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I.G.L.D. Ramblings with Past President Brother Eric Warner

It is with sadness that I record the deaths of Sisters Heather Duck and Lil. Mckenzie. Joining our ranks only twelve months ago Sister Duck was already fully booked to go to the Bunbury Congress when she was taken by a heart attack in September. Sister McKenzie joined IGLD away back in 1983 and at one stage was quite involved with our activities. She had recently resigned through poor health. No doubt we will remember our happy associations with our Sisters and I know our thoughts will be with their family members. I also mention Australian Brother Les Ferguson (Knight of the Endeavour) who passed away in March. Brother Ferguson was at the Hamilton Congress two and a half years ago and was elected to one of the Bard positions.

Early in October eight of our members plus a supporting wife finally made it to the Australia/New Zealand Congress in Bunbury, Western Australia, to join about forty Australians. In our delegation was Sisters Dolly Dyer, June Stewart, Barbara Wait, Helen Warner and Brothers Barrie Cuthbert and his wife Rae, Bob Stewart, Charlie Wait and myself.

The Congress and associated activities were extremely well planned and organised thanks to the superb skills of Sister and Brother Foulds and their team of workers. People mixed well in a friendly atmosphere resulting I feel, in productive discussions.

Four days prior to the Congress the Foulds hosted nineteen of the visitors on a three-day bus tour of the lower S/W Australia covering a distance of 1300km. Included in the places of interest visited, was a former whaling station, a wind farm, spectacular southern surf hitting high cliffs, "Valley of the Giants" tree-top walkway, a wilderness scenic boat trip, a modern computerised timber saw-mill, various museums and some rural industries.

The first evening in Bunbury about fifty visitors were present to witness the Bunbury Lodge's annual installation of Officers carried out by the District President and Grand Lodge Officers. It was a most impressive function. The following day was free to explore the city and do that souvenir shopping. The early evening we were taken to the local museum where we heard an interesting talk on the early history of the area. Then we moved on to a most enjoyable Mayoral Civic Reception with local dignitaries being present. The Mayor welcomed each person individually and had a few words with him or her as they entered the hall.

Saturday morning was group photo time and the opening of Congress. We got reasonable publicity in the local press including several photos. Five new members were initiated into IGLD. I presented each one with one of our North Island IGLD pens. Reports were presented by the various Jurisdictions with Brother Bob Stewart presenting our one. They did create some discussion and several questions were asked and answers given. My only disappointment during the whole Congress was to hear that membership is still declining in our two countries. Whereas in Europe it is on the increase and new Lodges are actually being opened. Why aren't our children and grandchildren following in our footsteps? I often wonder if we could present our Order in a completely different way in our country so as to be more appealing to young people. Information was also presented on the proposed book to be published to mark the centennial of IGLD. As yet there is no final agreement on what material should be included or what should be left out. During the afternoon session, partners and some members took the opportunity of a bus trip. In the evening there was a 'Grand Dinner', socialising and dancing. When everyone was seated at their tables prior to the dinner being served, the new Grand Lodge Officers for Western Australia were installed. The formal ritual and floor work made quite an impression.

Sunday it was an all day bus trip south to the Margaret River wine region, visiting places of interest. Early evening there was an open demonstration and explanation on the procedure of a First Degree (Eubate Degree) meeting of the Seven-degree Order as practised in Scandinavia. Two of these type Lodges have been established in Adelaide and Melbourne. Brother Wait and I were invited to act as Bards as we had been initiated into the Order in Adelaide several years ago. The evening concluded with an indoor BBQ.

The final business session on the Monday morning saw the installation of the new Officers. Brother Graham Galloway (Victoria) is the new President and Brother Kerry Robinson (Victoria) the new secretary. Many of our members will remember those two from the Congress held in Hamilton two and a half years ago. New Zealanders installed were Brother Bob Stewart (Guardian) Sisters June Stewart and Helen Warner (Bards) and myself again as one of the five Vice Presidents.

The guest speaker was the Bunbury Port woman Harbour Master and Pilot, Captain Helen Cole. She is the only woman to hold such a position in Australia and one of the very few in the world. A brilliant speaker she explained her life working around the world leading up to her position, which she punctuated with humorous experiences. She gets immense satisfaction and excitement when piloting huge tankers or container ships in and out of port.

Congress concluded with pleasantries being expressed and thanks being given to the organisers. On behalf of the 'Kiwi' delegation Sister Dyer presented New Zealand pictorial books to Sister and Brother Foulds and the Bunbury and Jasmine Lodges. A quick lunch and farewells to the locals and it was onto the bus for the trip back to Perth for about twenty-five of the delegates. A flight of just on eight hours saw three of us arrive back in Hamilton at 4.30am in the morning. So concluded a wonderful and rewarding eight days. I'm already looking forward to the next Congress, which will be held in Victoria in about two years time, to renew the friendships developed and again experience the camaraderie and fraternity fellowships. I hope several more of our members will be able to attend. In the meantime, lets hope that the New Zealand dollar appreciates against the Australian one.

Last year I made mention of the three Australian Druid Knights. Another to join the ranks is Brother Gorge White (South Australia) who has taken the title "Knight of Land of Oak".

Back on the local scene, there was a very good attendance of 23 members plus 3 visitors at our Labour Weekend meeting held in Palmerston North. Opening her first meeting as President Sister Dyer had the advantage of a personal amplifier system provided by Brother Ayers. Sister Dyer appreciated the support to her voice. All members will receive a copy of the minutes from the Secretary. However a few of the highlights included the Initiation of Sister Kahu Durie. Sister Durie has attended several of our functions in the past as a visitor. Sister Raven and Brother Lowndes were presented with five-year and twenty-year membership buttons.

Sister Dyer on behalf of members made a presentation of a clock/barometer mounted on swamp kauri to Past Secretary Brother McLay for his fourteen years service as secretary. Members had felt that Brother McLay during his term of office had greatly exceeded what could reasonably be expected of a secretary. He had always tried to be a perfectionist in the position and had driven himself to achieve exceptionally high results, sometimes at the expense of his health. He was the instigator of several new ideas resulting in the growth of the Order as well as membership. He will be well remembered for his regular mail-outs, supplying members with full details of what was going on within the North Island Order as well as being kept abreast with overseas news. It was also acknowledged the tremendous support he had received from his wife Sister Sylvia McLay. In a reply, Brother McLay gave an interesting review of being an IGLD secretary for fourteen years and the changes and new innovations he had experienced.

Following the meeting there was an appetising sumptuous dinner (with plenty of talking) at the "Fisherman's Table" Restaurant. For all of the Sunday meals, Sister and Brother Horman hosted us at their home. In between eating, a trip was made to the high Manawatu hills where a wind farm has been established. There are about 150 wind turbine towers gracing the skyline. The return journey was through the picturesque Manawatu Gorge. Around the meal table there were some interesting discussions on how electricity should be provided to fill New Zealand's future requirements.

Our next meeting will be in February on Waitangi Weekend in Hamilton. The Hamilton members would like to see our members make a special effort to attend because on the Saturday evening members are invited to the special centennial celebration dinner for the Pride of Hamilton Lodge. The total cost for the dinner will be \$35 a head. The Lodge will however require confirmation by the 19 December 2005 from those wishing to attend. All, who do so, will also receive a small centennial memento. There will be our normal Saturday meeting and social activities on the Sunday including a breakfast hosted by Sister Helen and myself. I hope to have a couple of interesting places to visit after breakfast.

The Druids of Australia. I'd like to suggest that members try and go into the web site www.druids.com.au There are several pages so you will have to do a wee bit of exploring.

Reminiscing back ten years, who remembers our triennial meeting held at Porirua? Sisters and Brothers Mangos and Hall were up from Christchurch. The Mayor of Porirua City opened the meeting. Brother Fraser received his Past President's Jewel. There was concern about IGLD not being able to continue with Grand Lodge being wound-up. Yet today we are now possibly stronger. There was even a discussion on whether the 2000 World Congress could be staged in New Zealand. We doubted it and the Congress was held in Melbourne.

Our President Sister Dolly Dyer and I wish you all a merry Christmas and that we can now look back on a year of satisfaction and forward to a New Year of successful achievements for our Order.

Yours fraternally in UPC

Eric Warner – Past President.