BURTON HALL .... THE WAY WE WERE.

Some weeks ago, a beleaguered Chronical (sic) editor sought a volunteer to write something inspiring about the impending closure of Burton Hall. There were no takers. This correspondent, for example, hung up his pen along with his football boots after recording the Crows' last premiership success, never again to bow the readers and tax Mr. Reisner's inconsiderable grasp on the English language. In recent weeks, however, the combination of pre-exams insomnia, frustration with the glut of inarticulate and narcissistic sports reports and the fact that half a dozen inebriated soccer players are playing golf in the corridor at 2.00 am, has driven me to dip my Bic in bile for one last fling. It is only fair to warn the reader that this "retrospective discourse" (i.e. pretentious wank) is intending to draw on the long and glorious history of Burton Hall. Therefore, anyone who thinks that the last two or three years of the Hall's chequered career have been the greatest thing since ribbed condoms should stop reading immediately, advance directly to the smutty caricature and give their dictionaries a rest.

One inescapable feature of collegiate existence is that most, if not all, things have been done before and, arguably, done better. The dreaded affliction of the killer hot-dogs which struck in August, for example, bore some similarity to the infamous "Green Steak Incident" of 1978. To quote the Dining Hall Suggestion Book for 30th July of that year:

"Tonight's meal honestly smelt like dog-sh... it was off. I am only hoping that there are not too many cases of food poisoning arising from this dog-sh... of a meal. Please do not serve dog-sh... to me or anyone else again."

On the night in question, rather than supplying samples of the "vomitus" (as the Community Sister so quaintly labelled the gallons of puke which issued forth after the offending frankfurters were ingested), the enraged residents smeared samples of the offending meat on the pages of the Suggestion Book, directing the reader to "Smell this!" For the record, it still stinks.

The demise of the Suggestion Book left an enormous gap in Burton Hall life, depriving many Wardens-in-the-making of their only access to the public. Examples of their work include:

"The pumpkin smells and tastes like sheep-dip!!" (Signed: "A.Griffiths")
"The meal tonight was an atrocity equal to the worst of Auschwitz"
"Were those shiny red rocks supposed to be apples?" and
"When the manager is away, the cooks will play... a) up, b) with themselves, c) silly games or d) dead."

Students lost the use of the Suggestion Book when the staff started reading it ..... and commenced to refuse to serve anyone who wrote anything bad about the food. As a token replacement they gave us the utterly useless "Food Committee", which is the main reason for the current state of the food. Moreover, the only fun that students derived from the Food Committee was from watching Mr. Bartulovich give fanciful reports of his endeavours on behalf of the common weal to bemused R.A. meetings, reinforcing the widely-held belief that his mouth was in no way connected to his brain.

Some rather amusing incidents have occurred in the recent history of Burton Hall and students had something to laugh at even before Broken Hill gave us its favourite minor. There was alleged to have been quite a stir when, one night in 1975, a naked female fell from a first floor window, apparently the fall-out from a (pre-Kylie) orgy in Room 156. She apparently landed at the feet of a somewhat stunned Warden, who was checking for noise in the blocks whilst on duty. Ever the gentleman, "the Warden" offered the fallen woman his overcoat but the (ungrateful) nymph ran off into the night, naked and screaming. This story is probably, at the very least, a gross exaggeration but it sounds pretty good. It is interesting to note, however, that some time after the incident bars were added to all
non-ground floor windows. Some of the present first floor rooms could use a few more (bars, that is!).

Even Kylie is by no means unique by Burton standards. In 1977 the Hall was graced by a wonderful young lady (just ask Dermot!) who also like the odd grog and had the reputation of being a bit of a man-hunter. There is a story that she dragged one young man home from the Union (for coffee) one night and, before she knew what was happening, the lad had the audacity to jump out of her first floor window. Apparently some time before the moment of truth, the bloke suddenly realised where he was (and with whom) and saw the window as his best avenue of escape. He finished up with his reputation intact and his ankle in plaster ... or so the story goes.

Anyone whose idea of a "handy" Bush Week stunt is to collect left shoes or Forestry windcheaters should consider and compare the following examples of Burtonian ingenuity before "the team" took over. In 1977, the Bush Week Committee designated the Capital Hill Flag as the top points-earner in the Scavenger Hunt, never dreaming that anyone would actually try and get it. A handful of Burton freshers did, however, and produced more than a ripple of concern when they presented it for judging at the Students Office next morning. After all, apart from being huge, it was worth several thousand dollars. Other memorable stunts included building a brick wall across Daley Road in the early hours of the morning, stealing a 40 ton D.M.R. truck from Fyshwick and driving it back to Burton and the brick-in of the S.A. Office. The piece de resistance, however, was probably persuading Gough Whitlam to have a beer in the Buttery, an event which took place in Bush Week of 1978. What is more, the honourable gentleman even shouted a round! "The boys", of late, would be hard-pressed organising a piss-up in a brewery.

Burton has always had a reputation of giving the other halls a hard time and this is not confined to the sporting field. As a result, Burton has been branded in successive Orientation Handbooks as "the arsehole of the A.N.U" and as being "full of animals and drunken footballers" ("Animal", incidentally, used to signify something a little more substantial than a stringy, unkempt, invertebrate from Dendiggin) ... and they were right! Burton used to be unbeatable at rugby league, in sharp contrast to our teams of the past few years, who have spent most of their time beating themselves. These lads have lived up to their tag of "bum-punchers" in no uncertain terms, though they have also punched the odd thorax.

Burgmann has always been our No.1. enemy, on or off the sporting arena. Notable "hits" against the terrors from down the road have been the looting of several (diseased) sheep from the Research School in their (beautifully carpeted) corridors and beating them by 5 points in the 1978 footy grand-final, when they were hot favourites. There was also a memorable 3P night in 1980, when the voyeurs ran amok on the way home and, amongst a host of heinous crimes, soaked Burgmann's (tastefully decorated) foyer by setting off a garden sprinkler in its luxuriant confines. Johns have also suffered and will never forgive the Burton student who "borrowed" their very valuable portrait of the Pope in 1979. The Gooses have always been sitting ducks for the old detergent-in-the-fountain trick of course. Serves 'em right!

We have harboured our fair share of "mindas" over the years, this year being no exception. There was a chap who went ape the night that Elvis (the real Elvis and not some pathetic imitation) died, locking himself into his room and skulling a bottle of five-star brandy. The men in white suits were called in and took him away. Another resident had a bad trip on the cooking spray one night and was driven to paint psychedelic pictures in oil paint on the walls of his room. He tried to convince the Warden to knock out the outside wall of his ground floor room to convert it to a walk-through art gallery. Mr. Rossiter called for the men in white suits again. A classic case of lunacy occurred in 1979, when Burton women were terrorised by "the Pin-stripe Prowler". This deviant liked to roam around the women's bathrooms, dressed in a pin-stripe suit and a balaclava, looking under the shower doors. The men in white suits should have been called in but the boys in blue took this clown away.

Sundry other unusual goings on have included the kitchen manager who was summarily dismissed for putting laxettes in the Milo as an April Fool's Day joke, the first year who stood on the table at his first Commencement Dinner to drop a brown-eye at the Vice Chancellor and Burton's capture of the Interhall Sports Trophy in 1980. Overall, however, there has been a marked erosion of time-honoured traditions. The Buttery, for example, used to have a code of behaviour to which members had to adhere. Drunken, loutish goings-on (and even swearing) could earn students a week Buttery suspension from our late, great barman, Eric James. Nowadays, anything goes, even vomiting on the carpet. Shame!
Other areas of decay have been the top floor landings. The top floor landing in West Block, for example, went through a glorious phase of being "Law Heights", "Forestry Heights", and "Peyton Place" before the zoon-heads took over. These days it is more like an open-plan psychiatric hospital, whilst the other landing is like a cheap disco. Gone too, is the fierce inter-block rivalry between the "West Block Wankers" and the "East Block Excretia" which crystalised every Vatele weekend with the inter-block cricket match. This situation is largely attributable to the fact that hordes of wankers have infiltrated the East Block ranks, though West Block still has the most. Gone, also, are the days when people who engaged in food fights at least had the guts to do so with the lights on, though this is one activity that should not be condoned.

There was a time when Burton Hall had a yearly magazine, a memento of collegiate subsistence. This was, of course, back in the days when you had to actually pass your exams to stay in Burton, meaning that most residents could probably read and write. Some of our current residents are hard-pushed in passing wind. Nowadays, "Grand-slams" rather than University Medals (and we have had a few) are "the go". Burton Hall used to be a University college. Now it is more like a Playschool for teenage alcoholics.

Basically, Burton has lost the great "characters" who once formed its back-bone. Obviously a whining article of this ilk could not do justice to Burtonians such as Professor Joe Burton, Eric James and Geoffrey Rossiter, whose contribution to this Hall has been inestimable but readers may rest assured that they have missed out on some truly great Burtonians. Even our original "enfant terrible", Pat Holland, had his good points (i.e. when he was kicked out, he stayed out). The "animals" of today would not come within a Bill's roar of people like Fitz, Newts, Dave, Humpy, Ferret et al. At least all those people graduated and eventually, grew up. When Burton Hall closes at the end of the year it will mark the end of an era. In the opinions of some, this end has come in the nick of time. You can, after all, have too much of a good thing.

Car'n the (Real) Crows!

S.A.P.S.