



Australian and New Zealand FORENSIC SCIENCE SOCIETY



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There are several Fire Investigators conferences and education programs being held overseas in the next couple of months. If you would like further information, please contact the newsletter editor. I will be happy to send you the brochures.

NSW Branch Newsletter

NSW Branch ANZFSS Inc ABN 33-502-753-392

Survey Results

Thank you very much to everyone who replied to the survey included with the July newsletter. You don't need to wait for such an opportunity to voice your opinions and make suggestions - we welcome feedback at any time.

We received 35 responses and the following is a breakdown of the majority votes:

Regular talks:

1. Night of the week talks are preferred: Tuesday (16), Wednesday (15), or Friday (12).
2. Time preferred: 7:00 - 8:00 (17), 6:30 - 7:30 (10), 6:00 - 7:00 (9)
3. Preferred duration: 1hr (13), 2 hrs (13), 1.5 hrs (12)
4. Preferred venue: IOFM (18), UTS (13), W'mead (10)
5. Type of talk preferred: Any (24) (some suggestions about different talks we could arrange in the future)

Social Event:

1. Would you attend 2004? Yes (29), No (5) ("No" people indicated that this was not a social club for them, they have other social clubs (2), or they do not have enough time (2))
2. Registered for 2003? Yes (4), No (27) ("No" people indicated that they were already booked for that day (8) were out of Sydney (7), working (5), Didn't know if they would know anyone (3), forgot (1), couldn't afford it (1), ill health (1), no application form (1), getting married (me!))
3. Month preferred: November (17), October (8), any other time of the year as early as May indicated.
4. In Dec, Which dates preferred: First week (20)
5. Which night of the week: Friday (26), Saturday (10)
6. Type of venue: Restaurant (25) (Some other suggestions received)
7. Talk before a social event: Yes (28), Not necessarily (5)
8. Tarrif: \$40 - 60 (17), \$60 - 80 (8), \$20 - 40 (5)

We also received some useful suggestions that I wont go into detail here. We will be sure to try to incorporate as many of these as possible into future events.

- Ed



Message from the President

Dear ANZFSS Members,

According to various websites, by broadcasting their new forensic documentary show "Forensic Investigators", Channel 7 almost doubled their number of viewers during the 9.30-10.30-time slot on Wednesday nights, even beating "The Panel" and "Without a Trace". What does it tell us? First there is an enormous interest for anything forensic in the general public. And this interest becomes a real fascination when forensic shows relate to real cases, and even more so if these are Australian cases. This is also our experience with the Society's public nights. Then, it appears that this interest does not fade away. Everyday sees a new forensic show released, and it looks like the public is not bored yet. It becomes a real snowball.

Is it good or bad for us, as Society members or as forensic professionals? Well, a bit of both. We are a bit like the RBA contemplating the effect of a strong economy. It depends on the way we manage the situation, especially the lime-light and the increased scrutiny.

There is no doubt that showing (local) Forensic Science successes will bring positive benefits to our discipline. We could even argue that this is something we (i.e. forensic stakeholders) have not been good at in the past. But this situation may also create some false expectations from the general public, potential students or even some investigators or lawyers. It is fair to say that the practice of our discipline involves a large part of tedious and bureaucratic tasks leading sometimes to indefinite conclusions. Obviously, we are miles away from Jerry Bruckheimer's productions.

In the end, I would argue that the main point is this: the combination of the current global political climate with the sustained strong interest for Forensic Science in the media and in the general public creates unique opportunities to advance the Forensic Science cause. It's up to us, as professionals and Society members to make the most of it!

Claude Roux,
President
28th September, 2004



NEXT MEETING: "Increasing the Probability of Finding Clandestine Graves (While Saving Time & Money)" - Emeritus Professor Richard Wright

DATE: Wednesday, 27th October 2004

TIME: 6:30pm for nibbles, 7:00pm start

VENUE: Institute of Forensic Medicine, Glebe

COST: Free to members, \$5 for non-members

Richard Wright is Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney.

He has specialised in applying archaeological methods to uncovering murders. Since 1990 his work has led to the discovery of more than 90 graves containing some 2,500 bodies.

A major assignment was from 1997 to 2000, when the UN hired him to head up a team finding and excavating mass graves in Bosnia and Croatia.

He advocates a 'low tech/low destruction' strategy, with tactics based on close examination of the surface of the ground. These tactics require extensive field experience in the archaeology of disturbed and undisturbed soils.



The talk will be illustrated with case studies.

We look forward to seeing you there!



REVIEW: Crash Investigation - Senior Sergeant Peter Jenkins ANZFSS Meeting, 22nd September 2004

Crash Investigators are a specialist unit of sworn members who attend the scene of the crash and follow the investigation through to interrogating suspects and attending court. Collisions they can attend include those where death has occurred or is likely, where serious injury has occurred and either criminal charges are likely, or there are conflicting statements, and major incidents of an unusual nature. Peter stressed that there are no “accidents” as there are causal factors for any kind of incident.

Peter gave us an overview of the different legislations that “Dangerous Driving Offences” come under, and the area of operation of his unit. He then explained the roles of the crash investigator. They are involved in: ensuring safety at the scene; identifying and interpreting physical evidence; recording and documenting the physical evidence using wet film, video and notes; testing their theory as to causation; looking for environmental / engineering contributors; interviewing all parties; compiling a brief; charging those at fault; and becoming the informant. They look at the physical evidence before interviewing witnesses so that their conclusions are not biased in any way, and so that they can be more efficient in interviews with witnesses.

An unfortunate problem faced by crash investigators is that death caused by traffic accident is not viewed as seriously as any other kind of death that might occur in the same place.



Peter then took us through the different kinds of on-road and off-road evidence they look for, and how they interpret these. On-road evidence includes things like road scars, gouges, tyre marks, debris, road surface and construction. Off-road evidence is the same, however it is much more weather-sensitive. He showed us several different types of marks and how they



Senior Sergeant Peter Jenkins

can indicate specific events. Some examples are as follows:

- an acceleration tyre mark is very black at the beginning and fades away, whereas a braking tyre mark is light at the beginning and becomes heavier towards the stop point.
- When a car is sliding sideways, a black skid mark occurs when the driver is braking, however if there is no braking action, striations appear in the tyre mark.

Peter had us thinking about things that we hadn't thought of before, such as which wheels lock up first during braking (the answer is the front wheels lock up first because of the weight shift towards the front during braking). He discussed some of the topical arguments in the field at present, such as the different methods of calculating things like braking efficiency or friction.

Peter's energetic and passionate presentation included many case studies and examples of motor vehicle collisions and pedestrian impacts, and how the forensic evidence present at the scene led them to conclude what had taken place.

The ANZFSS NSW Branch would sincerely like to thank Senior Sergeant Peter Jenkins for taking the time to talk to us about his work.



Welcome to New Society Members

The NSW Branch extends a warm welcome to our newly ratified members:

Michael COLELLA
Runa DANIEL
Emma KETTLE
Bridget SPELLER



ADVANCED NOTICE: November Talk



Please be advised that this is a **tentative** date for the November talk:

DATE: Friday, 26th November 2004
TIME: 6:30pm for nibbles, 7:00pm start
VENUE: Institute of Forensic Medicine, Glebe
COST: Free to members, \$5 for non-members

SPEAKER: Peter Gasner from the Queensland Maritime Museum
TOPIC: Maritime Archaeology

New Website

The Victorian Association of Fire Investigators has a new website: www.vicfire.com. Drop by, enjoy, and say "Hi"!

Contact Details

If you have any query, comment or suggestion about this newsletter or any information contained within, please do not hesitate to contact us. *All correspondence regarding general enquiries, membership renewal, payment etc, can be addressed to:*

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Final Words:

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function" - F. Scott Fitzgerald