



Horizons

Year 7
2007

The Signal

‘Signal’s up,’ cried Lucy, leaping from the verandah and setting off across the home paddock in the direction of the dam. Her nine-year-old brother Matthew, two years her junior but almost her equal in size, followed closely behind.

‘What do you think we’ll do today?’ Matthew panted as he caught up with her.

‘Bush walk, probably,’ replied Lucy. ‘Depends on Gary.’

Thirteen-year-old Gary lived on the adjoining property. It was Gary who had put up the signal. He could have phoned to say he’d finished his jobs around the farm and was free to take the young visitors exploring. It would have been easier than climbing the rusty ladder of the old windmill and tying a ribbon to the vane.

But the ribbon, streaming in the breeze or hanging listlessly in the warm air, was the agreed-upon signal to meet at the dam because Lucy and Matthew refused to use the telephone. This trip to the country was a journey back in time for them, and they wanted to pretend they lived in a bygone age without telephones or cars or computers.

Their serious attitude to the game amused Gary and he went along with most of their schemes. He’d opposed their idea for smoke signals, though, knowing the risk if sparks ignited the dry grass and the alarm which smoke would cause in a district alert to the dangers of bushfire. They’d settled on the windmill instead.

The Bogong Moth

Bogong Moths are dark brown moths with a wingspan of about 4 cm. The distinctive colour pattern on their wings camouflages them when they are resting on rocks or the ground.

As the weather warms in eastern Australia, Bogong Moths get ready for their annual migration to the mountains. From late September until December, they travel from their winter breeding grounds to the Snowy Mountains and the Victorian Alps, returning in March and April. Bogong Moths are unusual as it is rare to have a two-way migration in which the same individuals both migrate and make the return flight. Moth experts believe that this annual migration to cooler areas is a survival response to the harsh environment of their breeding areas which include the drier inland regions of Victoria. These places can be too hot and dry for the moths to survive summer.

Bogong Moths are well known in cities and towns on their flight path during migration. Bogong Moths fly at night and, like most moths, are attracted to lights.

They are drawn to the brightest lights on their flight path, which usually means well floodlit buildings. Once they have been attracted to a building, the moths have been known to cause considerable inconvenience. They have blocked air-conditioning ducts and set off alarms.

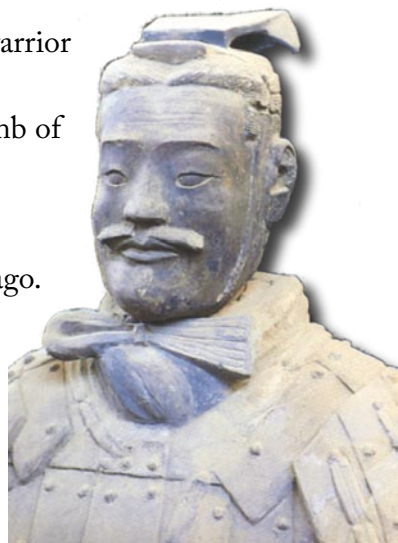


As they return from the mountains to their breeding areas in the autumn, the food they eat allows them to reproduce. If nectar or other sugar sources are not available they are unable to reproduce.

China's Clay Warriors

In 1974 near the city of Xi'an, China, archaeologists uncovered not just one warrior but part of a terracotta army – an army of nearly 8000 soldiers, built to guard the tomb of China's First Emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi.

The clay army looks just as Qin's army did when the tomb was built over 2000 years ago. There are bowmen, crossbowmen, foot soldiers, archers and six horse-drawn charioteers in wood and bronze chariots. Each group wears a different style of armour and clothing. The charioteers carry shields and heavy armour made of 324 separate plates. The bowmen and crossbowmen wear no armour and only the officers wear helmets. The face and hairstyle on each warrior is different.



Qin Shi Huangdi became ruler at the age of 13. He was a harsh man but he was also a practical ruler who achieved great things. His workers built the 3000-kilometre-long Great Wall of China and a vast network of roads. As the First Emperor, he united China, created one language, one money system and standard units of measurement.



Emperor Qin wanted his tomb to be spectacular so he spent a lifetime planning and building it. From 221 BCE until the emperor's death in 210 BCE, some 700 000 workers created nearly 8000 life-size clay warriors.

The Collector

I can't help it. I like collecting things – anything, really – because you can always find a use for them.

It seemed a good idea when I started. I was riding home from school when I passed a sign that read: *QUEUE HERE FOR CACTI*. People were lining up outside the funny old house on the corner. I'd been saving the money I made from odd jobs and my chemist round, so I hopped off my bicycle and joined the queue.

Before that, I'd been collecting stamps, but it was always just me and the stamps and I was getting bored with it. There's something about a queue. It gets you interested. I had to see what this was all about. So in I went.

There they were, row after row of cacti all over the front lawn. Cacti are rather like people. Some are big and hairy, some a bit spiky, a few real show-offs wave pink flowers and others just poke their noses out of the gravel. I had enough money to buy a cactus that was pretending to be a rock.

'Hey, Mum, look at this!' I hurried into the kitchen and plopped it on the windowsill.

'Is that for me, Danny?' She was being polite, I know, because she really hates cacti.

'You could get to like it,' I said.

She gazed at it, as if she wished it *was* a rock and she could throw it out the window.

'Thanks, dear.'



The can opener



Canned food was invented for the British Navy in 1813. Made of solid iron, the cans usually weighed more than the food they held!

The inventor, Peter Durand, was guilty of an incredible oversight. Though he figured out how to seal food *into* cans, he gave little thought to how to get it out again. Instructions read: "Cut round the top near the outer edge with a chisel and hammer."

Only when thinner steel cans came into use in the 1860s could the can opener be invented. The first, devised by E. Warner of Connecticut, looked like a bent bayonet. Its large curved blade was driven into a can's rim, then forcibly worked around its edge. Stranger yet, this first type of can opener never left the grocery store. A shop assistant had to open each can before it was taken away!

The modern can opener – with a cutting wheel that rolls around the rim – was invented by William Lyman of the United States in 1870. Sixty-one years later, in 1931, the electric can opener made its debut.

Mind your manners

A newspaper published the following letters to the editor in the same week.

Bad manners – 22 June

In today's world there is not enough emphasis on old-fashioned good manners. Everywhere you look young people are pushy, rude and ignorant. Magazines and newspapers are full of articles that encourage the individual to do what they like in the pursuit of happiness. Television programs and modern movies rarely show young people using good manners. I travel to work by train and sadly it is an uncommon event for a young person to vacate a seat for an elderly or less mobile person. If you are pregnant, forget being offered a seat by a young person. The younger generation is not being taught basic manners at home or at school. It is time we realised that manners help society to function properly.

David Flowers

Don't blame the young – 25 June

David Flowers ('Bad manners' – 22 June) makes some good points but he stereotypes the younger generation as being ill-mannered social misfits. Not all young people are as uncaring and selfish as Mr Flowers would like you to think. While he may have had some bad experiences, perhaps that is what he is looking for. It is not helpful to criticise any particular group in society and lay the blame for social ills on them. I have seen older people who are just as rude and obnoxious as any younger person. Perhaps Mr Flowers is just letting off steam or maybe he likes to see his name in print? Nowhere does he offer any practical solutions to the problems he raises.

Beverly Petrovski

