

# THE WOLLONGONG PIG-BREEDERS' GAZETTE 4

**APRIL 1994**, Issue 4. The Wollongong Pig-Breeders' Gazette is published with an ever-decreasing frequency by Perry Middlemiss of GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3001, [phone (H) (03) 819 2343, (W) (03) 634 2988], and on Internet at PMiddlem@vcprmrkt.telecom.com.au; firstly for members of ANZAPA and then for others as seems appropriate. Available for the usual. Beware the red "X" next to the address. It signifies the end of our relationship if I hear nothing from you.

## January 5, 1994

It's that time of the year when, if you were to believe all you read in the newspapers and magazines, every man and his dog is making New Year's resolutions. There just seems to be something about this time of the year which makes normally intelligent people want to give things up. Everything from smoking to sloth. The only reason I can think of to explain this aberrant behaviour is to look at it as some sort of catharsis. After the debauchery normally associated with the end of year celebrations the body rebels against all the inhaled, ingested and imbibed poisons and tries to make amends by believing that it can actually change the way it acts. To make matters worse it then assumes that the best way to achieve this is to tell everyone about it. Well, it's a theory.

And I for one am not about to be left out of the race so I thought I'd better examine the range of options open to me for a set of New Year's resolutions.

The biggie for a lot of people is "giving up smoking". And here I get the opportunity to feel decidedly smug as I've done that. Did it 15 months ago in fact, and not even at the beginning of a year. So that one's out. "Take more exercise" - other than the fact that I fall prey to the perennial "I can't find the time to do all the things I want to do during a normal day so how can I fit in 3 hours of torture down the gym?" excuse I offer in my defence the fact that I have a daughter who is just over twelve months old and who is just starting to find her running feet. Having to chase after her and lug her around everywhere is quite sufficient exercise in my mind. I should "eat less". Yes, well, so should we all I guess. I put it all down to the fact that I'm staring down the throat of my fortieth year so if you think I could stand to lose a little weight I'd be quite happy if you would keep your opinion to yourself if you don't mind - I've got other things to think about. Maybe I should "drink less". Oh come on, we have to draw a line somewhere. I've just started brewing my own beer and if you think that's a recipe for me to drink less you're very much mistaken. I'll drink better I can assure you, but probably not less.

All of which doesn't leave me with a lot I guess. I would like to watch more films on the big screen but the problems of arranging baby-sitters makes that one rather difficult - I'd probably fall asleep too often anyway. So I'm left with reading more books. A good resolution really and one that I fall back on to every year but not one that really stirs the soul into paroxysms of delight. I have this feeling that I may be getting too old for paroxysms.

☼ ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼

**February 14, 1994**

I honestly never thought it was possible to get this tired without the use of illegal substances, or at the very least, various mixtures of alcoholic beverages. Going without sleep for what seems like weeks on end and then having that small amount of sleep actually obtained interrupted by a crying child leaves me feeling like one of the living dead. And that's on a good day.

Our daughter Catherine is teething and she's not having a very good time of it. Various people have told us that their children have never had any problem with their teeth. "They'd just be a bit snitchy, go to bed with a bit of a grumble and wake up the next morning with a brand new tooth showing through the gums." Oh yes, we mentally respond, that's the way its supposed to be. But not in our household. I sometimes think Catherine didn't read that page of the manual.

Typically Catherine gets put to bed at 8:30pm whether she's ready to go to bed or not. We have never intended to be harsh about this it's just that that seemed to be a good cut-off time for her and us: she would normally be getting a little tired around that time and we needed to put her to bed early enough to give us time to ourselves for all those married-couple things like arguing about finances and breaking the crockery. So Catherine goes to bed at 8:30pm and grumbles a bit, sometimes cries and sometimes lies in her cot playing with her toys and talking to herself. The important thing for her to learn, in our view, is that bedtime is bedtime. I think she's starting to learn it, I'm not so sure about us.

The hardest nights are the ones where it is quite obvious she's tired at bedtime and goes to bed meekly enough only to start crying very loudly within the first half hour. If she's been teething, as she has been lately, it becomes a balancing act as we try to decide whether she's crying to gain attention because she's in pain from her teeth or whether she's crying to gain attention, period. It's amazing how a baby's cry will cut through walls, glass, pillows, anything. So you can't ignore it no matter how hard you try. Lately Robyn has been feeling so tired that she's been going to bed to read very soon after we've put Catherine to bed, so, as Catherine builds up a full head of crying steam, we discuss the best course of action. This usually involves me getting the bottle of milk and Robyn comforting Catherine in bed as she drinks the milk and drifts off to sleep. If all works well Robyn will be able to get some reading done and both will be asleep by the time I call it a night. I then transfer Catherine back into her cot and all is right with the world.

Until 1:30am that is. Then Catherine wakes up crying. I've been stupid enough to stay up watching some old black-and-white movie on the ABC or the English soccer highlights so I've only been asleep for about an hour. Catherine is brought back into our bed and the bottle inserted as we all fade off to sleep. I get woken half an hour later as a simultaneous slap in the face from an errant baby arm and a loud scream of pain from Catherine combine to wake up everyone. The bottle doesn't work too well this time so it's walking her up and down and rocking her backwards and forwards time. That works better for me than her I think but she's calm so I take the opportunity to lay her back down in the bed. She wakes again some time later but I dare not look at the clock as it will only make me feel worse. I now have no idea of how much sleep I've had but it feels like nothing. Robyn and I are both awake and we're starting to snap at each other as we argue over the next course of action. In fact there's really only one left. It's not one we like overmuch but we are left with little choice but to use a mild pain-killer recommended by the local pharmacist. Fifteen minutes later she's

calm again, Robyn's already asleep and I move Catherine off my arm back into the middle of the bed. At least twice more in the night I wake to find Catherine has moved at right angles to her initial starting position and has now positioned herself with her head on Robyn's chest and her feet digging into my kidneys. Any bed put under this amount of pressure is bound to be too small and being the biggest of the three I find myself with the smallest possible space and no bed covering, clinging gamely to the edge of the bed in an effort to stop myself plummeting to the floor. I'm not happy and at the second time attempt to put Catherine back into her cot for the third (or is it second or fourth?) time that night. It works until her head is about to be laid down on the mattress when she screams and starts thrashing about. I give in and take her back to bed. After that it's all a blur.

At work in the morning someone mentions that I don't look too well. "Is Catherine teething again?" I don't answer as my face probably says it all. "Don't worry", they say, "when she gives you that little smile it all goes away." I turn back to my computer screen and don't answer. I'm trying to figure out how many cups of coffee I will need to make it through the day. I seriously doubt I'm going to make it.



### **March 17, 1994**

We've been in our new house for just over three months now and the time is probably right for a re-appraisal. The warm inner glow of new-ownership has gently faded and it's now time to look at the house in a more critical manner than previously. So I've been wandering around the place in the past couple of weeks tapping walls and checking out the woodwork, eyeing the roof and rummaging in the garden. And I can safely say that I'm pretty pleased overall. There doesn't appear to be anything that is in dire need of immediate repair. A few bits and pieces that require fixing sometime in the future but nothing that threatens the actual welfare of the occupants.

Not so the place next door it seems.

Readers with some level of memory, or easy access to back-issues, will remember that the house Robyn and I purchased is one of a matching pair which are mirror images of each other - the reflecting axis running down the small laneway between the two properties. During the early days of our house-hunting in the middle of 1993 we had been quite smitten with number 30 Elphin Grove. It appeared to have everything we wanted: size, position, garden, room layout, and mostly renovated. It only lacked one thing - the price. Well, only one thing until the day of the auction, that is. It was on that day, during my last inspection of the property, that I discovered something that looked decidedly like rising damp on the main interior wall running down the length of the house. It scared the hell out of me. Visions of huge builders' bills drifting off into the distance made the high price obtained at the auction a blessing in disguise. And I thought the rising damp was going to be the only problem.

There has hardly been a week since we moved in at the end of November last year when the couple next door haven't had someone around working on the place. At first it was just the fencing contractors knocking down the old and erecting a new wooden fence between numbers 30 and 28. Then they spent nearly the entire month of December rearranging their back and front gardens. (I guess rearranging is a kind word for the slash and burn approach they took to ripping out nearly everything they could lay their hands on, digging up the back lawn, relaying it and generally sentencing huge amounts of foliage to the refuse tip.) Then there was a lull for a

while even though we would come home from work to find a van parked out the front of the house, ladders leaning up against the wall of their house and blokes in suits walking around looking up while other blokes in overalls clamoured all over their roof. Just watching made me think of money.

I got home from a few beers after work one night to a pleasant time with Robyn sitting out the back after Catherine had been put to bed when they decided to drop over and introduce themselves. Two hours later I didn't mind that I had supplied all the drinks for the night. They tried to put a brave face on it by saying that there really wasn't anything major wrong with the house except that a) the shower taps fell off the first day and they had been adjusting the shower using a set of pliers ever since, b) the shower door fell off in the first week, and c) the first major rainstorm provided them with a gentle trickle of water down several of their light fittings. I don't know where they come from but the last of these certainly sounded major to me. They didn't mention the rising damp. I didn't blame them.

A couple of weeks later and another van was outside the front of their place. It transpired that they were having the carpet taken up throughout the bulk of the house to expose the pine floorboards which were then cut back and polished. They moved out for a week to escape the stink of the polish. And now they really do have blokes clamouring all over their roof ripping off the old slate tiles and replacing them with corrugated iron sheets or some such. The process has been rather interesting to watch and amusing to speculate on the possible financial drain it has caused on their hip-pockets. A bit voyeuristic I suppose but we all have to get our pleasures somehow.

As I mentioned earlier, our place, on the other hand, appears to be a paragon of sturdiness in comparison. There appear to be a few floorboards which we are going to have to replace in two of the bedrooms when it comes time to change the carpet, but they can wait. I have to get up on the roof and check out the guttering and have a bit of a poke around but I'm not expecting to find anything untoward. And everything else is rather minor: we need a security screen door for the front, a new television aerial and a safety switch on the electrics in the house so that when Catherine decides sometime in the future to explore the innards of a light fitting with a screwdriver she won't give herself an unintentional afro hair-do. All in all I'm happy. These seems to have been a time near the third quarter of last year when things actually worked out quite well for us. We got a good purchase on the house and the car we bought is causing us absolutely no problems whatsoever. I don't know what we did. I just wish I knew.



## **March 21, 1994**

My father has just spent a week here in Melbourne with us, checking out the new house and seeing how Catherine was getting on. As all new fathers do I guess I was extolling her virtues, trying to give some idea of what she was interested in and what she was up to, and making every attempt to stay clear of stories regarding bodily wastes - an easy trap to fall in to. "She's learned to sit down", I said. "In fact, she seems to sit down almost everywhere she can." "Oh," my father replied, obviously totally underwhelmed by the whole concept. "Well, it is a rather difficult trick to master you know and implies a level of infinite faith in the universe," I said. "Oh?" he said. My father isn't the greatest conversationalist when it comes to children. "Well, think about it. She has to sit down without looking at what she's sitting on." "So?" "So she has to rely on the fact that what she's decided to sit on hasn't moved or changed in

the time she takes from looking at it to turning around and sitting down. I reckon that shows a great deal of faith. It wouldn't be too good if the bloke upstairs suddenly decided to change the chair into something else when you weren't looking. It would spoil your whole view of the world." "Oh", he said. "If you look at it that way..." I like having talks with my father; he puts so much into the discussion.



## The Mailbag.

The response to the previous issue was, how shall I put it, a little less than I expected. Maybe the problem was that I sent it out too close to Christmas and it got lost in the rush of cards and end of year letters. In a way I guess that's really what WPBG 3 was after all - an end-of-year catchup letter to keep all our friends informed of what we've been up to during the year. As well the subject matter might have had something to do with it. Not too many people of my acquaintance have had the difficulties that we faced in buying a house, nor the round-around we received in buying a car. Or if they did they didn't tell me about it. A few people, like **John Basevi**, mentioned that they were buying or expected to buy in the near future and hoped they didn't take as long to purchase as we did. In fact we really only took two days to purchase, it was the looking that took four months. **Sue Peukert** found:

the bit about buying a house was particularly relevant because we are finally getting around to doing something about moving out of the dump we are currently in. Roman [Orszanski], ever the idealist, was shocked to find out how long it took to find a suitable place. He envisaged a two week process, not months of looking...

As I attempted to explain in the article in issue 3, finding a suitable place is rather easy it's being able to find one you can afford in the area where you want to live that's the hard part. Our view was that if we were going to have to live in it for the next twenty years or so we'd better find one that suited us very well rather than one that was just okay. I reckon we did as well as can be expected. Also doing well was **Joseph Nicholas** (with Judith Hanna) who last issue gave the account of being gazumped within days, if not hours, of handing over the hard-earned folding stuff. They've found somewhere else at last and will have moved in by this time.

It's a turn-of-the-century terrace house which has been completely refurbished -- new roof, new floorboards, fitted carpets, central heating, double glazing throughout, fitted kitchen with gas oven, new paint job....it had been bought in a run-down state by a man who specialises in buying, and then doing-up run-down houses, and we were shown it by the estate agent before it had formally been placed on the market, at the very moment where replastering had been completed and internal painting was about to commence -- so having offered the asking price, and been immediately accepted, we were able to choose the colour scheme to suit ourselves. Not bad!

Pretty damn good I would have thought. Better to move into a house knowing that the colour scheme is going to be one you like is streets ahead of finding something that has obviously been painted in leftover colours by someone whose artistic appreciation rapidly approaches that of Genghis Khan - and I'm thinking here of the yellow, purple and green kitchen I once saw in a rental property in Adelaide. Lovely stuff it was too!

On a lighter note **Lee Kennedy** became completely nonplussed regarding my throwaway line concerning the possibility of bananas having seeds in issue 2. He took me gently to task over this saying "You cannot just throw a hook out like that! C'mon, an answer, please!", to which I replied that I could do whatever I liked. Which, of course, was merely an attempt by me to mask my complete lack of knowledge on the subject. Lee, however, was undaunted (as he seems to be on a number of topics if his correspondence file is anything to go by) and decided to write to "The Dean of the Department of Bananiology" at an academic institution in New South Wales. In order to protect what little is probably left of Lee's reputation, the name of this institution must remain nameless. And so for his respondent who supplied the information that "commercially grown bananas are seedless. Ornamental bananas have seeds." Leigh Edmonds used to push the line that sooner or later everything of interest would be published in a fanzine, you just had to wait around long enough. I think we might have missed out on this occasion.

**I ALSO HEARD FROM:** **Linda Gowing** stuck in Sydney airport on the way to visit her family in New Zealand. **Renee Sieber** and **Ken Smith** via Christmas cards. **David Robertson**, freezing in downtown New York after he left Melbourne at the start its summer - strange timing if you ask me. **Malcolm Holt** who, after sharing with Robyn and me in London has moved back there to a flat just around the corner from the old place, a bit further from one good pub and a bit closer to the other if memory serves. **Pamela Boal** with depressing stories of family members losing large sums in real estate transactions. **Mark Loney** via Internet, and various people who mentioned issue 3 either in person or on the phone - see I've forgotten who you are already. And lastly, **Harry Warner Jr.** who sent a beaut two-page letter which I read and then promptly misplaced. Sorry Harry, I know it's floating around somewhere, I just have to find it. Thanks one and all.

**THE WOLLONGONG PIG BREEDERS' GAZETTE 4**

If undelivered, please return to:

GPO Box 2708X,  
Melbourne,  
Victoria 3001  
AUSTRALIA