



Benalla and District Inc.

Newsletter – March 2015

P O Box 583
Benalla 3672
Editor: Judith Borthwick 5762 3442
editor@u3abenalla.com
Newsletter deadline: **12.00 noon 3rd Wednesday**

President: Terry Case 5762 1700
president@u3abenalla.com
Secretary: Lorraine Knox 5762 1531
secretary@u3abenalla.com
Web site: www.u3abenalla.com

PRESIDENT’S ANNUAL REPORT

I have now served half my term as President and our March AGM offers me the chance to review our operations.

Following last year’s AGM we hosted a Regional U3A meeting which discussed members’ access to other U3A groups. Our most recent Regional meeting held earlier this month formalised free access to other Regional U3A groups. With the growth of U3A branch websites, members will have information describing courses run by other groups, I currently have a member who is travelling from Beechworth to join my history class. If you are interested in joining a course run by another U3A please contact me.

Beverley Lee, Barry O’Connor, and Terry Dillon have brought our web site up to date and Beverley is working with Barry to introduce a replacement web site.

Accommodation and security of tenure at the Centre has been a major issue over a number of years. Twelve months ago Executive members met with the Benalla Council Executive Officers to discuss our concerns of finding a secure home for our U3A. Whilst the meeting was very encouraging nothing constructive was achieved as the Council was unable to fund any redevelopment of sites they own. Benalla College which owns the Barkly St site which is also home to the Centre is planning to re-develop its senior campus. I recently met the College Principal and have been assured that we will have secure tenure until the senior campus is re located; which would not be till at least another two and a half years.

The November Meet and Mingle is when we get a chance to see the creations of our Patchwork group and hear our Singing groups in action. For a number of years we have been holding Meet and Mingle sessions at the Senior Citizens. There was some consternation when we were refused access to the piano, but Joyce Borschmann negotiated our use of the piano and we had a wonderful morning which was a “sell out”!

We had already been reviewing our use of the Seniors for Meet and Mingle sessions, poor acoustics especially for those who use hearing aids and a drop in attendance have resulted in the decision to relocate this year to our “home” in W4.

Noel Meagher once more organized the Christmas lunch which was held in beautiful surroundings near Myrtleford. We were blessed with good weather and sold out the bus; it was a wonderful way to finish the U3A year.



2015 U3A Benalla Executive

L-R Dorothy Webber, Bill Parris (Treasurer), Corrie Witlox, Pat Gardiner, Terry Case (President) Judith Borthwick (Editor), Lorraine Knox (Secretary), Geraldine McCorkell (Immediate Past President).

I want to thank all our tutors and convenors, I am often asked how much U3A pays tutors? Many people fail to realise we rely upon members to run courses and our rewards are the pleasure we obtain in our continued mutual learning. A number of our tutors and convenors decided to step down at the end of the year. Elva Rush and Marj Law retired from the Film and Literature group but the class was able to continue with James Casey as the new leader.

Rupe Cheetham and Margaret Walshe decided it was time to retire from running the Astronomy class, of which they were both founder members. Class members Bev Morton and Jan Andrews have taken on the task of convening the group. We were pleased to be able to offer three new courses this year. We had been asked to run a "Comparative Religion" class and Laurence Neal who tutors for Wangaratta U3A is running it for us. Ian McLeod's "Making the Most of the Internet" was over-subscribed, but Ian accepted a very large class for this, his first venture as a tutor! Geraldine and Lorraine are hosting "Let's Talk Books," which meets in the new Library.

We held two enrolment days this year, the second being held at Cooina. Both were judged a success and we will hold similar days next year. Currently we have 20 new members giving us approximately the same membership numbers as last year.



Enrolment Day at Cooina – President Terry Case addressing participants.

In this my first year as President I have had tremendous support from our committee. I particularly want to thank Geraldine in her role as "Past-President" in guiding me and my Vice President Pamela for her many contributions over the last year, especially in relation to our

accommodation problems. Pamela has been a member of the committee for 5 years and is involved in leadership roles with other voluntary organizations. Pamela is now resigning from our committee and I want to thank her for a job well done.

Lorraine agreed to stay on as Secretary when I became President. I rely on her knowledge of U3A and our members.

I want to thank Judith Borthwick who steps down as Publicity Officer (and will also relinquish her role as editor of the Newsletter later this year). It seems Judith really is irreplaceable as we have no-one to take on these jobs.

Corrie Witlox will retire as our valuable Treasurer! We are lucky to have Bill Parris primed to take on this task. Both Corrie and Judith are going to serve on the Committee for another term.

Carole Marple, Barry O'Connor, Pamela O'Connor and Jennifer May have resigned from the Committee and I want to thank them for their contributions. Barry has offered to remain available to help the computer committee.

Dorothy Webber and Bill Parris will join our Committee, but we need additional help as we have no Vice President and need a Newsletter editor and a Publicity Officer. Please consider whether you could help.

On behalf of the Committee I hope you all enjoy another year with U3A.

***Terry Case
President***

GROUP REPORTS

Armchair Traveller – see also Railway Journey (page 6)

For our first meeting of 2015 on March 17, we travelled to two mystery locations – a journey from Russia to China, and of course, Ireland to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Our Russia to China journey was in stark contrast to the ways most of us travel.

Adventurers Tim Cope and Chris Hetherley rode on recumbent bicycles from NW Russia to Beijing, a 10,000 km journey over 14 months in 2001. The DVD made of this epic journey, "Off the Rails", kept us all enthralled with wonderful scenery and an insight into life in outback Russia, Mongolia and China.

We then journeyed with Reina and John on their 2010 visit to the Dingle Peninsula and around Killarney on South-West Ireland. This provoked many members to relate quaint adventures with whimsical Irish people.

We have a special session on April 21 described as the "Railway Journey" report from Terry Case.

Armchair History: the Victorians

In 1838 when Oliver Twist was published, Dickens showed he could stir the complacency of Victorian Britain and be a powerful advocate for social change: a dangerous writer. He had the ability to talk feely to the outcasts and destitute, he was able to draw upon his own unhappy childhood for material and fashion it into an attack upon the new Poor Law.

1844 saw the publication of Sybil: or two nations. The author was Benjamin Disraeli who whilst advocating change, was also hoping it would ultimately aid his bid to become Prime Minister. The novel used cities as synonyms for the destruction of traditional social order and a threat to religion. Disraeli was touting a new Conservatism in which the aristocracy would lead the workers to a better future.

In our previous session we saw how the Workhouses struck fear into those in poverty: Annie Lennox shows her family's tussle with poverty and children born out of wedlock and the social stigma that entailed. Another part of her family were servants to Victoria and Albert, making for an interesting Who do you think you are?

We will look at how the policy of governments not interfering and leaving it to the market to decide the economic future led to famine and rebellion in India and Ireland.

On a brighter note we will view Walking through history: looking at Haworth and the Bronte family and the Liverpool-to-Leeds canal, and some beautiful scenery.

I will be bringing the Elmo projector into play as we view photographs from the Victorian period. In 1839 the first practical photographic process was demonstrated and cameras were rapidly developed leading to excellent plate-glass cameras that in the right hands produced magnificent photographs.

Astronomy – Learning about Planets, Stars and the Universe

March has been an eventful time in space. The Dawn spacecraft arrived at the dwarf planet Ceres after a 5 year journey.

It has now been captured by gravity and will orbit the rocky planet, sending data back to scientists at NASA, providing much information about the early solar system.

While the Sun created a special St Patrick's day geomagnetic storm and bombarded Earth with blasts of the solar wind, at U3A Astronomy we studied NASA's 'Magnetospheric Multiscale Mission'. Four satellites have been deployed to orbit Earth to research 'magnetic reconnection', the explosive phenomenon that can send blasts of particles from the Sun hurtling towards Earth; hazardous to satellites, communications and "the grid." 'Magnetic reconnection' is also responsible for the brilliant auroras that are being seen in the northern hemisphere at present. It is expected that this information will reveal much of the early history of the Universe.

We also viewed the latest NASA test rocket booster u tube with appropriate flames and booming (largest rocket booster ever built). It hopes to blast off to Mars soon. (Jeff, by contrast provided chocolate boosters for the class). Did you know Mars used to have water- well we found out where it's got to. We've had a couple Prof Brian Cox amusing u tubes (his astonishment at being on the frozen steppes of Khazastan when Solyuz rocket suddenly whizzed out of the sky to land virtually at his feet) + the now classic Prof Stephen Hawking 'set up' wheelchair incident where he runs into Brian Cox (who is babbling on about earth shattering theories) and knocks him off his feet. (Prof Hawking shoots on up into the sky reciting famous lines from Money Python skits). Prof Hawking is doing stunts on many TV shows including 'the Big Bang Theory', now a TV star as well as top mathematician.

Thanks to Martin and Anne who've done a couple of short talks, and everyone else for mind boggling discussions. So far no one has fallen asleep so hopefully it's not because we are a novelty duo. Many thanks to Bev who has been relentlessly pouring over her computer finding astronomy u tubes and spending hours editing them to fit in with the talks. Terry has been very helpful when there is a query, having a smart phone or i-pad for instant retrieval of information. In future sessions he will

link the device to the big computer screen so everyone can read the information. Technology! By the time you read this the 'lunar eclipse' at the gliding club will be over- were you there, there were posters all over Benalla!

Back here on Earth we have had two more very productive sessions, discussing the latest theories and happenings in space, viewing interesting film from space agencies, and sharing an interest in Astronomy and related subjects. Some current interest seems to lie in space travel and the big question: "Is there anyone else out there?"

Please contribute to future sessions with a short talk of your own, Bev will be sole guardian of the programs for April and May so don't leave her with all the work she will run berserk, 5 mins will do!

Bev Morton /Jan Andrews
Co ordinators U3A Astronomy

Chat n' Chew

Our next Chat n'Chew will be held on Friday 17th April at Raffertys, Benalla, at 11.45 am. For bookings or cancellations please contact Shirley on 5762 6768 before Tuesday 14th April. All welcome.

Comparative Religion

The first session in February involved watching Franco Zeffirelli's movie "Brother Sun Sister Moon" which depicted the spiritual life of St Francis. The movie was almost two hours in duration and this left little time for discussion. Our coordinator Laurence Neill wrote a questionnaire about aspects of the film and these were discussed during our March session. We formed groups of three in order to examine a particular question each and then reported our conclusions to the whole group.

The March attendance was less than February, and again the group watched a shorter documentary, this time about Hinduism and it was discussed afterwards. Our homework for next month (April) is to study both Hinduism and Buddhism. Both of these religions originated in India, and Hinduism is almost twice the "age" of Christianity.

The days of being told what to believe and how to practice one's own spirituality are passing. This group gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding thanks largely to the skill and knowledge of our coordinator Laurence.

"Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but religiously follows the new." (Henry David Thoreau)

Mike Larkin

e-Book Group

Our first book of the year was The Rosie Project, by Graeme Simsion. This lighthearted romp through the enduring mystery of love, has the added complication of Asperger's Syndrome, as experienced by our hero, Professor Don Tillman, a university geneticist. Although not formally diagnosed, it's clear he has problems. His literal mindedness, and obsession with routine, is not ideal prerequisites for finding the ideal partner. His 16 page questionnaire, designed to weed out the unsuitable, clearly didn't take into account Rosie, his opposite in every respect, yet THE ONE. In the meantime, Don's quest to find Rosie's biological father, centres on Melbourne and New York, where a series of wacky incidents keep the narrative moving at a fast pace. Ultimately, however, the reader is left to ponder the nature of love and commitment, and decide if Don and Rosie's relationship can last. Nearly everyone loved it.

Film and Literature

Last month the group enjoyed a look at Baz Luhrman's 'Strictly Ballroom, a feel good film from 1992. Doesn't time pass quickly. Wikipedia gives an interesting glimpse into some of the obstacles encountered making the film.

As April 2015 is the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, the film we will be showing is the anti-war epic 'Paths of Glory' from 1957 starring Kirk Douglas and directed by Stanley Kubrick. Wikipedia has an interesting entry outlining the events that inspired this movie. Looking forward to the group's company on April 8th.

Jim Casey

Garden Appreciation

March 26th

Melbourne International Garden and Flower Show. Meet at Rose Gardens – Art Gallery End at 7.30 am.

April 23rd

Meet at Gwen Turners, 2/69 Arundel Street South at 10 am, or 9.45 for a morning tea cuppa. . Park in front of old Court House. Walk down path to Unit 2. We will then visit a beautiful display of Bonsai plants at the home of Anelli, 139 Arundel Street South, Benalla. 5762 3816, then back to my home 2/69 Arundel Street for byo lunch in the garden.

May 28th – Peard's Nursery. Plants, pots and gifts. Lunch at Borelli's Restaurant next door.

A warm welcome is extended to newcomers to the group. Please put your name down if planning to come on any of our trips.

Gwen 5762 7017, 0438 627010

Garden Team

Shirlie's pretty garden had some neat treatment when the team set to pruning with welcome contribution from new recruit Rupe.

Afternoon tea reached new heights with tasty offerings from three talented cooks.

With the next session coming up soon we've chosen an easy challenge in Carmel's well-kept garden so we'll see you at No 25 on the 30th.

Investment Group 1

At our last meeting following the regular format two of our members gave an interesting and instructive presentation on how to obtain the best use of the research tools in the ComSec Website. During the meeting the convenor also provided members of our group with the opportunity of viewing on the screen the progress of any Company they wished to research.

Investment Group 2

Members of Investment Group 2 were very impressed with the comprehensive talk on charting given at our March meeting by one of our members Peter Simpson. Peter discussed a variety of charting tools, and their application to a selection of stocks for consideration.

February 2015 was a positive month for the share market overall which was encouraging to our members. This upward trend has been running since the third week of January.

Due to Easter we have arranged for the next meeting of Investment Group 2 to be held on Thursday 2 April at 2pm in W4. Please note change of day for this month only.

Lifeball

Lifeball started off slowly this year, but by late February most of our regular players had returned as well as newly registered players who had decided to join our ranks. We welcomed Jan, Dick, Mary, Jean and Freya, who are learning the safety rules under the guidance of coach Rupe, and are enjoying this fun game.

New players are welcome any time at the Indoor Recreation Centre, Mondays at 9.30 a.m. 'til after Easter, then 1.30 p.m. thereafter. To make playing conditions more pleasant during the hot months we

use the air conditioner.

Our grand veteran, Betty Summers, returned to receive a rousing rendition of 'Happy Birthday' and an appropriate cake to help celebrate her 90th. Our Secretary, Margie, has sent out invites for our annual 'Fun & Friendship' day to be held on Monday 23rd March. Players from near-by Lifeball clubs in Victoria and southern NSW, Colleen & Brian Lord (the instigators of this marvellous game) and our Benalla players will be in attendance. We expect about 100 participants to attend, so we'll be using all three courts throughout the day, and our members will provide lunch for an anticipated three sittings.

We know, after previous experiences, this will be a wonderful day. Please come and watch the game—perhaps you will be our next new member!



*Congratulations Betty on your 90th
birthday from Executive and members of
U3A Benalla*

Making the most of the Internet

'Making the Most of the Internet' toolkits continued to grow during our March session.

Again prioritizing resources freely available on the net, our tutor Ian began by introducing free music downloads available at 'Radio Tunes' (www.radiotunes.com) (his particular favourite is 'Classical Guitar') and 'Tune In' which also has links to radio from around the world.

The remainder of the session focused largely on learning needs identified last session. Ian explained that he particularly values and recommends 'YouTube' as a resource for lifelong learning. He demonstrated how YouTube videos can be used to address learning needs such as '[How do you attach photographs to an email?](#)' and '[What is the Cloud?](#)' Viewing of 'What is the Cloud?' led on to an informative discussion about internet security and 'The Cloud'.

'[Metadata and data retention changes](#)' Ian explained the role of ISP providers, demonstrated how to access our Web Address, related web addresses to their use in the storage of data and reflected on questions the prolonged storage of metadata raises for him.

['Social Media - Twitter'](#) Admitting to not using his account a lot, Ian took us in a humorous, interactive way through Twitter's features, drawing on his own Twitter site, [Malcolm Turnbull's site](#) and a parodied site named ['Elizabeth Windsor'](#) (the official site for the queen seems to come under <https://twitter.com/BritishMonarchy>).

Questions relating to *computer speed*, especially in outlying areas, are a continuing concern to class members. Ian introduced a freely available program - [CCleaner](#) - which he uses almost continuously to ensure his computer doesn't become clogged up with extraneous files and slow down. When all else fails it seems that the Library and Macdonald's have publicly available WiFi (sorry, no café's), with motels having WiFi for travellers.

Other topics included 'Memory and Storage', 'Streaming and Downloading', Ad blocking, Password Managers; Netflix; Picasa and more - there's never a dull moment!

Next session - VPN (Virtual Private Networks) and an introduction to freely available, easy to use web page programs.

Meet and Mingle

Our next Meet and Mingle will be held on 15th April at The Centre. All welcome.

Music Appreciation

27 February 2015

For the first part of session John presented a lesser known composer, Robert Fuchs (1847-1927), who was a protégé of Johannes Brahms. The music presented was Serenades No's 1 and 2. The second half of session, John presented Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Piano Concerto No 2. Pianist, William Backhaus and orchestra Wiener Philharmonic.

13 March 2015

Neville presented a session of Mozart. The highlights were various YouTube segments from Ave Verum Corpus, and a concert in the Vatican comprising Mozart's Violin Sonata in G Major with soloist Hillary Han.

John presented a Soviet composer, Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956). The music played was Symphony No 1 in E Flat with the Slovak Philharmonic, conducted by Stephan Gunzenhauser.

Politics and Current Affairs

I don't think there has been finer comedy produced this year than that developed in Canberra. This latest comedy festival features the [Palmer Disunited Party](#). Come on folks get serious! Who knows what new comedy sketches will take to the stage before we next meet?

Railway Journey

Our first Railway Journey is on 21st of April when I will show you scenes from New Zealand's South Island. We open with a cruise on Milford Sound and then a steam hauled train tackles the famous Arthur's Pass. A glimpse of Christchurch prior to the earthquake leads to a favourite journey for me along the coast to Picton.

After a break our second journey will be more in the Armchair Traveller mode as we visit Cochin in the South of India. It was in the Cochin area that the first Christian missions were established on the Malabar Coast. This was also the hub of activity for the early spice traders whose cargoes were sold for fortunes in Europe. I will also show video of a Kerala "backwater" trip enabling you to see a little of village life in India.

I hope you can join us for this our only Railway Journey for semester one.

Singing for Fun

We've been singing some great new songs. At Harmony group Brian introduced "Down by the riverside in two parts. This song will be introduced to our main group at the next session. "This is my song" in two parts was taken by Faith and will be a winner. Margaret has taken us to New Zealand and we are now singing "Maori Canoe song" and "Pokarekare Ana." Our Maori language skills are improving slowly.

Towards a Sustainable Future

Did you know that 2015 is the International Year of the Soil? Many of our U3A members are from agricultural backgrounds or garden lovers so are already keenly aware how important the health of our soils is.

Dr Tony Weatherly, a soil scientist at the University of Melbourne, is currently researching into technologies to support large scale food waste as a soil conditioner. He would like us to think about soil as a dynamic, living thing. "Soils have a tipping

point, just as our own health does, and beyond a certain point soil can't be repaired or replenished - it's not an unlimited resource. Understanding soil science is more important than ever: our future environmental and economic well being depends on it. we can't keep treating soil like dirt, pun intended" ('Soil, food and cities' *Voice* University of Melbourne 9 March 2015 p 8). Another University of Melbourne researcher, Professor Deli Chen and his soils group hope to develop a scientific index called a nitrogen footprint to increase consumer awareness of how efficiently the farmer used nitrogen fertilizers when producing their food ('Food, fertilizer and our nitrogen footprints' *Voice* University of Melbourne 9 Feb 2015 p 10).

The Australian Academy of Science's report 'The science of climate change: questions and answers' was released recently (www.science.org.au/climatechange). We read a thought provoking article relating to this - 'Climate Change is not in doubt, so stop the ostrich act' by Nobel Laureate and Academy of Science fellow Brian Schmidt (The Age, 16 Feb 2015). Schmidt believes we should not self-diagnose but should act on expert opinion. Frank considered Schmidt's analogy 'It's much like getting a medical diagnosis from a panel of the country's best doctors' an excellent one.

Other topics discussed this month included the evidence of warming of the world's oceans from data collected from 3500 Argo buoys from 2006 - 2013; concerning reports that the government does not consider the Great Barrier reef in danger; cyclones; wave energy; the production of a new type of plum; innovations in solar technology in which energy from the sun is printed on plastic and research by Bendigo raised water engineer, Professor Peter Scales, on an optimal system to recycle wastewater.

John reported on the Strathbogie Voices seminar by Dr David Karoly and on George Marshall's presentation in Shepparton which emphasized the importance of relating climate change conversations to the feeling sides of people's brains, to their stories and interests rather than focusing on 'polar bears', or people will 'do it later'. As you can see, we always have lots to talk about and highly value the work our tutor John Lloyd puts into preparing topics for us to discuss each session.

Walks

Benalla Bushwalking Club Mid-week Walk Wednesday 11 March 2015

Early on Wednesday 11 March, a perfect North East autumn day, 9 members departed Benalla heading for Mount Buffalo National Park.

We stopped briefly in Myrtleford to get some suitable hiking shoes for Sue Pendergast as she realized that the plastic cros she was wearing to ease the pain of severe blisters, (the legacy of the previous weekend walk) would not be entirely suitable for today's walk.

With Sue leading, sporting her bright new shoes and clutching her trusty walk map inherited from Vaughan Cowan, we all followed from the car park at the Reservoir and headed for Eagle Point. It was decided to have lunch on arrival at Eagle Point while enjoying the brilliant sunshine and magnificent views. Somewhat to our surprise, over lunch we encountered a lone French speaking Canadian female hiker who had only arrived in the country the previous day.

The return walk after lunch was on a different track via another attraction - Og, Gog and Magog - huge granite rock outcrops. After a challenging scramble over some rocky approaches, the view from the top was indeed OMG and provided an interesting perspective on nearby (as the crow flies) Mount Dunn where some of the group had walked late last year.

From there we headed back to the Reservoir continuing to enjoy walking through the diverse alpine vegetation and enjoying the many and varied views encountered.

Once back at the vehicles, we headed for the picnic area at the Park entrance for the obligatory afternoon tea in very pleasant surrounds.

Our sincere thanks go to Sue for organizing such great weather and leading this most enjoyable, interesting and social walk, while no doubt enduring the discomfort of those blisters.

David Harvey

Easy walk Wednesday - April 1

We will start this year's easy walks by climbing to the top of Mount Samaria. Don't be frightened by the prospect - it is a short walk, we start from a high point of the range and the view from the top is excellent. We will take a leisurely pace and have lunch at the top.

Contact Vaughan Cowan 5762 1980 beforehand and we leave the Centre car park at 10.00 am.

Congratulations to Vaughan Cowan – Country Victorian Volunteer of the Year – Golf Australia Award

Vaughan has been convenor of U3A Walks for many years and is very much appreciated in that role. He has also been involved in the Benalla Golf Club since 1953 and has enjoyed being involved in different parts of the club. He has coached junior golfers for 42 years.

Vaughan's efforts have been recognized by Golf Australia and he has been named Country Victorian Volunteer of the year.

Well done Vaughan.



Vaughan Cowan - Photo courtesy of Benalla Ensign

Mid-week walk Wednesday- April 8

Start at the caravan park in Gough's Bay, walking through the town to lookout – some gradual incline. Continue along a gravel road through pine regeneration, having lunch at the lakeside and back to the caravan park for afternoon tea. Great views of Gough's Bay.

Leader; Sue Pendergast 0428 401 690 or 5768 2403. Meet at Centre car park 8.45 is for 9.00am departure.

Next month's walk - Wednesday March 11

MOUNT BUFFALO – EAGLE POINT S-3-3

A very interesting circuit starting at the Reservoir, with great views from Eagle Point. Includes visits to the Devil's Couch and Og, Gog and Magog, with the return along Rocky Creek track.

Leader Sue Pendergast 5768 2403
Meet at Centre 8.00 am; depart 8.15

Wine Appreciation

Wednesday 25 March

Meet at 10.00 am for travel to Eagle Range Estate near Ovens. Lunch at Delizie Café, Myrtleford.

Wednesday 22 April

Meet at 10.00 am for proposed visit to Baarooka Winery, Strathbogie and lunch at Euroa – to be confirmed.

Noel Meagher 5762 3149

Writing Workshop

Our writing workshop in March began with the sharing of 'News of Writing', starting with a report on a recent literary lunch with Jerilderie-born Rosalie Ham, writer of the novel 'The Dressmaker'. Another participant spoke of conducting an interview recently on biodynamic farming which led him to become intrigued by the long history of planting by the moon. Perhaps, like Rosalie Ham's memory of her father stressing the importance of never jumping into a sorghum silo appearing many years later as a tragic event in 'The Dressmaker', 'planting by the moon' might appear in his writing one day!

We then moved into '500 words' - the memoir oriented sharing of 500 words on last month's topic on ABC Open, 'Lost in Music'. Next month's topic is '**Testing the Friendship**' - "A true friend is there through thick and thin, but not all friendships survive under pressure. Tell us about a time when a friendship was put to the test. Did it strengthen your relationship, or push it over the edge? 'Sounding Board', scheduled in the second half of the session, provided the opportunity to give and gain feedback on ongoing memoir related projects.

The agenda trialed this month - 'News of Writing', '500 Words' and 'Sounding Board' – appeared to provide a flexible and inclusive framework for sharing writing and life experiences and will be followed over the next few months

Our group is very small and keen to have new members. We meet on the third Monday of the month between 2 and 4 pm in W4 at The Centre.

Our thanks go to Stephanie Ryan MP and the staff at her Benalla Office for printing this newsletter.