.	4000 approx.
Staff whole time Equivalents	5	25

In 2005 I started to attend the Policy Advisory Council as a representative of the AVHS. Strangely, this Council requires a Fee of \$300 from each attendee at each twice yearly meeting. In other words, veterinarians are required to pay for contributing to the policy development of their own professional association. This is of course absurd. It is even more absurd when we note that the smallest groups make the same contribution as the largest. As a protest I will pay my own subscription. I will be pleased to receive suggestions as to matters that any member might wish me to pursue. My guiding principle is that we, as an association, should do no harm and that we should not defend the indefensible.

John Auty.
Honorary Secretary.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2005

The Statement of Financial Performance and Bank Reconciliation follow.

It will be noted that the income from membership subscriptions represents the equivalent of 55 members. I have found it impossible to sort this out with central office just as did Dr C Bunn. Each year I write to those members who appear not to have paid their subscriptions and get a good response. I could have central office do this but believe that it is more caring if done by myself when some have passed away. Given our demographic we will, I believe, always be playing catch up. We also have a library free list.

It will be noted we have reduced Funds by \$1000.

I recommend that we increased Subscriptions by \$5 to \$20, including GST.

I also recommend that we give a free subscription to the student section of the Library at each Veterinary School.

John Auty. Honorary Treasurer.

The Australian Veterinary Association Ltd.

Annual Financial Return for the period ending 31 December 2005

Historical Group

BANK RECONCILIATION

	2005	2004
PART A		
Cash Book opening balance 1.01.05	1,095	419
Add Receipts	3,725	4,215
Deduct Payments (enter as negative)	(3,888)	(3,539)
<hr/>		
Cash book closing balance 31-12-05	932	1,095
<hr/>		
PART B		
Bank balance from statement 31.12.05	932	1,095
Add unbanked income	-	-
Deduct unrepresented cheques	-	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	932	1,095
<hr/>		
Cash Book closing balance 31-12-05	932	1,095

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Current Assets

Cash at bank	932	1,095
Interactivity account with AVA National	4,940	6,044
GST Paid	74	149

Total Current Assets	5,946	7,288
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TOTAL ASSETS	5,946	7,288
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Current Liabilities

GST collection		383
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NET ASSETS	5,946	6,905
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Accumulated Funds

Retained surplus brought forward	6,904	7,358
Current year loss	(958)	(452)

TOTAL ACCUMULATED FUNDS	5,946	6,904
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	2005	2004
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE		
INCOME		
Membership subscriptions	823	1,027
Conferences	1,650	54
Interest	257	174
Other		3,363
Total Income	2,730	4,618
EXPENDITURE		
Conferences	1,475	1,167
Publications	1,934	2,394
Business services	0	10
Other	279	1,499
	3,688	5,070
DEFICIT current year	(958)	(452)
Accumulated funds brought forward	6,904	7,358
ACCUMULATED FUNDS.	5,946	5,904

I confirm that the information provided on all pages of this Annual Return is in accordance with our books and records.

John Auty, Honorary Treasurer. May 2006.

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

REPORT OF THE HONORARY LIBRARIAN, 2006-06-09

At the time of writing, the Max Henry Memorial Library is still housed in a lock-up storage unit in Fyshwick, ACT. This is despite agreement having been reached in April 2003 for the library to be relocated to the Gilruth Library in the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Parkville, providing better conditions for the books and making it more widely available through being entered onto the national library catalogue that can be searched electronically. It is understood that a contract has now been drawn up between the University of Melbourne and the Australian Veterinary Association setting out the conditions for the relocation.

A recent addition to the library is: Colonel Lionel Rose, Chief Veterinary Officer of the Northern Territory 1946-1958 by Trish Lonsdale.

In the past year there have been more loan requests than in most recent years, although this is mainly as a result of one quite active borrower.

Dick Roe
Honorary Librarian.

AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION NATIONAL ARCHIVAL RECORDS

The major portion of the Archives is still held in storage at Fyshwick, ACT pending the transfer of the Max Henry Memorial Library to the University of Melbourne and the AVA Historical Collection to St. Leonards. In the same storage, there are cartons of files that need to be examined and disposed of, if necessary. One appears to contain AVA ACT Division material and they will need to be consulted if it is of any value to them. In agreement with Frank Doughty, I examined the papers, documents, journals and superfluous old text books on the shelves of the Historical Collection when I visited on 1 May 2006. When the move happens, we will consider how and where we dispose of them, for example, four sets of Aust Vet J for the years from the late 1920s to the mid 1970s. I have recently added to the archive listings, as you will see on the AVA web site www.ava.com.au.

Hard copy storage space can now be reduced by digitisation and I have now resorted to this method where possible. All Minutes and back-up papers from 1991 have been transferred to CDs, which are stored on the Archive shelves at St. Leonards. The office now has the technology for me to scan all AVA Minutes since 1921 and to store similarly. Digitisation is becoming a popular method for record storage even though updating of format must be done as this changes. The AVA CEO,

Ms Margaret Conley, is in agreement with my suggestion that files and folders be made accessible so that I can browse for appropriate archival material and transfer to CD direct without having to store hard copy. The AVJ editorial officer, Ms Eric Gell, has experience in systems and her assistance will be available when we introduce the scheme.

We thank John Holder who has been on call for help when needed.

Doug Johns
Honorary AVA Archivist
May 2006

REPORT OF THE HONORARY EDITOR OF THE AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY HISTORY RECORD

During the period 2005-2006 three issues of the Australian Veterinary History Record numbers 42,43 and 44 were published in the months of March, July and November 2005.

The March issue contained a series of papers on the Lessons from History of veterinary matters and what could be learned from them.

The July issue contains an article on the early history of the Murdoch Veterinary School that is of great interest.

In the November issue there were some important articles on Veterinary Practice, the veterinary practitioners' experiences with Strain 19 vaccines and an article on Ross River virus in Tasmania.

During the year the electronic archive of all 45 of the copies of the Australian Veterinary History Record has been completed. With the establishment of the archive, the long-term preservation of the Record is assured. The President will report on this matter at the AGM in Tasmania and in the next issue of the AVHR. As editor I am still anxious to welcome articles on veterinary history from those who have been pioneers in the large field of veterinary science in Australia and overseas.

Ian Parsonson.
Honorary Editor
May 2006

STOP PRESS

Robert I Taylor Veterinary Historical Collection

Members of the AVHS at the AGM in Hobart on 22 May 2006 resolved to recommend to the AVA Board that the designation of the AVA Historical Collection be changed to the Robert I Taylor Veterinary Historical Collection. Since that meeting, the AVA Board has considered this recommendation and approved this change.

This change will honour and commemorate the late Bob Taylor who was the founder in 1976 of the AVA Historical Collection and honorary curator until shortly before his death earlier this year. His worth has been recognised by his colleagues in the AVA and by the nation. This change will ensure that his name is remembered for his innovation and devoted work over three decades to collect and preserve a major part of our veterinary heritage.

THE AVA HISTORICAL COLLECTION – A SHORT HISTORY

The late Bob Taylor, a founder and the foundation president of the Australian Veterinary History Society, was also the founder in 1976 of the AVA Historical Collection and honorary curator until shortly before his death earlier this year. In his time, the Collection was displayed in the offices of the AVA in Canberra. Bob drove over from his home at Harden weekly and whenever AVA members or visitors visited to see the Collection. From small beginnings, the Collection has grown over 30 years and has become one of more than 40 veterinary museums that are affiliated worldwide through the World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine.

When in 1999 the AVA Board, in its wisdom, sold the Canberra offices, this Collection and the historical section of the Max Henry Memorial Library, which Peter Mylrea and others managed to save from destruction, and much of the AVA Archives were all consigned to a cheap but unsuitable repository on the outskirts of Canberra. Here our heritage lay until members of this Society met for an annual meeting in Canberra, which was followed by an outing to the repository.

Subsequent protests by the AVHG to the AVA Board were unavailing, until Professor Ivan Caple suggested that the University of Melbourne might consider providing a home for the Library. More than three years later, that suggestion will soon become reality. Meanwhile, the Historical Collection remains in the repository.

As well as publishing the Australian Veterinary History Record and holding meetings for its members, the AVHG also has responsibility, delegated by the Board of AVA Inc, for the Max Henry Memorial Library and, we understand, for the AVA Historical Collection. Both responsibilities were accepted willingly and have been carried out assiduously.

However, AVA members were informed in April 2005 [Aust Vet J 83;(4):188] that the Historical Collection will move to the AVA National office in St Leonards, NSW, and that the AVA has appointed a new curator. Apart from undertaking an annual audit, the duties of the curator were not described. As the AVA Board had seen fit not to consult the AVHG about this removal or destination, the AVHG wrote to the Board about space allocation, security and conditions for access in St Leonards; the value, conservation and preservation of constituent items; and the existence of an inventory. In addition, the AVHG asked the AVA Board, as space in the new AVA offices in St Leonards is known to be limited while space in other AVA properties is unoccupied, whether alternative accommodation was considered and the grounds on which St Leonards was preferred.

The AVA president, Dr N Blackman, replied that space at St Leonards was insufficient [sic] to house the present Collection, and that other AVA offices with empty space were considered but "at the time we purchased the St Leonards property one of the considerations in terms of space was that this collection should logically be at the Association's National Office." He added "all matters that [the AVHG had raised] are very relevant and need to be addressed by the Association." The CEO, Ms M Conley, has since informed the AVHG that few items of the Collection will be placed in a display case in the National office, but most will be stored in a windowless storage room. Assurances were given on security.

The CEO has contracted a Canberra conservator to examine the Collection. The CEO has told the AVHG that the conservator has sent an inventory to her and that she will forward a copy to the AVHG. At the time of writing, this copy has not been received. The contents of the Collection are listed on the website of the World Association for the History of Veterinary Medicine as: Equipment, instruments (ca. 100), photographs (ca. 350), printed materials (ca. 450), archival records,

and a catalogue of Australian prominent veterinarians. Members may have seen some of these items when Bob Taylor arranged for them to be displayed at AVA conferences. It is understood that Ms Conley's intention is to move the Historical Collection to St Leonards when the Max Henry Memorial Library is moved to Melbourne, and to vacate the repository.

The hope of Bob Taylor was to establish a museum to display the Collection for viewing by all interested in veterinary history – the public as well as AVA members. Your committee will work toward the realisation of this hope. You will see in the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the AVHG held in Hobart on 22 May 2006, which are also published in this issue of the Record, that the meeting resolved to recommend to the AVA Board that the name of the Collection be changed to the Robert I Taylor Veterinary History Collection. The AVHG will also formally ask the AVA Board to reconsider their decision to move the Collection into St Leonards on the grounds that the space available there is insufficient to do justice to the vision of Bob Taylor.

Trevor Faragher
June 2006

Editorial Note: The late Dr Bob Taylor wrote this short note in the AVHR No. 36, March 2003 to provide the background for the AVA Historical Collection to inform members of the origins and international importance of the collection.

THE AVA HISTORICAL COLLECTION

Dr. Bob Taylor, Honorary Curator.

The AVA Historical Collection was established in 1976 when Dr. RI Taylor was appointed Curator. From small beginnings, the Collection has expanded over the last 25 years. It is at present located in a storage facility at Fyshwick ACT following the sale of AVA House Canberra in 1999.

The Collection comprises old instruments, photographs, memorabilia, books and items of real veterinary historical interest. Many of the items are rare and irreplaceable. Eventually it is hoped to establish a small museum to display some material for public viewing. It is one of over 40 veterinary museums and is affiliated world wide through the World Association of Veterinary History. We appeal to members to donate items to the Collection. All will be gratefully received, acknowledged and catalogued. The Collection is accessible to members and researchers of Veterinary History by request to the Curator.

The electronic archive of the Australian Veterinary History Record

This archive contains all 45 published issues of the Australian Veterinary History Record. When you log onto <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/222> , you can browse among these issues by titles and date, as well as searching by keyword. By establishing this archive, long-term preservation of the Record is assured and the content of all issues made available not only to members of the AVHG and AVA but also to a worldwide audience as the content is 'harvested' by Google. Future issues of the Record will be added to the archive as they are published.

A project to convert all published issues to electronic files and to upload them on to a permanent archive was suggested several years ago by Jane Barton, then librarian of the Veterinary Education and Information Network (VEIN) in the Badham Library of the University of Sydney. Underwritten by a grant from the AVA Communications Fund, the project was managed by Jane Barton, and her successors Phillipa Stevens and now Sarah Graham, who have each at different stages kept the project on track and ensured its eventual success. The AVHG can be proud of the result, and these three first-rate librarians and other staff within the Badham Library deserve great credit for their work and our thanks. This example of cooperation with the University of Sydney is in addition to their generous establishment and maintenance of the AVHG web page. All AVHG members appreciate this productive cooperation while they enjoy the benefits of this work.

“Australian” newspaper, 15th September 2005.

“The consequences of being unable to communicate clearly and logically are not restricted to the classroom. During the Crimean War of 1853-56, Lord Raglan sent the following order to Lord Lucan: “Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front – follow the enemy and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns. Troop Horse Artillery may accompany. French cavalry is on your left. Immediate.”

Such was the ambiguity and uncertainty that Lord Lucan sent the Light Brigade advancing down the wrong valley. The rest, of course, is history.”

Kevin Donnelly is author of *Why Our Schools are Failing* (Duffy & Snellgrove, 2004).



WHALE STRANDINGS IN TASMANIA

Tim McManus
35 Hammond St., FALMOUTH. Tasmania 7215

INTRODUCTION

Cetaceans – whales – are divided basically into two orders, Baleen Whales or Mysticeti, and Toothed Whales, Odontoceti. Toothed whales are further sub-divided into those possessing obvious projecting teeth; and the much rare group of Beaked Whales whose teeth, especially in females and juveniles, are often obscured. Tasmania shares with New Zealand the distinction of having more whales stranding along its coastline than anywhere else in the Southern Hemisphere.

Cetacean stranding in Tasmania fall into three categories; mass strandings of large numbers – anything from a dozen to 300; stranding of single animals; and small pods of 3 to 5 individuals. Mass strandings here always involve the toothed whale group with obvious teeth, mostly Long Finned Pilot Whales (*Globicephala melaena*) and Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*). Single stranding can be virtually any species although, apart from the Pygmy Right Whale (*Caperea marginata*) strandings of baleen species are very infrequent. Many of the rare beaked whales have stranded as singletons in Tasmania. Strandings of small groups are always confined to Odontoceti and mostly involve pods of Common Dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) or Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). This paper, is not intended to be a scientific presentation, but rather a historical account of my relationship with cetaceans, and the conclusions I have reached about managing strandings, after confrontations throughout the years with nearly 1000 whales.

MY EXPERIENCES

I retired in 1997 after 40 years in the Department of Primary Industry, most of it spent on Tasmania's east coast where many cetacean strandings occurred and still do. I was fortunate to have as my initial mentor that very experienced and knowledgeable biologist, the late Dr. Eric Guiler. I well remember the first cetacean, a female Pilot Whale that we conducted a postmortem examination on in August 1968 on Seymour Beach. Since then I have had the benefit of dealing with many single and multiple strandings, as well as attending dozens of relevant cetacean conferences where world authorities on the management of stranding events gave me the benefit of their collective wisdom. I would also like to mention the late Barry Munday who, during his distinguished career, taught me a good deal about the formerly mysterious world of these denizens of the deep.

So what did I learn? Firstly, I quickly discovered that a mass stranding of cetaceans on an accessible beach stimulates public interest, empathy and sympathy like no other biological event. It also arouses an intense media response and scrutiny, to a degree rarely experienced by veterinarians elsewhere, except perhaps at a disaster on a horse-racing track. The television stations in particular pursue mass whale strandings relentlessly; the potentially dramatic pictures making for a guaranteed audience. I have had the doubtful honour of unwittingly appearing on television channels all over the world – even in Russia!

On at least two occasions, when I was merrily cutting up whales on remote beaches, a media helicopter suddenly dropped down alongside me, complete with reporter, cameraman and sound engineer. Similarly, my international friends have sent me many press photos of my presence at a cetacean stranding which I didn't even know had been taken.

Any publicity is good publicity, as the saying goes, and such media attention certainly keeps one on one's toes, but there is also one real down side, especially in an accessible location. It makes control of the general public much more difficult. It is a revelation to any veterinarian attending his or her first mass cetacean stranding to observe the degree of radical behaviour the circumstance inspires, particularly in young women. Maternal instincts are aroused to an inordinate degree, to the extent that personal safety is abandoned and individuals put themselves at considerable risk. Nowhere was this more evident than at a mass stranding of 183 Long Finned Pilot Whales on the morning of 8 September, 1981. The location was 7 km south from where I live, so I was in it up to my neck. It was also school vacation time. The weather was appalling with gale force 3 off-shore winds and a very rough sea. There was no possibility of doing much more than watch the unfortunate creatures die. Yet despite the hopelessness of the situation, it became necessary, literally, to physically drag young women from the raging surf to prevent them contracting severe hypothermia or having a limb broken from a flying fluke, in their efforts to 'save the whales'.

Next day the weather was calmer and nearly all the animals were dead. Unfortunately though, as matters transpired, a few were still kicking. The media too were there in abundance. Against my strong recommendation, supported by the senior Parks & Wildlife Service Officer present, members of the public, urged on by two of Australia's leading anthropomorphic agitators who had appeared on the scene, proceeded to refloat 11 survivors and pushed them out to sea. There was little we could do. The whales had been beached for over 24 hours. During the next fortnight 11 Pilot Whale carcasses were washed ashore at various nearby spots. Since the 'saved whales' had not been identified in any way, it was not possible to be sure of their identity, but I had no doubts. Why, because I had been told by that great cetacean biologist, Dr. Joe Geraci, in a meeting with him, that "stranded whales which have been on the beach for longer than 4 hours are history!" The reasons will be elaborated later.

This was an interesting incident because it was one of the rare occasions when the pod was actually observed at the moment of stranding. It must have been quite dramatic because a group of later identified males were seen to actually lead the rest of the whales ashore. Subsequent postmortem examinations of four of these adult males revealed their middle ears – essential for navigation and echo location – were heavily infested with *Stenurus globicephalae* nematodes, in numbers ranging from 1,140 to 4,200. Because other animals randomly examined had no such infestations, there seemed little doubt that in this instance, parasitism could be nominated as a significant factor in the stranding.

Many and varied are the reasons postulated for cetacean stranding. Some, such as instinctively seeking to return to their primitive land connections of 670 million years ago, are extremely fanciful. All I can say, from my experience, is that a plausible explanation emanated from every case, single or multiple, I investigated. We never found another instance of auditory canal parasitism though, although others have. By far the commonest cause of mass strandings is navigation error exacerbated by local geographical anomalies and 'spring' tides. This is almost certainly why only toothed whales are involved in mass strandings. They follow a food source of squid or fish across a shallow sand bar, known in Tasmania as a 'whale-trap', only to have a rapidly ebbing tide strand them in the shallows. Referring to the dates of mass strandings and relating them to the advent of a 'new' or 'full' moon gives substance to this theory. Whale traps can occur anywhere around Tasmania's coastline, but some are regular stranding sites, particularly the shallows adjacent to Perkins Island near Circular Head in the far north-west. The Macquarie Harbour – Strahan area is another regular stranding location, as is Flinders Island. However, a glance at a detailed map of Tasmania, with its many coves and estuaries, indicates cetacean strandings, as a consequence of a combination of geography and 'spring' tides can occur anywhere – and indeed have done so.

Most singletons come ashore to die. Various ones I have examined include a new-born Sperm Whale calf that had separated from its mother; a female Strap-Toothed Whale (*Mesaoplodon layardi*) with post- partum metritis; another male Strap-Toothed Whale with a broken jaw and other injuries consistent with having been hit by a ship's propeller; several with all the signs of 'old age'; a Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) separated from its mother; an aged Pilot Whale with peritonitis; an aged Sperm whale heavily parasitised with Goose Barnacles (*Lepas* spp.); and so on.

EUTHANASIA

The largest stranding I encountered was of 296 or thereabouts Long Finned Pilot Whales in a very remote location on the central east coast. So remote in fact that they were not discovered until several days afterwards. Even so, amazingly, when I arrived on the scene about 20 were still alive, although in a dreadful state from sun-burn, stress and dehydration. I had no hesitation in immediately euthanasing all these survivors.

Much has been said, written and debated about euthanasing stranded cetaceans. Earlier I referred to Dr. Geraci's dogmatic assertion that if they have been on the beach in excess of four hours, their situation is hopeless, and this has certainly been

my experience. Re-floating a cast whale and pushing it out into the deep might evince warm fuzzy feelings but rarely is success guaranteed unless both time gap and handling are absolutely minimal. Ideally, translocation is also necessary to ensure distress calls from others in the pod don't encourage the 'saved' whales back to the shore.

The reasons for pessimism are not hard to accept. A heavy cetacean ashore, out of its natural habitat, has to overcome a significant specific gravity effect merely to breathe. Add to that physical stress, sand and rubbish in the respiratory passages, and, in particular, exertional rhabdomyolysis ('Capture Myopathy') - so familiar to those whose task it is to relocate wild kangaroos - and one realises why the end result of re-floating them is often unsatisfactory. It can also be very expensive. In the event of essential or commonsense euthanasia, from my experience the quickest and kindest way is a single well-placed bullet. I reckon I have, in the past, shot more cetaceans than most other vets without a single regret. My .38 calibre revolver, with hard-nosed projectiles was ideal for the job. Target areas for small Odontocetes and small Baleen whales are well described. The alternative of intra-venous injections via the fluke veins is not, in my opinion, very practical, certainly not in a mass stranding situation; nor is exsanguination. Shooting though does have two draw-backs. Firstly, it has to be done in the absolute absence of members of the public or the media. And secondly, it is quite useless for large whales of any species and in particular Sperm whales.

As mass stranding of Sperm whales is always a dilemma for wildlife biologists. On the one hand, the media and the public make unrealistic demands for authorities to 'do something'. On the other, is the absolute impossibility of doing anything, apart from waiting for them to die - which they soon do - and preparing burial sites. Dr Munday investigated the feasibility of euthanasia of stranded Sperm whales. Due to the inaccessibility of the brain in this species, his only practical recommendation was to place an explosive charge at the back of the mouth behind the tongue and detonate it - from a distance!

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

Notwithstanding the usually sad or depressing sight of stranded cetaceans, it is important to realise that they have been doing so for many thousands of years, and view the spectacle from a practical standpoint. Measurements and sexing tell you quite a lot. So do external lesions on carcasses. The commonest of these are the characteristic white circular, fibrous scars left by 'Cookie-Cutter' Sharks - *Isistius*. Male beaked whales frequently bear the long parallel double teeth scars of contests

with other males. Open wounds caused by attacks from Killer whales or sharks are also common. Pregnant females on the beach for more than half a day, nearly always abort their foetus – an indication of the duration of a previously unobserved stranding.

Some things are invisible. For instance, it has been suggested in the past that a pod of stranded whales could provide a useful source of protein in the form of meat meal for animal industries. Investigations with which I have been involved indicate otherwise. Even assuming the practicality of such a salvage operation, all our analyses have demonstrated unacceptable levels of heavy metals and insecticide residues in local whales – Pilot Whales especially.

WHALE RESCUE

When is a whale rescue feasible and what can be done to maximise success? The most important pre-requisite is the presence of an experienced dispassionate person on site and in charge. Emotion should not be a factor. Consideration for the animals is paramount. Much has happened in recent years to improve matters in Tasmania. For a start we have a Whale Protection Act that imposes authority in any relevant circumstance. “Rescue Mats” for small cetaceans have been evolved, together with trained volunteers to use them.

There should be no difficulty ‘rescuing’ the most likely small groups of cetaceans to strand, viz. Common Dolphins. They usually do so in locations where they are quickly seen. And they are relatively small and easy to translocate with mats and trailers. Dolphin rescue has been a regular success story in Tasmania.

I suppose well-meaning persons will always attempt to return singletons to the water even though, most of them come ashore to die, and even if refloated nearly always die.

Preventing strandings in the first instance has merit, if one is lucky enough to spot the warning signs.

One such incident that I encountered was at Coles Bay when a combined mixed pod of Common Dolphins and Pilot Whales pursued a school of squid into the shallows. Boats were quickly mustered, and all the dolphins and most of the whales were successfully shepherded out to sea. Some elderly stressed Pilot Whales didn’t make it and two of these were examined postmortem – one of the occasions when the media descended by helicopter to witness the gory scene.

Mass stranding of Long Finned Pilot Whales, will remain a dilemma until some kind of scientific aid for individual assessment of their situation becomes available. There are usually numbers of them at one time. Indeed they are among the most

numerous of whales. They are also much heavier than dolphins, and can be up to 6 metres in length. Apart from clinical appearance, the critical factor, as mentioned, is the degree of exertional rhabdomyolysis liable to frustrate rescue efforts. In my experience a cardinal indicator of the extent of this condition is the level of creatine kinase, which becomes very elevated in stressed Pilot whales. If a quick, cheap, simple on-beach test for CK could be evolved; it would enable a more rational judgement of priorities for potential rescues. It will never be possible to save them all.

COOPERATIVE OBSERVATIONS

When one is as fortunate as I am to have whales literally swimming past my front door, it is inevitable that one becomes involved in observations and benign research. In this regard I have been privileged to gather quite a lot of information about the once rare Southern Right Whales – *Balaena glacialis* – and share it with the South Australian Museum. They, with their Western Australian counterparts have done much to elucidate migration and breeding behaviour of these delightful, placid animals. Most interesting have been the studies of ‘bonnet’ patterns on their heads that enable accurate identification of individuals. I have witnessed these gentle giants breach, sound, mate and give birth, all of it less than 200 metres from my kitchen window. Long may they live! Tasmania has also provided useful data for Dr Catherine Kemper’s research into the distribution of the mysterious Pygmy Right Whale – *Caperea marginata*.



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