



After the shearers' strikes of 1891 and the trials of 12 conspirators against the government, a disillusioned group of men and women guided by the vision of William Lane left for Paraguay to build their own Utopia.

They called it New Australia...

And so begins **Fletch's Anecdote**, a chapter of Australian history reflected in 12 songs.

Times are uncertain for the unionists. They've set up camp in Barcaldine, Central Queensland and are striking over the scab labour being sent up from Melbourne. But their hopes are high, with the voice of their socialist leader William Lane. Tensions are at boiling point. There's talk of an uprising. **Viva La Yeah Overture**

**Nopla** is a borrowed term from the introduction to Thomas Moore's 'Utopia'. Australia sings about the exodus - *You are my children, I slighted you this time .... I'm still young and you aint been here long but you'll learn to love me if you'd stay and hear my song.*

But they didn't stay and The Royal Tar set sail in 1893. One death was recorded on the trip over to South America, a small child - *Pale boy died below deck half way to Paraguay they threw that kid over board but he keeps coming back* - **Little Ghost**

Soon into the voyage two factions formed, the loyal Royals and the drinkin' Rebels - **Royals & Rebels**. William Lane had started imposing rules, no-one was even allowed to walk on deck late at night and of course, there was to be no drinking. Within months of creating New Australia it was clear they couldn't live side-by-side, forcing William Lane and his remaining followers to acquire new land and set up Cosme.

It sounds like **William Lane** had been defeated. But this was a man who was used to being defeated and then rising again. At the time of the shearers' strikes, William Lane was 29 years old and editor of *The Worker*. The mainstream press saw him as 'the man behind the curtain'. The *Brisbane Telegraph* wrote that it was 'worthless for the government to arrest strike committees when it was Lane who was the real criminal.'<sup>\*</sup>

At one point you could have found William Lane on the **Side of the Road** somewhere, anywhere in Australia and even England. By bike, by boat, by train, by foot he searched for volunteers to join him in Paraguay.

'The Bulletin' was a vocal critic of the whole socialist adventure and the imagination of its contributors and readers painted a bleak portrait of life in the jungle, were they so desperate as to resort to cannibalism? *Big water on the rise desperate men and desperate wives - Big Water*

Although those who sailed over on the first two trips to South America signed up for teetotalism, some people just don't want to get off the wagon! *But I aint gonna stop not till my last drop it's as I've always said moderation in temperance*

*Into this mess that I've made ...* I felt like I got into a bit of a mess of my own with this album and in the three years it took to write, record and release it I too needed some **Nervous Tonic** at times. But like William Lane I felt compelled to continue ...*I need this like smoke to my lungs, like a finger and a thumb, lips to my pipe, like seed to my son.*

**Sunsets & Death** could easily have been called the Beginning of the End as a number of deaths signalled the end of the optimistic times ..... *little Bella gave her hand to a man thrice her years but no one seemed to care, what more could her mother do swinging from a branch in the woody dew.*

Before this whole misadventure began William Lane wrote a novel called 'The Workingman's Paradise' featuring the characters **Ned & Nellie**. Take a look on the current \$10 note to find the real 'Nellie'. Mary Cameron also went to Paraguay but returned and became the famed poet, Dame Mary Gilmour.

**Anarchy I'm happy Alls I wants to stay at home....** There are still Australian descendents in Paraguay. More than a hundred years after utopia turned sour, an old-style Australian accent could be heard from the mouths of people who'd never been here.

Fletch is a Perth-based songwriter, guitarist and flute player. The album was inspired by an anecdote found in a library book.

Previous albums - Peach in a Pickle 2003, Deaf Side Songs 2004

**Fletch's Anecdote** will be launched November 21st at Fremantle Arts Centre Courtyard.

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[www.fletchmusic.net](http://www.fletchmusic.net)

Tickets available at [www.heatseeker.com.au](http://www.heatseeker.com.au)

\* 'A Peculiar People - William Lane's Australian Utopians in Paraguay' by Gavin Souter.