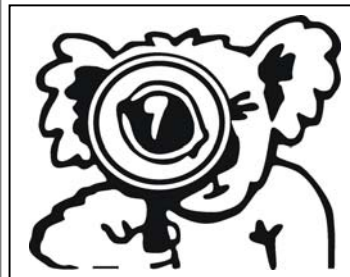


VICTORIAN SKEPTICS NEWSLETTER



April 2003

*“The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Curiosity has its own reason for existing”.*

Albert Einstein

Number 41

“Primary Science Education – a Cause for Concern?”

In 1988, Bob Hawke introduced the term “The Clever Country” while opening Canberra’s Questacon . While attracting some derision, not least from many of the elite in Australia’s scientific community, the phrase did catalyse wide debate about the opportunities and difficulties confronting the Australian community in an era of enormous technological change.

A focus on Education was inevitable.

At the same time, Victorian Education Policy underwent a sweeping revision. A plethora of year 11 and 12 courses were rationalized into the VCE, years 1 to 10 being subjected to the Curriculum and Standards Framework. The framers of the CSF held that the Curriculum could be divided into a small number of Key Learning Areas, and that prescriptive guidelines should commence at Junior Primary level.

Science is a Key Learning area. Victorian Government schools are required to provide a Science education based on the CSFII document, with non-Government schools generally following suit.

There is a wide range of passionately held opinions about the teaching of Science to younger students, but they can be categorized as follows:

*Is there sufficient emphasis and importance being placed on Primary Science?

*Who and what is Primary Science for?

- * Is Science being taught well enough in Primary Schools?
- * Should Science be taught at all, at this level?
- * Does it Matter?

Chris Krishna-Pillay, Manager of CSIRO Education in Victoria will address these issues on Wednesday May 21 in The Barton Room, Whitehorse Inn Hotel, 5 Burwood Road Hawthorn.

Admission is \$10 at the door, with refreshments provided.

Chris will commence his presentation at 8.00 pm. We suggest you try the excellent bistro before the talk.

Whitehorse Inn Hotel has plenty of parking space, is a one-minute walk from Hawthorn Station, and is served by tram route 75.

Vic Skeptics are planning more events at this venue in 2003.



http://www.asta.edu/primary/hardy_prisci.html (An address on the role of Primary Science, by Tim Hardy, Associate Professor of Education, University of Canberra)

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/csfdc/sc/kssc.htm> Victorian Science Curriculum and Standards Framework (Primary = levels 1 to 3)

www.atse.org.au ASTE Website which contains their report on the teaching of Science in Australian Schools.

Chris Krishna-Pillay

Chris Krishna-Pillay has a background in theatre, science and education. He is manager of CSIRO Education in Victoria, where he has worked for 10 years. In this time he has presented thousands



of science education programs to public audiences and school groups. He has also written scripts for national educational presentations such as "Smart Moves" (for Questacon), "Howard Florey a Tale of Tall Poppies" (for the Florey Centenary Committee) and "Our Place in Space" (for CSIRO). Most recently he researched, wrote and

toured "Pre-Coital – the Science of Dating". Described by *The Canberra Times* as the "pick of the [Australian Science] Festival" this adult cabaret examines the science behind such topics as beauty, pheromones and prophylactics.

Theatrically, Chris has experience in drama, musicals, stand-up comedy, film, television and street theatre. He is frequently called upon to present sessions at education conferences as well as running theatre and communication workshops. He has appeared many times on educational videos and has been MC at countless events from orchestral concerts to corporate award presentations.

Chris is a member of the Victorian Science Drama Awards Committee and maintains a keen interest in all areas of theatre, public education, corporate entertainment and the amalgamation of science and the arts.

Teachers!

**There's a new source of material
designed to help you promote
critical thinking
in *YOUR* classroom!**

Australian Skeptics Teacher Resource

<http://www.skeptics.com.au/features/teachers.htm>

SCEATS'S SPECIALLY SELECTED SOUTHERN SKEPTICS' SOCIAL SNIPPETS

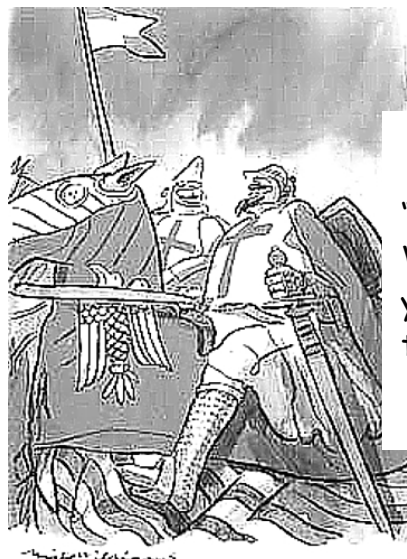


(by Rosemary Sceats)

As regular readers of this prestigious publication would be aware, Melbourne Skeptics have an informal gathering at Pugg Mahones Irish Pub in the CBD, on the third Monday of each month. In March, this coincided with St Patrick's Day on the 17th, and since we figured that there would be standing room only at Puggs that day, decided to hold the event at the Whitehorse Inn, Hawthorn, instead (the new venue for our quarterly dinner/speaker meetings). Whether it had anything to do with St Patrick or not, there was a bumper turnout at the Burwood Road venue, and a jolly good time was had by all in attendance. Perhaps it had more to do with the fact that we were welcoming a pair of visiting Skeptics from the USA, Len and Marilyn Levine, who were on their first visit to Australia and were keen to meet and exchange notes with some "Down Under" Skeptics.

Len kept us all entertained with a nifty, vaguely boomerang-shaped, apparently simple little plastic gadget that appeared to work by magic. No matter which way it was initially set in motion, it seemed determined always to spin in the same direction, reversing the direction of spin if necessary. It had Lynne Kelly (a physics graduate and science teacher) both fascinated and stumped.

Len also distributed copies of a useful document to those present - a "Get Out of Hell Free" card, to be kept in the wallet "Until Needed or Sold". They say "You can't take it with you." I wonder if this applies to the non-monetary contents of your wallet!



"Isn't life simple
When you know
you're right all
the time?"

Borderline Skeptics Survive Hellfire and Dam(Nation).

By Laurie and Eden Smith.

Summer 2003, a time that will always have warm memories for the Borderline Group. To quote Russell Kelly, "We must have sinned more than usual to deserve this fiery hell".

Here at Callaghan's Creek, the first threat was just over the hill where a lightning strike started the first of many fires. At Mitta-Mitta, the Kellys and the Bradshaws were no further away from the Bogong fires. Over at Mount Beauty, Tracey O'Brien would have been paying keen interest to the fire reports, as would Tony Norton at Bright.



Things changed quickly following bad weather conditions, and we were all soon in that well-known ditch. The next two weeks were so crammed full of rumor, action, inaction, evacuations, highs and lows that we are all still catching up on lost time.



Despite record attendance at local churches, and the combined efforts of Ouyen's women, no rain fell and the fires moved on when there was little else to burn.

The Kellys and ourselves received many amazing offers of assistance from Melbourne Skeptics that we will always remember fondly, so do come and visit us here in Australia's water divining capital and don't wait for a natural disaster to get in touch!

What is the Price of a Man's Soul?

..... About \$4.50 , as at 8.30 pm on Friday 12th of April, if you happen to be young Melbourne comic Lawrence Leung.

Mr Leung made this revelation to an appreciative audience, which included seventeen Vic. Skeptics and associates. He had listed his Soul on E-Bay, partly from curiosity , and partly because his mother and his Priest had strongly advised against selling it to the devil.



Performed during Melbourne's Comedy Festival, this one-man show, entitled "Skeptic", featured episodes in a personal quest to confront the paranormal, such as staying in a haunted castle, and attending a John Edward event (while taking copious notes).

Mr Leung also presented a graphic documentation of a series of dubious but highly risible controlled experiments involving rakes, blindfolds, black cats, ladders and mirrors.

The show included audience participation of the "Mind-reading" variety. Lawrence made several accurate, seemingly impossible predictions about aspects of the night's performance. Readers who attended Marc Salem's recent show "Mind Games" at the CUB Malthouse Theatre would have seen some similar mind-boggling prophetic utterances sealed in an envelope and opened at the end of the show.

It was a pacy show, quirky yet polished. Probably very few people share Lawrence Leung's refreshing outlook on life. More's the pity.

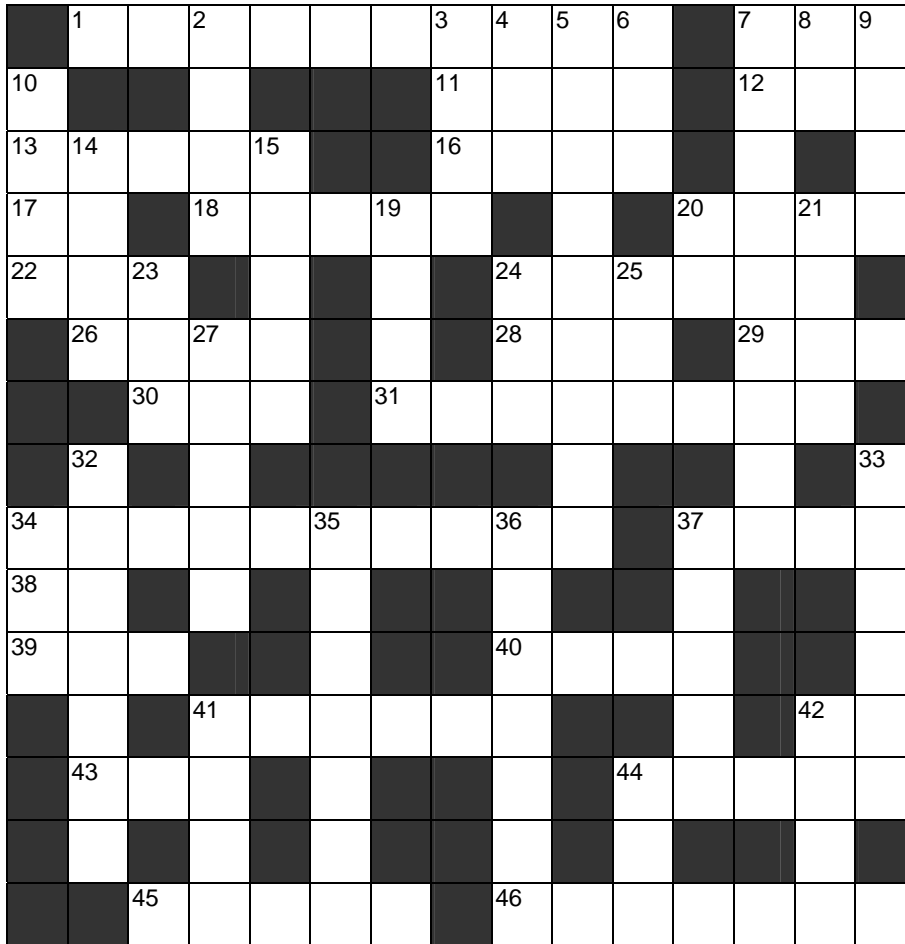
* Australian Skeptics Celebrate Land-Mark Social Reform Anniversary

On May 7th, 1908 the British Old-Age Pension was raised to 5 shillings per week. That's as good a reason as any to offer a **Gift Subscription** to

"The Australian Skeptic"

(Existing or renewing subscribers can introduce new subscribers at a special rate of \$22. See subscription form, back page)

SKEPTICAL CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 NE Vic Town, one site of the 2003 bushfires, which hosts an annual Water Divining Challenge (So good, they named it twice!)
- 7 What they keep the Covenant in (all over Ethiopia.)
- 11 Ritualised fight between gentlemen. Also first Spielberg Movie.
- 12 Proscription.
- 13 Abrade, as of corn.
- 16 To eye amorously. To perve, in other words.
- 17 In relation to. (abb.)
- 18 Arthurian Chalice.
- 20 Head-and-shoulders sculpture.
- 22 Consume.
- 24 Verbal Articulation.
- 26 Job description for Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar
- 28 Of a satisfactory standard.
- 29 Metallic element denoted by the symbol Sn.
- 30 Aged.
- 31 A small piece of guidance from Nostradamus in 4 lines.
- 34 The kind of alternative medicine where less is more.
- 37 Cut with scissors.
- 38 We. (In passive case)
- 39 Female sheep. (subject of 16 across in NZ?)
- 40 What Uri and his spoons are.
- 41 Sacred Ancient Egyptian beetle. Used in jewellery.
- 42 Thus.
- 43 The Lion.
- 44 What we think with. (Or perhaps not.)
- 45 This Amazing Skeptical guru upset Don Lane.
- 46 The craft of Divining as practised in 1 across.

Down

- 2 Strong taste or flavour.
- 3 Image which is the object of worship.
- 4 Pull.
- 5 Long distance form of communication with better rates than Telstra.
- 6 The amber fluid.
- 7 A pastime which visiting aliens apparently really enjoy.
- 8 Sun god.
- 9 Grannies and broken bones do this.
- 10 Monster with a voracious appetite.
- 14 Bundle of paper.
- 15 Celtic Priest.
- 19 Many of us are sceptical about fighting a war here.
- 20 Exist.
- 21 Front of calf.
- 23 A view about existence in Chinese philosophy.
- 24 Aerated or mineral bath.
- 25 To make a mistake.
- 27 Cemented.
- 32 U.F.O. Central!
- 33 A right to chose.
- 34 Colour.
- 35 Ancient structure , speculation upon which has created a modern industry.
- 36 Scientology's founder
- 37 Indian stringed musical instrument.
- 41 Settee.
- 42 Astrological Predeterminant.
- 44 Front of a ship.

'TIME-TRAVELER' BUSTED FOR INSIDER TRADING

(by Chad Kultgen)

NEW YORK -- Federal investigators have arrested a Wall Street wiz on insider-trading charges - he claims to be a time-traveler from the year 2256!

Sources at the Security and Exchange Commission confirm that 44-year-old Andrew Carlssin offered the bizarre explanation for his uncanny success in the stock .

"We don't believe this guy's story - he's either a lunatic or a pathological liar," says an SEC insider.

"But the fact is, with an initial investment of only \$800, in two weeks' time he had a portfolio valued at over \$350 million. Every trade he made capitalized on unexpected business developments, which simply can't be pure luck

"The only way he could pull it off is with illegal inside information. He's going to sit in a jail cell until he agrees to give up his sources."

When Carlssin made a flurry of 126 high-risk trades and came out the winner every time, it raised the eyebrows of Wall Street watchdogs. "If a company's stock rose due to a merger or technological breakthrough that was supposed to be secret, Mr. Carlssin somehow knew about it in advance," says the SEC source close to the hush-hush, ongoing investigation.

When investigators hauled Carlssin in, they got more than they bargained for: Carlssin declared that he had traveled back in time from over 200 years in the future" It was just too tempting to resist," Carlssin allegedly said in his videotaped confession. "I had planned to make it look natural, you know, lose a little here and there so it doesn't look too perfect. But I just got caught in the moment."

In a bid for leniency, Carlssin has reportedly offered to divulge "historical facts" such as the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden and a cure for AIDS. All he wants is to be allowed to return to the future in his "time craft." However, he refuses to reveal the location of the machine or discuss how it works, supposedly out of fear the technology could fall into the wrong hands.

Officials are quite confident the "time-traveler's" claims are bogus. Yet "No one can find any record of any Andrew Carlssin existing anywhere before December 2002."

Keep watching for further developments.

ATHEIST SOCIETY

FREE PUBLIC LECTURES, followed by questions/discussion (The lecturers are not necessarily Atheists.)

13 May 2003 Colin Goodwin (Former Registrar, Victorian College of the Arts).

"The New Cosmology and The Search for Meaning."

10 June 2003 John Noack (Carl Jung Society).

"Original Christianity: Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria."

8 July 2003 Ian Fry (Author of, 'Trouble in the Triangle').

"The Conflict in the Middle East and its Spin-off:

A Challenge to the Concepts of Atheism and Agnosticism."

12 Aug. 2003. Dr. Alan McPhate (Humanist Society of Victoria).

"Anaesthetics and Contraception: The Religions Opposed Both!"

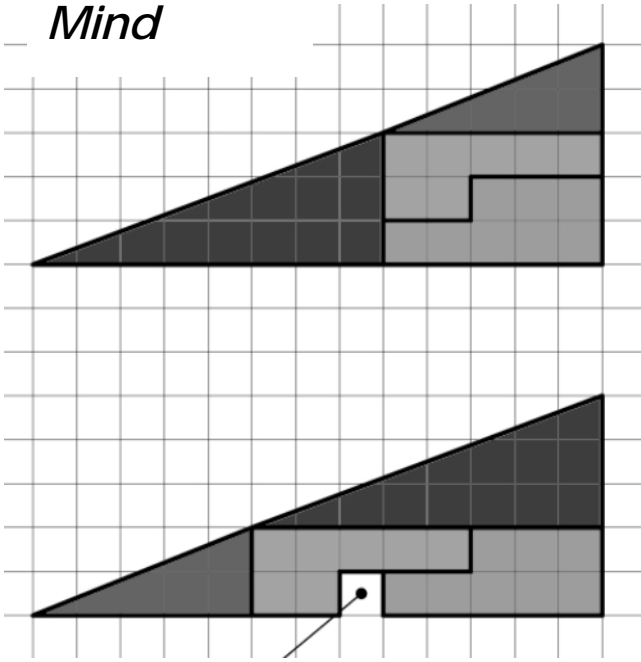
Venue:- The New International Bookshop's Seminar Room in the Trades Hall, 54 Victoria Street (corner Lygon Street), Carlton.8pm, on the second Tuesday of the month.

For the complete 2003 schedule: ENQUIRIES:- David Miller, Secretary. Tel: 03 9467 2063

Email:- atheist_agnostic@lycos.com

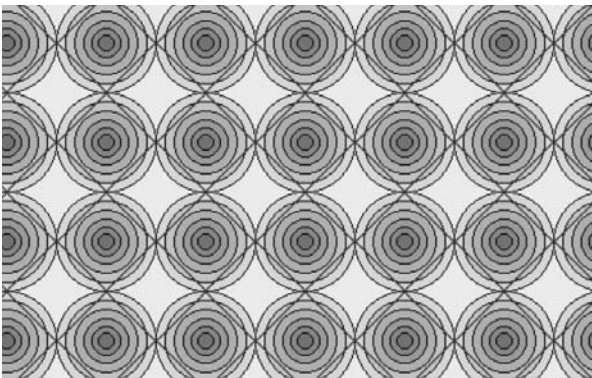
Mail:- GPO Box 1555, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Mind



?

Look at the two diagrams above. The lower diagram purports to be a re-arrangement of the tiles in the upper diagram. Can you explain the blank square in the lower diagram?



Are there any straight lines in this diagram?

The Great Australian Skeptics CD

\$55

1800 666 996 GPO Box 5166 Melbourne 3001

It's sing-along time!

*To the tune of "If you're happy and you know it"
With acknowledgements to the author...*

If you cannot find Osama, bomb Iraq.
If the markets are a drama, bomb Iraq.
If the terrorists are frisky,
Pakistan is looking shifty,
North Korea is too risky,
Bomb Iraq.

If we have no allies with us, bomb Iraq.
If we think someone has dissed us, bomb Iraq.
So to hell with the inspections,
Let's look tough for the elections,
Close your mind and take directions,
Bomb Iraq.

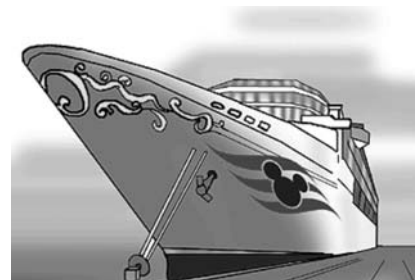
It's "pre-emptive non-aggression", bomb Iraq.
Let's prevent this mass destruction, bomb Iraq.
They've got weapons we can't see,
And that's good enough for me
'Cos it's all the proof I need,
Bomb Iraq.

If you never were elected, bomb Iraq.
If your mood is quite dejected, bomb Iraq.
If you think Saddam's gone mad
With the weapons that he had,
(And he tried to kill your dad),
Bomb Iraq.

If your corporate fraud is growin', bomb Iraq.
If your ties to it are showin', bomb Iraq.
If your politics are sleazy,
And hiding that ain't easy,
And your manhood's getting queasy,
Bomb Iraq.

Fall in line and follow orders, bomb Iraq.
For our might knows not our borders, bomb Iraq.
Disagree? We'll call it treason,
Let's make war not love this season,
Even if we have no reason,
Bomb Iraq.

*The US Navy
deploys its
secret
biowarfare
vessel in the
Gulf*





VIC SKEPTICS WEBPAGE !

By Christopher Short

Interested in coming along to Skeptics events but never really know what is on when?

If you have access to the internet, you can now go to our new Victorian Skeptics Events webpage.

1. Go to the usual Australian Skeptics website
<http://www.skeptics.com.au>
2. Click "News" in the top right hand corner.
3. Select "Victoria News" on the left hand site.

This webpage will be constantly updated. As new events are arranged, I will promptly add them. The first page only shows the next three events, but if you click on "more events..." below them, you will see our calendar for the whole year. At the moment the calendar is rather dominated by our regular social "Skeptics Pub Nights" but they should become watered down as we plan extra events.

Bulletins will be shown on the main page, highlighting special Events that may be of interest to Victorian Skeptics.

Watch this space!

Australian Skeptics Inc. Victorian Committee April 2003

President: Bob Nixon
 Vice President: Steve Roberts (*Life Member*)
 Secretary: Ken Greatorex
 Treasurer: Rosemary Sceats
 Public Officer: Peter Hogan (*Life Member*)
 Rob Brown
 Christopher Short
 James Gerrand (*Life Member*)
 Andrew Rawlings
 Grant Stevenson

Peter Hogan Creates Concern Among Creationists

Vic Skeptics Committee member and Australian Skeptics Life Member Peter Hogan has cracked it for a mention in "Prayer News", the official newsletter of the Creationist/Christian Fundamentalist organization "Answers in Genesis".

Peter had an article in *Australasian Science* (Vol. 24 No. 1) warning readers that AiG was trying to get its supporters to donate subscriptions to *Creation* and *TJ* magazines to local and school libraries. Peter suggested it was important to make sure these magazines, which are anti-evolution, be classified as religion, and not as science, as AiG suggested.

He also jokingly suggested that a suitable classification would be "Myths & Legends". AiG have magnanimously agreed to relegate their products to the "Myths and Legends" shelves - as soon as Evolution is also treated as a myth.



"Primary Science Education - a Cause for Concern?"

Chris Krishna-Pillay

(Manager, CSIRO Education Victoria)

Wednesday May 21 2003 8pm

The Barton Room

Whitehorse Inn Hotel

5 Burwood Road Hawthorn

\$10 includes light refreshments

Australian Skeptics

SKEPTICAL CROSSWORD (SOLUTION)

	M	I	T	T	A	M	I	T	T	A		A	R	K
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