



• John Brock is a Registered Surveyor in Australia and is a stalwart of FIG and its Permanent Institution for the Art and History of Surveying.

Trips to a historic town and to the Snowy Mountains where our correspondent's mentors cut their teeth on a great hydro scheme plus a big plug for the FIG Working Week in Christchurch.

*A giant theodolite? No, just a modern sculpture spotted in one of the rebuilt areas of Christchurch NZ.*



## Surveying in bygone days: a Spartan life

I hope that all readers of *GW* have had a great Christmas and started the fresh year with optimism and enthusiasm. To finish off a vibrant last few months of 2015 we toured with Topp Tours to Jindabyne, Sydmore Valley, Myths and Murders in the Blue Mountains Sydney Masonic Museum and the Sydney Opera Company facility in Surrey Hills.

### Surveyors of Hill End

Joining a full day tour of Hill End historic town with Bathurst Historical Society, it was brilliant to see how many extra historic houses have been open for inspection as well as the excellent signage at sites to explain in text and photos just what had once occupied what now is grassed field. Even one of the old shops now continuously screens a slide show of the glass negatives rediscovered in 1957 of the images recorded by **Bernard Holtermann** in the late 1800's of most of the town as it stood over 130 years ago with two notable scenes of two of the local surveyors standing in front of their offices.

One of the men was named **J.M. Barrie** and local legend alleges that he is related to the "Peter Pan" author of the same name but this is to be confirmed. A great tale has it that when Mr Surveyor Barrie was leaving town in the late 1870's his offer of sale of his office was accepted by a local lady who thought that its location was too low lying and may be subject to flooding. When she placed an ad in the local newspaper seeking assistance from the town's men to help her roll the building on logs to higher ground, with a guarantee of alcohol to be supplied, 70 able bodied men showed up to render help. The house called "Bleak House" still stands at the spot at which the well lubricated workforce left it so many years past. After looking up the other surveyor, **Charles Mayes**, I was delighted to find that an author had written an autobiography of him, a copy of which I have tracked down in the Royal Australian Historical Society library.

### Snowy Mountains Wonderland

The image of snow seems to conjure up delightful visions of a wonderland full of reindeer, snowmen and big men in red suits cavorting around the countryside with sacks full of gifts. Well, in our "little" area of high country, which receives snowfall during the colder months of the year, we have a hydroelectric scheme hailed as one of the wonders of the modern world constructed over 50 years ago to harness the energy of fast running

melted snow to create power as well as to store the water in a series of dams.

Surveyors were essential to the success of this major project. I am proud to say that one of my brilliant UNSW lecturers Prof **George Bennett** was responsible for surveys to drive many of the vast underground tunnels connecting the network. Another major surveyor **Bert Egging**, who was Major Clew's 2IC, passed me for my country job in the Board of Surveyors viva voce (verbal test). The recently opened museum in Adaminaby has a life-sized model of a surveyors' camp with tents, instruments, cooking and washing equipment to show the Spartan existence of these hardy men during the construction of this massive job. Many images of surveyors with horses, equipment and encampments are displayed throughout the region such as the Snowy Discovery Centre in Cooma, Khancoban general store and three mosaics in the International Park in Cooma.

### Walking with Evans and Cox

Just to see if I still had some stamina left after turning 60 this year, I joined a walk which retraced part of the road built by **William Cox** 1814-15 along the line surveyed by **George Evans** in 1813-14. Although the descent from Mount York was arduous the stretch to Glenroy Crossing was low grade with many kangaroos bounding through the fields alongside our intrepid party, which I always love to see when I am in the country.

### FIG 2016 in Christchurch

Anyone thinking about coming down under to the FIG Working Week in Christchurch New Zealand in May this year can I please tell you that the locals would love to see you there and so would I. Having just returned from a snap visit to sort out some details with regard to the History Symposium I am planning for the Saturday 30 April and Sunday 1 May I can report that reconstruction is well under way with the local community most keen to welcome all visitors to some of the stunning efforts in restoration and other unique innovations of improvisation such as the shopping centre built from shipping containers and the cardboard Cathedral. There are so many amazing sights and attractions in Christchurch with the local organizing committee, led colourfully and ably by **Simon Ironside** (one of my best friends in NZ), offering an extensive programme of activities for all registrants to this internationally eminent event. If you want to know more about the History Symposium you can contact me directly at [brocksurveys@bigpond.com](mailto:brocksurveys@bigpond.com)