

CRABTREE AND ME – A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION

My involvement with Crabtree's Australian chapter began in or about 2005 when Elder Paul Rodan invited me to a Crabtree dinner at the Monash Faculty Club. The Orator was Associate Professor Ian Marshall. I recall virtually nothing of what he orated but do recollect enjoying the fellowship and wine. The food was the classic Monash Club fare, mediocre.

Crabtree is a curious concept but one for which I developed a quick fondness.

My other recollection of that initial dinner was a somewhat masculine, albeit refined, community. There were certainly women scholars, but the blokes had the numbers.

From 2005 I attended dinners on and off over the years, remembering particularly orations by Ian Cummins (a past lecturer from my undergraduate years), Bill Claiborne and the erudite Kate Burridge.

It was in Kate's year I was invited by Elder O'Brien to consider nomination as an Orator for 2015. I was stunned and (for about 15 minutes) thought myself unworthy of such a distinguished role. Nonetheless, Elder O'Brien persuaded me to take on the role, (I wondered about the extent of any competition?). I was advised to be humorous, modest, entertaining, and not to speak for too long!

Anyway, the invitation carried the caveat that I move the vote of thanks to the 2014 Orator which necessitated constraining alcohol intake and thinking desperately of witticisms to pass about Kate's oration. I think I passed the test because we remain on speaking terms!

As to my Oration, I needed to think of a different leitmotif to attach to the constant Crabtree theme. I settled on a topic *Crabtree and his encounters with Antipodean Pettifoggers*. The usual mixture of fantasy, humour and some facts made for what appeared to me to be an enjoyable oration consistent with the flavour and nature of past orations.

I do recall Living Burden Downes at Question Time accusing me of plagiarising a recent publication of mine. He had his facts wrong, I had certainly plagiarised (a tradition in some academic quarters), but not from my book. I had no book. My brother, Dr Simon Smith, had recently published *Barristers Solicitors Pettifoggers – Profiles in Australian Colonial Legal History* (Maverick Publications 2014) and he was relaxed about me quoting extensively!

Returning to my personal Crabtree reflection, I believe the move from Monash to the City (Savage Club and more recently The Atheneum Club), was a critical and positive move in the being and growth of Crabtree Australia. It encouraged a wider spectrum of scholars and pleasingly, a greater involvement of women scholars.

I have enjoyed my Crabtree involvement and trust I am able to continue contributing to ensuring Crabtree remains a vital element of Australia's prosperity and growth.

Elder Tim Smith