

## WA Member Picnic – March 2015

Western Australia Members marked the Autumnal Equinox with a picnic on 21<sup>st</sup> March held in the lovely garden of **Bruce (MI '58) and Betty Webster**. Phil Crosby organised the event after arriving in Perth for a 2-year CSIRO posting and finding very little Club activity. After chatting with Bruce, Phil (with help from Margaret Whitelaw, and Marilyn Drake) canvassed Members about holding an informal get-together in Perth. The response was an enthusiastic “yes” from around 20 members.



Despite mixed weather in the preceding week, the day turned out sunny and perfect for a relaxed self-catered picnic. Bruce and Phil welcomed around 25 people on the day, including spouses, partners, and family members. As MC, Phil thanked Bruce and Betty for making their home available, and also read out a message of best wishes from Club President, **Dr Joe Johnson**, on behalf of the ANARE National Council. On hearing of the event, David Ellyard also expressed his delight, and of course insisted that many photos should be taken to accompany this story for Aurora Magazine.

Following Phil’s welcome, he called on Bruce to recount his experience of applying for the job of Diesel Engineer for the 1958 Macquarie Island expedition. “I paced up and down Collins St, wondering whether to attend the interview” recalled Bruce, “and eventually steeled myself and went in, only to be engaged in the lift by a goateed gentleman, who turned out to be Dr Phil Law – head of the interview panel!” Bruce’s tales of domestic preparations for departure included the chopping of 12 months supply of firewood. Betty was down to three sticks on his return.

**Shane Ness** contrasted Bruce’s experience with an entertaining account of his own recruitment for a summer expedition to Casey this year – a 12 month process including exhaustive medical and psychometric testing. This brought wry smiles to the three 1958 expeditioners at the picnic whose

selection process was somewhat less scientific (but no less successful)!

Members were asked to bring along any interesting artefacts, and the old-hands certainly had the advantage over recent expeditioners, given that almost nothing can be ‘souvenired’ these days. So **John Bennett** (MI, '70) was the clear winner of the ANARE branded ‘stubbie’ holder with his elephant seal tooth, and ocean current drifter plate washed up on a beach at Macca. John’s personal copy of the station yearbook (one of only 18 ever made) was keenly thumbed through during the afternoon.



The gathering passed all too quickly, with a great sense of fellowship especially between past and recent expeditioners – some of whom only returned a few weeks ago. We had a wonderful mix of tradies, scientists, medicos, a Station Leader, some summerers, some winterers, and even a Wilkes man (**Ron Higgins**). While most people came from the Perth region, a special mention goes to Paul & Leesh Bright who kindly drove down from Geraldton. Our best wishes to John Munroe (Albany) whose poor health prevented his attendance on the day at short notice.

A question Phil posed to the assembled group was “when was such a meeting held previously in WA?” No-one knew for sure. Although sporadic gatherings have occurred over the years, it seems likely that around 15 years have passed since the heady days of well-attended formal mid-winter dinners in Perth. Nonetheless, there was good all-round interest in holding another gathering soon, and **Jeremy Wills** has kindly offered his house in Maylands (Perth) for a possible 2015 mid-winter BBQ. All ANARE ‘sandgroppers’ should watch their email in-boxes for news of further WA reunions.