



RGSQ Bulletin

December 2015

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Patron: [H.E. Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland](#)
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From the President

As we're on the countdown to the last event for 2015, it is time to reflect on a very busy schedule of events and activities during the past year.

In February we started the year with our 2014 Treks Revisited evening which has now become a regular feature to start off our calendar of events for the year. In 2015 we visited the Museum of Military Intelligence, we've been for an outing on Pumicestone Passage on a LARC, visited a Scenic Rim Robotic Dairy, and we finished this year trekking with an organised tour of the Toowong Cemetery, and the adjacent Mt. Coot-tha Botanical Gardens.

From April 27th to May 7th we were on tour in the Warrumbungles area of central western New South Wales. Over the past couple of months RGSQ members have had a very busy time both here, in Australia, and in Sri Lanka with only a bare couple of weeks to spare after our return from Sri Lanka and our Adelaide and Kangaroo Island trek. Sri Lanka was extremely interesting and perhaps a great start to RGSQ looking closer at treks in the area around the Indian sub-continent. (*Sri Lanka Report on pages 1- 2 of this Bulletin*)

We arrived home a month ago from our Adelaide and Kangaroo Island trek and while this wasn't the first time we had visited this part of the world, it has been 20 years since the first RGSQ excursion to Kangaroo Island. Much has changed in terms of National Park infrastructure on the Island over this period of time.

The landscape and colour of Kangaroo Island is quite spectacular and Adelaide is very laid back, organised, and a very pleasant place to visit. I would like to thank Kay and Graham Rees for a well-organised event and I'm sure the newer members who joined us on the trek are now looking forward to more RGSQ activities.

In October, RGSQ held the annual 'Geography's Big Week Out', the students' reward for excellence in the 'Australian Geography Competition'. This was ably supervised and run by the Geography Teachers' Association of Queensland, Bernard, Kath, and Margaret McIvor from RGSQ. Students from all States and the Australian Capital Territory took part in this event.

During the past couple of months we have established a very interesting RGSQ Map Group for those interested in the Society's map collection, mapping history, and modern mapping techniques, and in November we had another 'promotional evening' related to our forthcoming signature overseas event for 2016 - 'Tanzania, Madagascar, and South Africa' trek.

The past year also produced a busy schedule of monthly lectures on topics as diverse as, 'Soldier Settlements on The Granite Belt', 'The Interagency Between People and Trees', and 'Landscape Appreciation - Carnarvon Gorge', to name just a few of the interesting titles presented throughout the year.

Much progress has been achieved through the RGSQ Council who are well on the way to a very significant restructuring of all of our activities through our new Strategic Plan initiative. In conclusion to this last President's Page for 2015 I would like to invite you all to our **Christmas Party/Picnic to be held on Saturday, 5th December 2015** on the foreshore at Wellington Point



On behalf of myself and all The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland's Council, Bernard, Lilia, and Kath, I wish you all a happy and joyous Christmas 2015 and hope to see you at the

start of another event filled year in 2016.

Leo Scanlan

Sri Lanka Roundup



After a very smooth flight via Singapore, we arrived at Negombo airport (Colombo) in the early hours of the morning on Sunday, September 6th. On our arrival, the first glimpse of the hotel was not one we had expected judging by the sight of the street, but the Jetwing Sea Hotel proved to be very comfortable. We celebrated our arrival the same evening, on a beautiful clear night, with a seafood b-b-q on tables set up on the beach. A very pleasant way to recharge our batteries after the long flight from Australia.



We visited Negombo, the local fishing port, where there were a number of local sailing craft/fishing vessels plying the waves off the beach out from the hotel. The fishing port was full of various size vessels with very colourful paintwork making for some picture-postcard scenes on the river. There was certainly no lack of seafood in this part of the world, with a large area near the port being set up as a drying area for fish, squid and other sea produce. The people worked extremely hard here in the drying area turning, sorting, and carrying fish in very hot sultry conditions.

Next morning we travelled to Sigiriya (Lion Rock), an ancient palace located in the central Matale district near the town of Dambulla. The site, which is dominated by a massive, 200 metres high, column of rock, has historical and archaeological significance. King Kasyapa's palace was situated on top of this rock which had decorated frescoes on the side with a gateway in the form of a lion. The palace was abandoned after the king's death and was used as a Buddhist monastery until the 14th century. Most of our group did venture to the top of Lion Rock for a spectacular view of the surrounding countryside.



Our next highlight was an afternoon venture to Minneriya National Park where we saw more than our share of the local wild elephant population. On the afternoon we were there it was evident that this particular national park has a worldwide reputation for wildlife viewing – numerous safari operators were vying for the best spots to photograph from the Indian Mahindra 4x4 vehicles used

in the park. Some members of our group experienced a mock charge by one of the elephants and this was a talking point over drinks during the evening.

Dambulla, the 5 magnificently constructed cave temples, the 150 statues of Lord Buddha and some magnificent cave paintings along the walls were next on our list of cultural icons to see in this part of the world. On the way, a visit to a labour intensive batik factory, as well as a stopover and information session at a therapeutic spice garden and the 'shop', of course, proved of great interest.

Kandy, our next stop, was home to the 'Temple of the Sacred Tooth' and it was shoes off into the temple. Due to the pressure of those faithful to Lord Buddha I found this experience rather stifling, and rewarding at the same time, with only a slight glimpse of the door to the Handum kunama or shrine. We visited the lower and upper floors of the shrine which was full of pilgrims straining for just a glimpse of the ivory doors of the actual chamber. Sri Lankan Buddhists believe they must complete at least one pilgrimage here in their lifetime.

Our accommodation here at the Hotel Suisse was also a step back into the past in a beautiful old colonial building, situated on the top of a hill, overlooking the lake in central Kandy. Next morning it was a truly pleasant place to have breakfast outside on the lawn. Before our departure we were witnesses to the arrival of the bride and the groom who were to be married later that day in traditional costumes and traditional Sri Lanka style. I'm sure I wasn't the only one trying to get in the best picture that morning.

While here, in Kandy, we visited a 'gem factory' which provided us with information on gem mining in the area. I'm sure 'work place health and safety' would have a field day in policing safety regulations here. Some of our group bought a few of the gems on display, and all managed to admire the gems on show.

On our way through town, I noticed the Kandy International Cricket Ground and the many advertisements related to upcoming events on the cricket calendar displayed on billboards and it got me thinking about the place cricket and cricketing stars now hold in the minds of ordinary Sri Lankans.

Next on our agenda was Nuwara Eliya, a tea factory, and the cool highlands first colonised by the British civil servants and planters to service the burgeoning tea plantations. I have to admit, while the views were spectacular, I was a little disappointed at having seen only a few 'lady' tea pickers while we were there. We did have some compensation with a very enjoyable cup of tea near the end of our day's drive.

Horton Plains and the wet montane evergreen forest certainly lived up to its name with a very wet morning's outing and walk to the World's End drop off for a disappointing view into thick fog. At the end of the day St. Andrew's Hotel, Nuwara Eliya, was again another of those colonial, but oh so very, very comfortable English style hotels.

Despite its stellar reputation, Yala National Park was one feature of our trip to Sri Lanka that didn't quite live up to its pre-trip reputation, and the elusive leopards certainly

didn't display any of their spots during our time on safari. However, I'm sure many of the 'birdos' were anything but disappointed as there were plenty of the feathered variety on show, and again we managed to see elephants, and quite a number of spotted deer close to the road in the shadows.

Stick fishermen, elusive or real, but still on show, could be seen on the seafront on the road to Galle - a small town with over four centuries of stone fortress and Dutch and English history. Not quite enough time to really savour all that was on show here. Interestingly, following the disastrous tsunami of 2004, the fortress was left entirely intact inside while a scene of considerable devastation was unfolding outside. Further along the road, there is a tsunami memorial dedicated to the thousands of people who died in this terrible event in 2004. There is also evidence in the form of ruins to suggest that some local home owners just disappeared during this event and their destroyed homes have not been reclaimed since.

On a rather rainy afternoon we visited a cinnamon plantation along the Madu River. This is reputed to be a hotspot of biodiversity but sadly I was disappointed with the distinct lack of birdlife on the river and I'm sure cinnamon would not be an economical crop to produce in the west without significant mechanisation. On the other hand, a visit to a sea turtle hatchery at Kasgoda was something very special to see. While not to the same standard as what we might have in the West, it was nice to see some effort being made to conserve the sea turtles and return their offspring to the sea.

Finally, we arrived in Colombo, the capital and largest city in Sri Lanka, which left us astounded by the cleanliness of its streets. On enquiring of our guide about the reason for this cleanscape on the streets of Colombo I was told that the government had passed a bill to fine anyone caught littering – the law, while not as draconian as elsewhere in Asia, has had the desired effect.

Our accommodation was the OZO Hotel Colombo, right across the road from the railway line that runs along the seafront. This was the first time I had witnessed crowding to the point of hanging on the doorways of passing trains. Previously, I had seen these scenes only on the pages of National Geographic and other geographical magazines and on television. I'm sure in Australia we would be horrified to see this kind of behaviour but here it is considered normal. I spent some time trying to photograph the passing trains and their passengers.



The old Dutch Hospital and the port area where many old buildings are in the process of gentrification and renewal are among the other interesting places we visited while in Colombo.

Finally, short of a Michael Palin special with lots of BBC finance as a backup it is nigh impossible to relate all that was on show during our recent tour to Sri Lanka. I have hundreds of photos and so do many of the others who accompanied me on this recent Royal Geographical Society of Queensland trek to Sri Lanka. I'm sure many of the highlights from this tour will be on display at our first activity for 2016, our Treks Revisited evening in February.

My thanks and appreciation goes to all my fellow RGSQ members who accompanied me to Sri Lanka on this memorable trek.

Leo Scanlan

RGSQ Adelaide and Kangaroo Island Trek October 2015



Twenty-two participants were involved in the Adelaide section of this Trek with a further five joining us on Kangaroo Island. Twenty seven on a Trek could have been too many but because of their friendliness and participation in all activities, it went very smoothly.

The weather was extremely kind to us, with only a little rain, although there were a few overcast days. At times, the temperatures were surprisingly high in Adelaide but mostly good on Kangaroo Island, especially for our long walks. As expected, cold weather gear was needed and rain jackets were pulled out for the koala walk one night.

The Adelaide events in which we were involved with RGSSA were well attended and most enjoyable, in particular, the visit to RGSSA's rare book collection at the State Library where we were all presented with an early map of Adelaide. The bus trip and cruise on the Mighty Murray at the Coorong gave us a good opportunity to witness how geography plays a part in the best use of this part of the country and it was so heartening to see that now its waters can enter the sea at its mouth. It's a great feeling to be able to stand on the sand dunes to witness this.

We also visited the wonderful Central Markets to stock up on food supplies, Glenelg, where Adelaide had its beginnings, Hahndorf in the hills - for a tour of Hans Heyesen's cottage followed by lunch and a wander in the

village and, for some, a glimpse of our first koala for the trip and a very informative tour of the North Terrace. This entailed a brief visit to the Parliament where we just missed the mace being ceremoniously brought in for a session. A tour of the Science Centre and SA Museum focussing on the Mawson Collection was very well presented by one of the RGSSA members and thoroughly enjoyable. It certainly gave us an insight into the difficulties involved in Antarctic exploration and how tough men were in those times.

Kangaroo Island offered much more than we could have imagined. With only about 3000 residents who rely heavily on tourism, we were well looked after and offered every help and consideration. Travelling the length and breadth of the island, we visited light stations including Cape Borda, (the only light house on the island, the others are beacons), National Parks (Remarkable Rocks and Admiral's Arch were definitely the highlights), local industries such as honey, wine & eucalyptus oil and enjoyed some delicious seafood, in particular, King George Whiting and Spencer Gulf prawns. Wildlife viewing delighted everyone. We saw koalas (a couple walked through our camp), Rosenberg's goannas (the only goanna on the island), enough bird life to satisfy the 'birdos' in the group, Tiger snakes (no close encounters), echidnas, seals and a couple of dolphins.

We had a variety of accommodation types - tents, caravans, camper vans and cabins - and although basic, most were comfortable and satisfactory. We made base at four different locations - Penneshaw and Western KI for three nights each, then Parndana & Kingscote for two nights each. Although a few roads were 4WD only, most travellers could navigate around the island with no problems being reported. Perhaps the timing of our visit was fortuitous as the roads become rather boggy in the wet. The wildflowers in bloom were wondrous with many photographs taken to be shared with fellow RGSQ members. It was certainly a great time to choose for our visit. On some days the colour of the water was luminous and we wished we could have bottled it and brought it home. We also appreciated the lack of litter on the island - no fast take-aways may have something to do with that - the beaches are pristine and beautiful to walk on. Several nautilus shells, washed up after a storm, were found. Some brave folk even managed to have a swim but not for long. The water was a bit brisk!

For our final night, we shared a barbeque at the caravan park in Kingscote. Two local echidna researchers joined us and gave a most informative and enlightening talk. This night marked the end of the Trek as most were leaving the island the next day to journey home with wonderful memories of their time spent in this special part of the world. Many thanks to all those who participated and made our journey together so enjoyable. It was much appreciated.

Kay & Graham Rees

Welcome New Members

We have much pleasure in welcoming **Glenyce Cullen, Tom Asher and Robert Forsyth** as new members. We hope your association with your new Society is long and enjoyable.

November Lecture by Professor Shilu Tong
Following the interesting November lecture, a number of members asked about obtaining copies of some of the material that Prof. Tong presented at the lecture. His recent papers can be found under Publications at:
<http://staff.qut.edu.au/staff/tong/>

Christmas Party - December PLEASE NOTE

**There is no Lecture/Meeting on the usual
Tuesday night on 1 December**



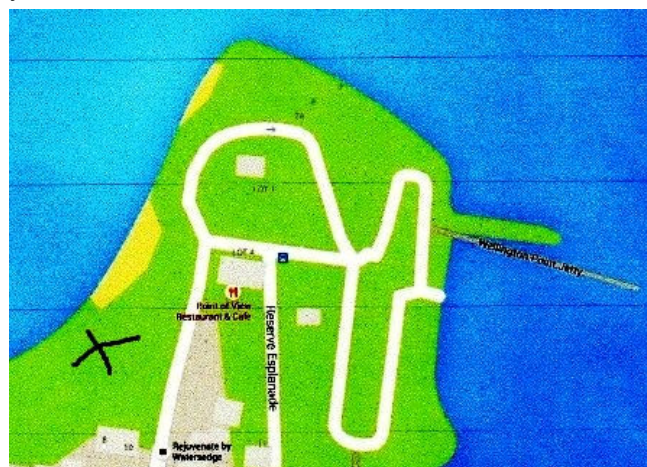
The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland Christmas Party/Picnic

When: Saturday 5 December 2015

Time: 10am – 3pm

Where: Under the RGSQ marquee at Wellington Point Reserve

We're trying something new this year with a 'picnic in the park' on the foreshore at Wellington Point. Bring along your own picnic lunch/drinks, sunscreen, the kids, the grandchildren, a hat and a chair, and join us to celebrate the end of another very successful RGSQ Geographical year.



X is the RGSQ Marquee

Christmas Cake and Fruit Platter supplied.

To ascertain number attending could you please RSVP by Friday 27 November by contacting the office at 3368 2066 or via email at info@rgsq.org.au

Leo Scanlan

Next Map Group Gathering

When: date will be advised in the next Bulletin

Where: "Gregory House," 237 Milton Rd, Milton

All RGSQ members with an interest in maps and mapping are welcome to the group's gatherings. Enter via the Society's front door. We will be somewhere in "Gregory House" talking maps.

The Map Group had its third gathering in November and there are about 20 RGSQ members who are now attending the meetings or are on the mailing list.

The Map Group is now moving into its Action Phase with members volunteering to do the following:

- **RGSQ Map Library** – six members will work on the Map Library across a range of matters in the coming months.
- **External Map Collection Visits** – two members are to organize at least three visits during early 2016 with the following themes to be pursued:
 - > Map conservation and management
 - > Map collections contents
 - > Modern GIS methods and data collection and dissemination
- **Blaeu Atlas** – two members to gain confirmation that the Qld State Library has attributed the Blaeu Atlas loan to RGSQ and not the London based RGS.
- **Historical Geography Studies** – one member to investigate what is involved in this type of project and how geography school students may become involved.
- **Maps and Education** – one member is to investigate the possibilities for project based activities which could also include geography school students.

The Map Group meets again in February 2016 and its members will report on the progress of the above initiatives.

Bob Abnett, Map Group Member

Queensland and much of the rest of the world are covered in the Society's collection of atlases and paper maps.

Members are welcome to browse through the atlases at the Milton Rd end of the library and the individual maps in the racks and drawers beside the kitchen.

Australian topographic maps, from small to large scale, make up the bulk of the collection. Other reputable series include National and Australian Geographic maps, as well as census, national parks, geographical and road maps. One can find sheets from a Russian atlas, American topographic maps and a small collection of Australian charts.

I could go on, but why don't you come in and browse through the shelves, racks and drawers at the next gathering of the RGSQ Map Group.

Peter Nunan, Map Group Member

ADVERTISEMENT for the Tours and Activities Committee

Over the past year we have organized a very successful and diverse range of events as part of The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland's programme of 'geography on the ground'.

Early in the year we travelled to North Central New South Wales and the Warrumbungles, in September we were in Sri Lanka, and in October we were in Adelaide and Kangaroo Island. I have to commend the Tours and Activities Committee for a job well done and I'm sure all our members appreciate the amount of organisational

work involved in putting together this programme of events.

2015 has been a very successful year for 'Treks and Activities' so let's make 2016 just as adventurous and enjoyable. Many of you have already committed to travel to Tanzania, Madagascar, and South Africa in April, and we have another shorter international trek in mind for late 2016. If we are to maintain our present level of activity we do need additional RGSQ members to join our Tours and Activities Committee.

While we do have a very willing committee, I would like more of our RGSQ membership to put up their hand and help us organise an equally successful programme of events and activities in the coming years. If you have enjoyed these activities then why not take it a step further and join us on the 'Tours and Activities Committee' in making sure we have an equally successful programme of events in place for 2016 and beyond.

If you are interested in treks, tours, and day outings and would love to be part of this organising committee then please phone either myself at home on 3343 4398 or phone the RGSQ Office on 3368 2066.

Leo Scanlan

RGSQ Office Christmas Close

The Society's office will be closed for Christmas from close of business Friday 18 December 2015, reopening on Monday 4 January 2016.

Please note that the Society does not publish a January Bulletin. The 2016 lecture and trip programme will be sent out with the February Bulletin in late January 2016.

Kath, Bernard and Lilia have enjoyed assisting members in 2015 and we wish you and your families a safe and joyous Christmas and look forward to a vibrant year for the Society in 2016.



Thank you, Kath Berg!

Not so much farewell, but more like "we will see you later". As of the end of this year Kath will be finishing her regular employment with the Society. No doubt we will see her at some of the Society events from time to time, and she may be back to assist with some aspects of the Australian Geography Competition and associated events during 2016.

The Society Council would like to take this opportunity to thank Kath for her 26 plus years of service to the Society. During Kath's time at RGSQ, among other tasks, she has overseen the development and running of the Australian Geography Competition, building it to where it is today, and she has been the Society's force behind our responses on matters related to geography education.

Kath, thank you for all your great work and putting in the hard yards.

Australian Geography Competition

Thank you to all members who helped with the Australian Geography Competition in 2015.

The Competition commenced in 1995 as a joint initiative with the Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA). Over the last 21 years it has developed into a competition for Australian school students from Years Seven to Year with 770 schools and over 77,000 students entering in 2015.

It is a major exercise for the RGSQ with volunteers helping with the packing and sending of: information

brochures and posters; question booklets and answer sheets; and, the certificates, results and prizes. In 2015, RGSQ volunteers provided 374 man hours, and sorted and packed over 318,000 printed items, and moved over 6 tonnes of material.

We thank all the 2015 competition sponsors:

- Australian Government (Department of Education);
- Macquarie University, Sydney;
- University of Queensland, Brisbane (School of Geography, Planning & Environmental Management);

- Curtin University, Perth (School of Built Environment);
- Ken Sutton Trust (managed by RGSQ).

In 2016, the Competition will be run in mid to late May rather than late March. This will change the timing of related activities which volunteers help with.

2016 Volunteer Day Tues 2 and Wed 3 February.

If you are able to help, please call the office (phone: 3368 2066) and let them know which day you are willing to help on?

RGSQ Bulletin

December 2015

Lecture/Meeting: PLEASE NOTE

There is no Lecture/Meeting on Tuesday 1 December.

Christmas Party:

Saturday 5 December, 10:30am to 3:00pm.
Wellington Point

Member Gathering:

RGSQ Map Group - to be advised in February Bulletin

RGSQ Christmas Office Closure:

Fri 18 Dec 2015 to Mon 4 Jan 2016

Australian Geography Competition volunteers

Tues 2 and Wed 3 February 2016.

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

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