



# RGSQ Bulletin

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## From the President

Sharyn and I were due to fly out on 5 March for Christchurch – yes, Christchurch. Needless to say we rearranged our holiday to take in other parts of the South Island where if it were not for the earthquake I would have had something different to report this month. Hopefully I can still present something interesting from this rather beautiful corner of the world next month.

I would like to comment on Brent Williams' RGSQ presentation for March regarding the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. As Acting General Manager, Basin Plan Development, Brent has quite a deal of responsibility in 'pulling it all together' for the final report to be presented to Federal Parliament and to begin implementation later in 2011.

The Murray-Darling Basin is important for all Australians for its biodiversity, its rural communities, its wetlands, its water use, the future use of irrigation within the Basin, and of course its agricultural production. It is clear the sustainability of the Basin is under threat from over-allocated water resources, salinity and climate change.

It was interesting to hear 'Cubby Station', much maligned and targeted in southern states for its water allocation in western Queensland, has very little impact on what happens further down the catchment. Without commenting further one can only hope the Australian Government's urgent action plan can return the Basin to good health with best practice water sharing between the environment, agriculture and other human needs.

Every time I sit down to write this column there's another disaster. First it was the Queensland floods, then the monster North Queensland cyclone, then the devastating earthquake that struck at our friends on the other side of the Tasman in Christchurch, and now this evening we are witnessing on our televisions a really cataclysmic event, the 8.9 magnitude earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on Friday 11 March. Japan is now bracing itself for a mounting death toll after the fifth biggest earthquake in recorded history [*since upgraded to 9.0, fourth largest since 1900 - Kath*]. Japan could also be bracing for a nuclear spill which could have implications for nuclear power projects in other parts of the world as well.

With the overwhelming scientific evidence of climate change, I'm still astounded at the amount of public displeasure at the prospect of a 'carbon tax'. After all, the previous Federal Government was installed with a mandate to do something about climate change. Now it seems nobody wants to pay if we have to have a carbon tax.

I'm equally astounded at the current Federal Government's capitulation regarding having finally given the green light to Gunns pulp mill in the Tamar Valley in Tasmania despite numerous court challenges, and much controversy. I might quote *The Australian* Friday 11 March ('Odour emissions represent a key issue for a project on the doorstep of a tourism, food and wine region') and this is only one of many side effects.

No wonder the public are confused with government decisions which deem it a must to save the Murray-Darling Basin, and a must to impose a carbon tax to reduce carbon emissions on one hand, and on the other hand grant a permit to a major polluter to go ahead with an enormous pulp mill in northern Tasmania.

Again this month there is just so much to focus on with 'geography' in the news.

Over the past few weeks I have been building up my supply of 'spent' newspaper articles that have

Patron: H.E. Ms P Wensley AC,  
Governor of Queensland  
President: Mr Leo Scanlan

The Royal Geographical Society  
of Queensland Inc  
237 Milton Road  
Milton Qld 4064

Tel: (07) 3368 2066  
Fax: (07) 3367 1011  
Email: [admin@rgsq.org.au](mailto:admin@rgsq.org.au)  
Web: [www.rgsq.org.au](http://www.rgsq.org.au)

something to do with geography from around a dozen or so daily newspapers. This evening I sorted through them and I managed quite a neat pile about the same size as the normal *Weekend Australian*. Considering our lobbying effort regarding geographical education, we should be winning the argument hands down if the politicians are reading the same newspapers.

Leo Scanlan

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## Lecture – Timor Leste

At the March meeting, Society Councillor Prof Jamie Shulmeister will give a presentation on: *Loitering in Timor Leste*.

This talk is based on a recent research trip by Jamie to Timor Leste. Timor Leste is a fascinating country, ethnically part of Indonesia but culturally quite separate with a long history of Portugese colonialism and the effects of the recent Indonesian occupation. The talk will try to give a feel for what life is like in Timor Leste and to show both the scenery and customs of the country.

Timor Leste also lies in a critical zone for global climate change with the Indonesian region driving the global climate engine. Jamie's research project is involved in trying to determine when ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) started – a topical issue in this La Niña year – and the talk will cover both the work and the actual doing of the work in Timor.

Prof Jamie Shulmeister is a physical geographer with a research focus on past climate changes. He did his undergraduate degree at Trinity College Dublin, his MSc in Canada and his PhD, working in the Northern Territory, at ANU. He has worked in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, Antarctica and parts of Asia on topics ranging from sea-level change to dune field evolution and climate records from glaciers. He is currently the Head of School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Queensland.



## AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHY COMPETITION

The school round of the Competition will be underway as you receive this *Bulletin*. Over 78,000 students have entered this year. Our Society can be justly proud of the significant contribution the Competition makes to promoting geography in schools all around Australia.

A willing band of Society members was on hand as usual to cope with the very substantial task of packing all the questions and answer sheets and sending them out to schools. Thanks to:

Dal Anderson, Maureen Curnow, James Hansen, Susan Jeffrey, Bev Leggett, Maureen Meier, John and Mary Nowill, Karen Nunan, Judy Gale Rechner, Graham and Kay Rees

Everyone worked so hard on the first two days that other members who had volunteered for later in the week weren't needed. But there's always next time – see following item.

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## More Help Please

We could use some assistance to sort the returned answer sheets – during working hours from about 4 to 15 April.

This is a more relaxed job where even an hour or two helps. Please ring Kath (3368 2066) and check before you come so we don't get too many helpers here at the same time, or conversely so you don't come when we are all caught up with processing the mail. Thank you.

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## Social: Cathedral + Lunch

What: A guided tour of St John's Cathedral and lunch

When: Tuesday 19 April

Meet: outside the Cathedral in Ann Street by 9:55am

Wear: Comfortable walking shoes. Total walking distance is about 3 km (perhaps less)

Cost: \$31.00 – includes donation to Cathedral + 2-course lunch, drink

Book: with the office; pay by 7 April

After a guided tour of St John's Cathedral for about an hour or so, we'll take time to revisit sections that we found interesting. (See last month's *Bulletin* for more information on the Cathedral.) By about midday we will have developed an appetite, so we will stroll a few hundred metres to 301 Ann Street, for a main course and drink. There is a very varied menu to choose from. Then another stroll to the Japanese Bakery in Adelaide Street for an exciting selection of sweets and coffee.

Audrey Johnston

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## Maidenwell & Bunya Trek

21 to 22/25 May 2011

The Astronomical Observatory at Maidenwell has three 35 cm telescopes and, with special street lighting to reduce light flare, gives excellent views of the night sky. Free camping has been arranged behind the Maidenwell Hotel. Arrive in time for the Observatory Day Show starting at 14:00. We'll have dinner at the hotel and then take in the Night Show.

Hotel accommodation is also available for those who don't camp at about \$25 per person but you must arrange this yourself. Ring the hotel on 4164 6133.

On Sunday we'll visit a historical museum at Boobie in the morning and lunch at a Pitaya (Dragon Fruit) farm, returning to Maidenwell with afternoon tea at Coomba Falls. Some may choose to leave after lunch to head home. The stalwarts will camp Sunday night at Maidenwell in case the previous night's observation was cancelled because of cloud.

On Monday we will drive via the pretty village of Kumbia for morning tea to Bunya Mts National Park for 2 nights' camping and gentle walking in this most beautiful national park.

The cost is \$75 pp, \$60 child or \$230 for a family (2 adults + 2 children) for the weekend only and \$85 pp or \$70 child for the 5 days. This includes all entry fees and dinner at the Maidenwell Hotel on Saturday. Please email Graham Rees [Graham@wombatshollow.com](mailto:Graham@wombatshollow.com) for further details.

## Spatial Technologies Workshop

When: 4.00-6.00pm Wed 11 May  
 Where: Brisbane State High School,  
 South Brisbane (park in grounds)  
 Cost: \$15.00  
 Book: for members only. Email the  
 office on admin@rgsq.org.au so  
 we can email back instructions.  
 Places are **limited** and will be  
 allocated first come, first served.

This 2-hour hands-on workshop will be run by Mick Law. It will investigate simple spatial technologies, all of which are available free on the internet, for example, Google Maps and some websites that embed GIS (Geographical Information Systems). Mick will take participants through how to access and use each of the technologies that we cover, showing you the basics of navigating and creating maps online.

Mick is a Queensland geography teacher who taught at Ferny Grove State High School and Brisbane Grammar School before moving into the role of ESRI Australia's GIS in Schools Program coordinator. Since 2008 Mick has run his own consultancy aimed at helping teachers get spatial technology programs established in their schools with training, resources and mentoring.

Mick will be ably assisted by Rebecca Nicholas, Acting Head of Humanities at Brisbane SHS, and

very experienced in using spatial technologies.

Please note, the workshop fee is for the hire of the computer room only. Mick is very generously donating his time to organise this workshop, which is available to members only.

We are planning a second workshop on 10 August. This will focus on Google Earth and the many different ways you can use it. Preference will be given in the second workshop to those who have attended the first workshop.

## Gayndah Bridges

11 to 13/15 June

The Gayndah area contains several of the most fascinating and different railway bridges in Queensland. We are aiming to visit all seven of these bridges designed by William Pagan and built between 1905 and 1914.

The Queen's Birthday weekend also coincides with the Gayndah Orange Festival so don't miss this most interesting and fun trek. Similar to the Maidenwell Trek, members are welcome to attend for the shorter period of 11 to 13 June.

Detailed information will be in the next *Bulletin* or you could email GrahamRees@wombatshollow.com. We'll be organising camping, **BUT**, if you want to stay in non-camping

accommodation in Gayndah you should try to book direct for the long weekend **NOW**.

Graham Rees

## Members Outside Brisbane

The Treks and Activities Committee is aware that there are many members of the Society who reside outside Brisbane.

In the 2011 programme we have endeavoured to include trips which should be of special interest to those members. We hope to see many of the 16 memberships in the Sunshine Coast region represented at the Elanda Point Weekend (1 to 3 July) and many of the 16 memberships in the Toowoomba and District area at the day trip to Toowoomba on 25 September. If you live in the Sunshine Coast or Toowoomba areas, please note those dates in your diary.

Brian McGrath, Convenor

## Burke and Wills Seminar

To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Burke and Wills Expedition, RGSQ is joining with the Royal Historical Society of Queensland to host a seminar: *The Search for Burke and Wills*. This will be held at RGSQ on Saturday 4 June. More details in the *May Bulletin*.

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## 2011 Membership Renewal

Membership fees for 2011 were due on 1 January. According to our records, your membership has been paid up to the year shown in the top right corner of your mailing label. (For life members this space is blank.) Please contact the office if you think there may be a mistake in our records. If you have not yet paid, please circle the appropriate fee and send this in with your payment. The mailing label on the back of this sheet gives your name and address. Please correct it if there are any errors. You may like to consider making a tax-deductible donation for the Society's environmental and educational work at the same time. Thank you.

Ordinary	\$40.00
" Pensioner rate	\$25.00
Household	\$55.00
" Pensioner rate	\$35.00
Student/Junior	\$25.00
Schools/Non-profit organizations	\$55.00
Corporate	\$150.00
Life	\$400.00
Donation	\$.....
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$.....</b>

I enclose a cheque/money order payable to RGSQ; or, please debit my  Visa  Mastercard

Card no.: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder name: \_\_\_\_\_ Cardholder signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I'd like my Bulletin delivered by email. My email address is: \_\_\_\_\_

## Bribie Bonus

Warwick members Geoff and Shirley Billing had a pleasant bonus from their trip to Bribie with the RGSQ in February. They managed to catch up with old friends who have retired to the Island with whom they had many activities more than 20 years ago in the Caper Cat Club.



## Rocks and Landscapes

The Geological Society of Australia, Queensland Division has published a 'new, improved' 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Rocks and Landscapes of the Gold Coast Hinterland*, by geologist and author Warwick Willmott.

Warwick Willmott has worked in the Geological Survey of Queensland in a variety of fields. He likes to bring geology to the public, and has written other Rocks and Landscapes booklets, given talks and guided excursions – including to RGSQ members.

Landscapes and scenery are not accidental – they are closely related to ancient geological events. This book fills a gap in natural history publications by explaining how the Gold Coast hinterland has been formed over many millions of years, and how its landscapes and scenery have developed. Chapters describe the ancient geological history, the history of coastal areas, useful rocks

and minerals, landslide problems, issues of acid sulfate soils, and a major section describing excursions where typical rocks and landscapes can be seen around the coast and hinterland.

The clear non-technical treatment makes the book a must for everyone interested in natural history, as well as engineers, natural resource managers, teachers, students and tourists.

As a service to members, the Society will be placing a bulk order for this book. Cost is \$10.00 if collected from RGSQ, \$13.50 posted to you. Please **order and pay by 3 May**. A sample is available at the Society.

# RGSQ Bulletin

April 2011

**Lecture**, Tues 5 Apr, 7.30pm  
Speaker: Prof Jamie Shulmeister  
Subject: Loitering in Timor Leste

**Volunteer Days**, 4-15 April  
For: National Geographic Channel  
Australian Geography Competition

**Social**, Tues 19 Apr, 9.55am  
What: St John's Cathedral + lunch

**Thomson Address**, Tues 3 May, 7.30pm  
Speaker: Prof Andy Short  
Subject: Australia's Coasts: A Status Report

**Workshop**, Wed 11 May, 4.00pm  
What: Spatial technologies  
Where: Brisbane State High School

**Weekend Trek**, 21-22/25 May  
Where: Maidenwell Observatory + Bunyas

The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Inc  
237 Milton Road, Milton Q 4064

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