

***The Institution of Engineers, Australia; Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee***

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

**Bryan John Hilton Besly (1934 -)
Civil Engineer**

Birth and Family: Besly was born on the eighth of January, 1934, in Greenslopes, Brisbane, Queensland. His father was Owen John (b. 1900) and his mother was Irene Eleanor nee. Mallett (b. 1904). He married Jocelyn on the third of January 1959 and had three children; Bill, Graham and Joanne.

Education: Primary School: Holland Park State School
Secondary School: Church of England Grammar School, East Brisbane (on a scholarship won by exam in 1947). He passed his senior exam in 1951.

Qualifications: March 1956 – BE (Civil) from the University of Queensland. His degree was interrupted at the end of his first year by a three month national service duty.

Memberships: Fellow, Institution of Engineers, Australia.
Member, Association of Consulting Engineers, Australia.
Member, Australian Concrete Institute.
Registered Professional Engineer, Queensland.

Awards :

Work History: On the sixth of January, 1956, Besly attended his first and only job interview during his professional career. It was for Macdonald Wagner and Priddle, which was located in Brisbane. In 1958/9, he was made the Resident Engineer of the Townsville Bulk Sugar Terminal in North Queensland and in 1959/60 he was made Resident Engineer at the Mourilyan Bulk Sugar Terminal Coal Loader in Gladstone, concerned mainly with structural design. From 1961 to 1965, Besly was the Senior Engineer of the company's Brisbane office and also worked on the development of sugar cane farms in the Mackay region.

In 1966 he became the Manager of the company's new Melbourne office and in 1969 his work at the Long Island Point Liquids Pier project earned the company the first Award of Excellence from the Association of Consulting Engineers. In 1971, Besly became the Associate Director and Victorian Manager of the company as well as continuing his work on the Long Island Point project which, in Western Port Bay, was the terminal for the Bass Strait oil fields. This

project involved the bulk handling facilities for cement, flour, grain and alumina.

1973 marked the beginning of Besly's work in East Java, where as a World Bank Project, he assisted in the rehabilitation of sugar mills. His overseas work for Macdonald Wagner and Priddle continued when in 1976 he journeyed to Nigeria to help in the development of a sugar plantation and factory. In 1979 he worked in the Philippines on a 'Philippines National Coal Logistics System Study,' which included the evaluation of reserves, market facilities and policies for the establishment of a coal industry. At this time, Besly was also the Project Manager for the construction of coal handling facilities in the Philippines.

In 1980, Besly was appointed as a Director on the Board for Macdonald Wagner and Priddle and in 1982 he participated in the ASEAN coal utilization workshops. In 1984/5 he served as the Director for the civil section of the Sydney office of the firm and from 1985 to 1989 he was Director of the Adelaide office whilst still living in Melbourne. During this time he also worked as a Project Manager on the design of onshore facilities for the Australian Submarine Corporation in Port Adelaide as well as a Project Manager for the design of aircraft maintenance hangers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In 1989 the company changed its name to Connell Wagner and in 1990 he relinquished his position as Director in preparation for his upcoming retirement. In 1991 Besly did retire from Connell Wagner but continued to work for them on a part time basis as he established his own company, Bryan Besly Pty Ltd (1991/4). This personal company was then employed by Connell Wagner to undertake some work into the quality assurance area.

In 1994 he retired completely and after undertaking an art course, at the time of interview was pursuing a career in oil painting.

Prepared by Patricia Taaffe, August 2002 from oral history interviews conducted on 06 July 1998.

BRYAN JOHN HILTON BESLY

Born at Greenslopes, Brisbane 3 January 1931
 Father Owen John Besly b. 16 May 1900
 Mother Irene Eleanor Besly (ne Wallett) d. 15 Nov 1904

Education:-

Primary: Holland Park State School - passed
 Scholarship exam 1947

Secondary: Church of England Grammar School,
 East Brisbane - passed Junior (1949)
 and Senior (1951) examinations. Studied
 art with Carolyn Baker in the city one
 afternoon each week in order to gain
 matriculation in architecture. On the
 advice of my father I chose engineering
 which he considered to be more secure
 particularly in difficult times such as
 the Great Depression of 1931

Tertiary: University of Queensland
 Bachelor of Engineering (Civil) March 1956

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Interests at school and university:

athletics, tennis, cricket football + swimming
 and art

Probationer + Cadet Lieutenant at school
 Queensland University Regiment

Second Intake 3 months National Service Training
 at Wacol early 1953

Editor of Engineering Undergraduates Society
 Journal in 1955

President of Church of England Young Contingent ? 1952
 Scouting, stamp collecting and carpentry.

Vacation employment:

- chairman for Elm Jams - surveyor
- labourer at Evans Desklin working on the reconditioning of steam locomotives and the fabrication of the Burdekin River Bridge
- design offices of Main Roads Dept (Road Section) and Brisbane City Council (Bridge Section)

② → Professional employment.

Having decided not to enter the public service, Professor Lavery arranged an interview for me with Charlie Tranberg, Brisbane Office Manager of Macdonald, Wagner & Biddle in Fortitude Valley - my only job interview throughout my professional career.

Commenced work in the Brisbane office 6.1.1956

Social note:

① There were 25 graduates in civil engineering in 1956 and we are proud to have held a Reunion dinner in Brisbane each year

I elected to work in Australia with Macdonald Wagner & Biddle rather go overseas because I thought I would get better experience

Memberships:

Fellow, Institution of Engineers, Australia

Member, Association of Consulting Engineers, Australia

Member, Australian Concrete Institute.

Registrations:

Professional Engineer, Queensland

1956-57 - Junior Engineer - Brisbane Office

1958 - 1959 - Resident Engineer - Townsville Bulk
Sugar Terminal

1959 - 1960 - Resident Engineer - Mourilyan Bulk
Sugar Terminal

1961 - 1965 - Senior Engineer - Brisbane Office

1966 - 1987 - Manager - Melbourne Office

1987 - 1991 - Project Leader Sydney Office

1992 - 1994 - Quality Assurance Manager

1985 - 1989 - Director of Adelaide Office

1984 - 1985 - Director, Civil Section, Sydney Office

1965 - 1971 - Associate - Macdonald Wagner & Piddell

1971 - 1980 - Associate Director - " Pty Ltd

1980 - 1989 - Director - Macdonald Wagner Pty Ltd

1990 - Director - Connell Wagner Pty Ltd

1991 - Project Leader - "

Retired July 1991

1991 - July 1994 - Bryan Besly Pty Ltd

- Quality Assurance Manager,
Connell Wagner Pty Ltd

1956-1957 - Brisbane Office

- Supervision of the erection of structural steel on power stations including survey checks and "walking the beams"
- Design and supervision of residential and industrial subdivision estates
- Design of small commercial and residential buildings
- Survey set out for Bundaberg Bulk Sugar Terminal using four screw theodolite (with plumb bob) and chain

1957-1959 - Resident Engineer

Jarvisville Bulk Sugar Terminal

responsible to head office in Sydney.

Franki cast-in-situ bulb piles, reinforced concrete, structural steel and conveyor system - survey checks. The sugar terminals for loading of raw sugar into bulk ships had to be completed on time because the sugar mills were converting from bags to bulk at the same time. This was typical of the firm's projects on which MWP was engaged as Principal Consultant to carry out feasibility studies, budgets, design, documentation, call and evaluate tenders, administer construction contracts and supervise installation and construction.

Married in Brisbane on 3.1.1959.

Co-ordination with construction of a new wharf which was another MWP job.

1960-1961 - Resident Engineer

Mousilyan Bulk Sugar Terminal
responsible to Brisbane Office.

Similar to Townsville but involved major earthworks and very wet conditions.
Coordination with the construction of a new wharf by Dept of Harbours and Marine

1961-1966 - Senior Engineer - Brisbane Office
Associate in 1965

- Structural design for coal loading facility at Gladstone
- Survey control, design and supervision of the subdivision of a stud cattle property into cane farms for Pleystone Sugar Mill, Mackay. Roads, drainage (open channels), 2ft gauge railway and hydrological studies to determine the effects on properties downstream. Established survey camp for 4 weeks to set up ground control for aerial mapping. Final inspection of ground preparation by horseback because of wet conditions.
- Molasses tanks foundations - Frankipiles in Cairns and hydraulic rock fill on the Mackay breakwater
- Design and documentation for the dredging of a shipping channel in Burnett River for Bundaberg Harbour Board.
- Preliminary design and report for a mass concrete weir on the Kolan River near Bundaberg

- 1966-1987 - Manager - Melbourne (The firm's first office in Melbourne)
- Associate Director 1971
 - Director 1980

• Principal Consultant for:

- Long Island Point Liquids Pier at Whiteport Bay for ESSO and Public Works Department of Victoria - included dredging + survey. - 100000 DWT tankers loading LPG. This project won the first Award for Engineering Excellence presented by the ACEA in 1969.
- Heavy duty pavements for container parks in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide for Sotainers Ltd.
- Bulk cement storage and distribution depots
- Concrete wheat storage silos
- Steel flour storage bins
- Metal recycling plants for Sino metal including pavements, machine foundations, overhead travelling cranes and rail sidings
- Grain storage silos and outloading facilities at Portland, Victoria
- Alumina storage and handling system for Comalco at Bell Bay, Tasmania

• Reports and design for:

- Bridge overpass structures for Eastern Freeway for MMBW, Melbourne - The National Park Road Overpass won an CIA Design Award in 1973
- Smaller bridges for Country Roads Board, Victoria
- Main line railway bridges at Echuca and Dartmoor for Victorian Railways
- Modernisation of Geelong Grain Terminal
- Sugar storage and packing facilities for CSR
- Bulk grain loading berth for Geelong Harbor Board

- Overseas Work

- Structural and civil design for three sugar factories in Indonesia funded by World Bank 1972 to 1974
- Feasibility study for irrigation and structural engineering for a sugar cane plantation and sugar factory in Nigeria - 1976
- Feasibility study and design of a Coal Logistics System for the Philippines -

③ → 1979 to 1985 Australian Aid for MWP services -
 BSHB was Project Manager with ^{wharves} civil and structural work in Melbourne office and mechanical, electrical, maritime ~~and~~ naval architecture and economic components in Sydney - local and imported coal

- BSHB was a presenter in the Coal Utilization Workshops staged in all ASEAN countries in 1982 by the Australian Government

- BSHB was guest lecturer at International Coal Technology Courses, sponsored by the UNDP & ESCAP, at Newcastle University, and organised by the Joint Coal Board of NSW

1987-1991 - Director in Sydney office.

McDonald Wagner and Connells merged in July 1989 to form Connell Wagner

- Project manager for the design of the on shore facilities for the assembly of submarines at Port Adelaide for the Australian Submarine Corporation. This included buildings, services, roads and drainage. The main building (125m x 80m x 27m high) contains four 80t/16t overhead travelling bridge cranes of 37m span, eight 5t travelling wall cranes and eight 3.2t overhead travelling bridge cranes.

at Zia International Airport, Dhaka

- Project Manager for design of a maintenance hangar complex for John Holland Constructors who won the design/construct tender awarded by Bangladesh Biman Corporation. The hangar (84m x 87m x 25m high) houses two DC10-30 aircraft and the two storey workshop/office has a floor area of about 9000 sq. m.

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and demand for coal

③ This project involved the evaluation of local coal reserves, ~~and~~ production, land and sea transport, coal terminals, wharves, organisation structure, coal pricing policies and guidelines for the development of coal production

In July 1991 I retired from Connell Wagner, -- established my own company Bryan Besly Pty Ltd. From July 1991 to July 1994 I worked with Connell Wagner Pty Ltd in establishing and managing a quality assurance system in Sydney office

④ → Publications

Since July 1994 I have travelled extensively in Europe (mainly France), attended the Julian Ashton Art School in Fukuoka, Sydney and pursued oil painting on a business basis

My other business interest is the management of a plantation (37.5 ha) of *Pinus radiata* which I established at Woodside in South Gippsland, Victoria in 1980

Three children:

Bill	Oral and Maxilla Facial Surgeon - Melbourne
Graham	Computer Scientist - Brisbane
Joanne	Bachelor of Visual Communication - Melbourne