



Benalla and District Inc. Newsletter – March 2016

P O Box 674
Benalla 3672
Editor: Freida Andrews 5765 2476
fmandrews46@gmail.com
Newsletter deadline—fourth Monday at midday

President: Terry Case 5762 1700
case.terence@gmail.com
Secretary: Lorraine Knox 5762 1531
lorrain.knox@bigpond.com
Web site: <http://u3abenalla.weebly.com>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Following the Annual General Meeting in March I am now into my second term as President. Dorothy Webber is our new Vice President and will make an excellent President when I stand down.

At last year's Annual General Meeting I reported on accommodation. Security of tenure at the Centre had been an issue over a number of years. We had met with Benalla Council on a regular basis over the years to seek secure accommodation.

Benalla College stepped in when The Centre pulled out in March 2015. Benalla College secured our short term future and classes were able to continue without interruption, I wish to thank them for their support at a time of crisis for U3A. We now have a lease on W4 with Wodonga College's Flexible Learning Team. Problems arise in the school holiday periods when access becomes a problem, especially for scooter and wheel chair users. Access to the room, other than advertised class time is also a problem. The possibility that all our members would have to hold a current police check is something we have so far avoided, for these reasons we continue to seek our own base.

In January we re-opened negotiations with Tony McIlroy the Chief Executive Officer for Benalla Council. Tony presented to us new plans which had been presented to Council for the redevelopment of the 'seniors', which would include a new base for U3A. The Council, U3A and the Executive of the Seniors have met on three occasions this year and developed a good working relationship, however the Seniors and the Council team are now deadlocked.

We remain determined to find a secure base with wheel chair and scooter access and believe the Senior Citizens is still the only realistic solution.

We need to set the record straight with our members.

1. U3A did not seek to remove any of the facilities at the Senior Citizens rooms.
2. U3A were invited by the Council team to join discussions with the Seniors' executive re the shared use of the facility.
3. U3A seek to have a room allocated within the seniors which would be a permanent classroom and office for use of U3A members.
4. Discussions with the Seniors' executive have been amicable.
5. The first proposal from the Council envisaged stripping the commercial kitchen area and creating a room for our use. U3A would contribute to Council for costs involved, and support Council in applying for Round 2 of Federal Regional Funding.
6. In return we would have security of Tenure.
7. The Seniors objected as they still use the kitchen facility on occasions.
8. **The second proposal came from the Seniors' executive. They offered U3A use of the room where currently the billiard table is stored.** We accepted this offer.
9. It was proposed that U3A members would use the side door as our entrance/exit so as not to interrupt Seniors' running of activities in the

main hall.

This was approved by all parties.

10. At a subsequent meeting in March the Seniors advised that they have withdrawn that offer. They now do not wish the billiard table to be removed from that room. This is an unsatisfactory and impractical outcome for U3A.
11. U3A partnered Council to seek extra Federal funds which were provisionally approved in early March. Those funds would have allowed more money to be spent on refurbishing the Seniors rooms. If U3A are forced to pull out the funding would no longer be available as it is only available on the basis of a partnership for a shared facility.

We do not seek confrontation and do not want to take over the Seniors, but see shared occupancy as a way forward for both groups.

I remain optimistic we can amicably share the facility.

Terry Case
President

Newsletter

- The deadline for the newsletter is the 4th Monday of the month – it will be emailed to arrive by the beginning of the following week.
- Items for the newsletter are to be emailed to Freida Andrews fmandrews46@gmail.com or delivered to Bev Lee at 61 Monds Avenue, Benalla.
- The newsletter is also available on the U3A website <http://u3abenalla.weebly.com>
- The next newsletter deadline is on **Monday 25 April** at midday.

Please note that due to recent changes in Australia Post procedures, posted newsletters will take up to 5 days to arrive.

GROUP REPORTS

Armchair History

In our last class we made some comparisons with Roman and Chinese history, I made up a timeline from various sources, Roman dates are shown in italics.

Comparative Chinese/Roman history

551 BC Birth of Confucius, ideas of an ethical ordered society.

206 BC to 220AD Han Dynasty, the “true” establishment of the Chinese state.

218 BC Hannibal conquers Spain, crosses the Alps and defeats the Romans.

214 BC Emperor Qin indentures thousands to link existing city walls into a Great Wall.

183 BCE Hannibal defeated by Romans, and takes poison to evade capture.

c100 BC Silk Road between China & Middle East sees Chinese goods in Rome.

c100 BC Buddhism first appears in China.

55-54 BCE Romans invade Britain

30 BCE Antony & Cleopatra commit suicide, Egypt becomes Roman Province.

27CE Jesus begins his ministry

46CE Paul begins his missionary journeys

67 AD Han Emperor Ming sent a mission to India to invite Buddhist monks to his court.

132 CE Sun dials, water clocks, astronomical instruments and paper in use.

166 CE Reported arrival of an emissary from Rome bringing ivory and other gifts.

380 CE Christianity official religion of Roman Empire.

Armchair Traveller

In March Reina and John took us to Portugal for a cruise up the Douro River and a visit to the cities of Porto, Coimbra, and Lisbon. We also heard about the still-thriving cork industry and saw some examples of the

use of cork as a fabric. Terry then took us on a tour of an ancient Hindu civilization ruins in Hamti, South Central India.

We meet again on Tuesday May 17, and John Avery hopes to hear from a volunteer or two who can take a talk for an hour about some of their travels.

Art Appreciation

The Benalla Gallery is currently hosting an exhibition of paintings from the Cbus Super Collection. It is interesting to reflect that one of the largest Trade Unions has made the pragmatic decision to have its Superannuation Scheme invest in Australian Art and our gallery is benefiting from this decision. This exhibition attempts to show the development of colour and movement in Australian paintings.

The U3A Art Appreciation Group listened with rapt attention to Bryony Nainby give an interesting review of some of the paintings on display. Examples from late colonial through to early Impressionism through to early attempts at Cubism were discussed. In recognition of International Women's day Bryony also compared the development of some paintings done by women - some from Benalla's own collection and some from the Cbus collection. Bryony left the review of some of the CBus paintings until a later date.

This exhibition is well worth viewing and is recommended.

There are two standout paintings. One by Nolan from his early riverbank period and titled "River", shows a woman recently removed from her horse when crossing a river with a naked Ned Kelly watching from up in a tree. The real standout of the exhibition is a Tom Roberts painting titled "Portrait of a Young Girl". This portrait of a young girl can only be described as a beautiful painting. This shows just how good an artist Roberts was. It is difficult to understand why this painting is not included in the retrospective currently on display in our nation's National Gallery in Canberra.

In the other rooms in the Gallery there are two excellent Tuckers from the Gallery's own collection on show. There are also several very interesting Nolan prints displaying examples of his Kelly paintings.

There is also on view a very modern looking installation in the shape of a cube titled "No Entry-Staff Only".

Astronomy

A visitor from outer space pulled in by the Sun's gravity, passed by Earth at a safe distance of 4,092,497 km on March 7th. The asteroid, 30 metres in diameter, known as 2013TX68 was not predicted to impact Earth. Its imminent arrival was discussed at our last Astronomy session. Our tutor Rupe assured us that there was only a one in twenty million chance of us being hit!

Members had been busy preparing presentations. Dick gave us a very in-depth lecture on Asteroids and Comets. Jan spoke on the History of Radio Astronomy and also on Capella, a golden star that she had observed low on the horizon recently. Rupe added further information on Capella which is a double star, the 6th brightest, at 42 light years away. It will be visible low on the northern horizon for another month.

Gravity waves are ripples in the fabric of space time and they have been detected for the first time. Scientists based their findings on the collision of two gigantic black holes 1.3 billion years ago. In an instant about 3 times the mass of the Sun was converted into gravitational waves in a fraction of a second. Rupe gave us a white board presentation on this recent exciting detection by twin lasers, at the LIGO observatories in Germany and the U.S.

Albert Einstein predicted gravitational waves with his theory of relativity 100 years ago. We truly live in the times of exciting discoveries!

We are now meeting once a month on the third Tuesday at 1.30 p.m.to 3.30 p.m.

Bird Watching

Visit to Lake Benalla Thurs 10 March 2016

The group met near the Weary Dunlop Learning Centre for a walk around the red gum woodland section of the lake walking track. Because we have a large number of participants, we split into two groups, taking off in opposite directions. Bird numbers were reasonable for a warm, humid morning given that we've had almost no rain since January, and a recent heatwave. One group had views of an Australian Darter, a Sacred Kingfisher and several Blue-faced Honeyeaters, while the other group saw a flock of Red-browed Firetails and 5 Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes. A large flock of King Parrots was

also seen flying through the area. A total of 37 bird species was recorded by the two groups. For those with internet access, the species list has been entered on the Ebird website.

To view the bird list, press CTRL + Click on this link <http://ebird.org/ebird/australia/view/checklist?subID=S28073941>

Thanks to Val La May, Convenor of the Seymour U3A Bird group who helped lead the walk and entered the bird list on Ebird. Thanks also to Christine Pollard who provided the photos below. Christine's photos have also been added to the list on Ebird, and to the Birdwatching pages on the U3A Benalla website.



Some of the group ready for the walk. Photo Christine Pollard

Next activity 14 April 2016

Our next activity will be a morning visit to Winton Wetlands on **Thursday 14 April**. Please meet at the Barkly Street car park in front of the school (behind Aldi) at **9.40am**. We plan to visit 2 or 3 locations at the wetlands, with short walks at each location. For those who want morning tea, please bring your own and a folding chair or stool if you have one. Some participants may want to stay on for lunch at the Mokoan Hub. We will car pool for the drive there and back, taking into account people who want to return straight back to Benalla and those staying for lunch.

If you want to lunch at The Hub, please ring or email Kathy Costello (5762 5755 or coskoy@bigpond.com) by Thurs 7 April, so that a booking can be made. As I'll be away for a few days, Margaret Walshe (5762 3906, margaretwalshe@bigpond.com) will also take bookings.



Straw-necked Ibis beside Lake Benalla. Photo Christine Pollard

Brain Games

A diligent dozen deliberated over 25 puzzles which tested across a wide range and we took home the score sheet so we could analyse the weak and strong points of our skills.

Yet another brain-training book I've found suggests a tonic which you might like to road test: a **Memory Smoothie** which includes carrot, blueberries, beetroot, avocado, almonds or walnuts, lime juice and a slice of fresh ginger.

Bushwalking

Mid-week walk – Wednesday 9 March

Mount Buffalo – Lake Catani circuit.

Eleven walkers headed for Mount Buffalo and cooler temperatures. We started from the day park beside Lake Catani, walked west to do a circuit to the north then crossed a boardwalk to walk the picturesque north-west side of the lake. From here we could see Doug, who remained fishing on the other side. After crossing Eurobin Creek we headed for the Chalet car park for lunch. This track has many enormous rocks and we stopped off for the view from one. Doug drove round to reserve a picnic table for us. The coffee van did a great trade.

Some very active European Wasps made eating interesting. We retraced a short distance to the start of the Monolith track (originally called the "Pig Run"). If you haven't done this track already, you should. Very well constructed and interesting all the way. We dumped our back packs and climbed to the Monolith for excellent views. The cameras kept clicking. Then back to the lake, repeating the north-west section to return to the cars. A good day, but Doug didn't catch any fish.



Mid-week walkers at the base of the Monolith

Mid-week walk - Wednesday April 13 Samaria Tramline and Braking Station.

For those who missed Terry's walk in February & the regular mid-week walkers, we will follow the historic tramline from the kilns to the braking station. Club members have been helping to clear the previously overgrown section of track from the kilns. The road up the range is also greatly improved. From the braking station we return on a different track leading to magnificent views, before descending to the cars. A wonderful area for walking.

Ring Vaughan Cowan 5762 1980 and meet at the Centre at 9.15am for 9.30am departure.

Easy walk - Wednesday 6 April Plain Creek Tramway near Sawmill Settlement.

A delightful shady walk along the wooden tramway and stream to the remains of a bridge and back. This was a site of one of Carter's timber mills, and is off the Mansfield – Mt. Buller road.

Ring Vaughan Cowan 5762 1980 and meet at the Centre at 9.15am for 9.30am departure.

Easy walk - Wednesday May 11 Bright and Wandiligong.

Please note we are combining this walk with the mid-week walkers, as it is not a strenuous walk. I hope this does not prevent anyone from walking the second Wednesday.

This year we make our annual autumn foliage trip to Bright and Wandiligong. As a slight change, we will start by climbing to Huggin's Lookout, for an overview of the township. Then to Wandiligong for lunch and the traditional 'Wandi wander'

Ring Vaughan Cowan 5762 1980 and meet at the Centre at 8.45am for 9.00am departure.

Chat n' Chew

Art Gallery Café - April 15th - All welcome

We are pre-booking from the Gallery's usual lunch menu. I have copies of this menu for perusal.

Contact Shirley on 5762 6768 at least three days before lunch to book in.

Collectors

We again had an interesting collection of items.

Brian Greed brought along a selection of flutes which he had collected in his travels to South East Asia and played us a tune.

Our collections included blue and white Delft pottery, kerosene table lamps, badges from various sources collected over the years, which included many Red Nose Day badges.



There was also a collection of trinkets brought as mementos of overseas holidays. Some people are wise enough to buy small, easy to carry items. Judith and Jennifer had a funny story (in retrospect) about getting a fragile and bulky, kerosene lamp home from England.

We had a selection of Carlton Ware, Hummel, Spode, post cards and some very unusual and beautiful plates. The collection of handkerchiefs showed some very pretty and delicate handkerchiefs from yesteryear. Bev continued her theme of memorabilia from her ballerina aunts. Two of our group are collecting animals so we saw an assort-ment of owls and elephants.

We also viewed a short YouTube clip on the making of Wedgewood pottery and the 'Collectors' page on our U3A web site.

Next month as well as their usual items, members have been asked to bring along a gift which has special meaning to them. It might be a 21st birthday gift, wedding gift, retirement gift or other.

Comparative Religion

The session commenced with discussion about future topics. This included research on encyclicals by Pope Francis and the merging of pagan cultures with Christian beliefs. We moved on to a discussion of the various definitions of "religion". One that seemed to spark some interest was *something of overwhelming importance to a person*. Another expressed the view that many definitions focus too narrowly on only a few aspects of religion; they tend to exclude those religions that do not fit well. An alternative was offered - *It is apparent that religion can be seen as a theological, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological phenomenon of human kind. To limit religion to only one of these categories is to miss its multifaceted nature and lose out on the complete definition*.

We followed up with a comparison between the *origins of religion* and *religion today*. After developing a list of features of the origins, we looked at what we could see as the differences today. Our conclusion was that much of the original list still applied but there were some less comfortable cultural aspects that had crept in i.e. power, greed, idealism and seeing things in black and white even though a more mature approach would see more grey.

Homework for this month is to look at the website www.religioustolerance.org Freida will look for some information on the encyclicals by Pope Francis.

Film and Literature

The Film and Literature Group gathered on a hot Wednesday to see Franco Zeffirelli's production of *Taming of the Shrew*. Based on the William Shakespeare play of the same name, *Taming of the Shrew* is described as "a comic look at male chauvinism and Women's Lib in the sixteenth century." Renaissance Italy, as recreated by Zeffirelli, provides the perfect backdrop for the reform of Katharina, the bad tempered, aggressive "shrew" played in fine form by Liz Taylor. Petruchio, as played by Richard Burton, is the fortune hunting wife- seeker from Verona who takes on the task of taming this shrewish woman.

This proved to be a busy but enjoyable film – lots happening in the background of each scene, the language of Shakespeare to decode and savour, plus a couple of different subplots woven into the transformation of Katharina. The concept of one

human consciously working to "tame" another is a thought provoking concept and this film gives one lots to think about.

(For trivia enthusiasts - a shrew is a tiny rodent that is extremely bad tempered!)

Garden Appreciation

April 28th - Bus trip to Dame Nellie Melba's Gardens, Coldstream. Meet at Rose Gardens at 7 am – Royal Hotel End. Bus, Garden Tour and Morning Tea \$55 pp. Then to Chocolate Factory and café for lunch--own cost. "Booked Out". We have a waiting list.

May 26th - Meet at the Benalla Flexible Learning Centre's car park (formerly the Centre car park) in Barkly Street at 9.30 am. We will visit Joan McIntosh's Garden, 17 Lower Stanley Road, Beechworth. Lunch at Beechworth Honey Experience.

June 23rd - Meet at the Benalla Flexible Learning Centre's car park in Barkly Street at 10.00 am. We will visit the Victorian Grower's site. They specialise in beautiful flowering perennial, ornamental trees, etc. All grown just off Mansfield Road. More information will be available in the next newsletter.

Gwen Turner Ph: 5762 7017 Mob: 0438627010.

Garden Team



We leapt into work at Kathy's on the last day of February. It was a third Monday session chez Bill et Jane - to leave free the March long weekend. Next we'll gather at Val's back on our regular second Monday (11th April).

Meanwhile let's hope for more showers!

Investment

At the March meeting of Investment we looked at some results from the companies Reporting Season in February. We noted that companies that had missed their expected results even by the slightest margin had been severely treated by the market.

Overall since April 2015 the market has tumbled 20%. We looked at other years, namely 2002 and 2012 when a similar decrease in the market had been experienced. We noted that the fall in 2009 had been considerably greater than 20%, and that conditions then had been quite different to what they were during this last decrease. The encouraging aspect in 2016 is that the all ordinaries is now above the 5000 mark.

The next meeting of Investment will be on Friday 1st. April at 1.15pm in W4.

Let's Talk Books

At our gathering on Tuesday 1st March the usual books were swapped and exchanged. A feature of our discussion this time was Shirley reading some Chinese poems from a much worn and loved book. Thank you Shirley. Sometimes in discussing books we have read we allow little glimpses of our life to come into our reflections. What diverse and interesting backgrounds we all come from.

Carol by Patricia Highsmith, now a current movie, received good reviews as did *The Lie* by Helen Dunmore. Rebecca Shaw has written a series of books such as *Love in the Country*, *Country Vet* and *A Village Deception*. A book written by Hazel Hawke – *My Own Life* was retrieved from a bookshelf and thoroughly enjoyed, what a great lady she was.

Looking forward to catching up on the 5th April in our very comfortable library.

Lifeball

Lifeball has had a revival, which has been wonderful! We have five new players, and everyone seems to love their new challenges.

On March 21, we had our annual Fun and Friendship Day, with teams from Albury, Wangaratta, Myrtleford, Rutherglen, Deniliquin, Mansfield and Eildon all visiting us to play for the day. As usual there was a magnificent spread for lunch, for which we catered, and very little left over, which says much for the quality of our preparation.

There are two more Fun and Friendship Days for us next month, both in the same week, the first at Mansfield on Tuesday 12th April, and the second at Myrtleford on Friday 15th April. So those, combined with our own home game on the Monday, constitutes a busy few days. We will be jumping out of our skins with fitness that week! Plus it gives us all a good insight into how other teams manage their social games, and the general camaraderie amongst all players is just wonderful.

It is such a stimulating game, and gives us even more pleasure when Colleen Wilson-Lord and her husband, Dr Brian Lord, who are the creators of the game, manage to come and play alongside our players. They continue to have as much fun as we do, despite their travelling up and down the eastern seaboard of this vast country, teaching this great game to anyone who wishes to learn something new and morale boosting under any circumstances. That's the effect this game has upon anyone who gives it a go. Why don't you give it a try as well?

Phone Marg Merriman on 5762-1404

Meet and Mingle

The U3A Benalla and District 2016 Annual General Meeting was held during the Meet and Mingle session in March. Laurie Webber officiated during the election process. Current members of the executive were reinstated with the addition of Dorothy Webber as Vice-President and Judith Borthwick as Publicity Officer. Terry Case's thought provoking President's report (refer Page 1) was followed by general discussion and morning tea.

At our April Meet and Mingle Jane and Bill Parris will be presenting on their trip to Turkey and the service they attended at Gallipoli in April 2015.

Music Appreciation

26/02/2016

John presented musical works of Russian Composers (mainly Oboe).

1. Johann Luft - 1813 to 1877
2. Rimsky Korsakov – 1844 to 1908
3. Boris Asafiev – 1884 to 1949
4. Reinhold Gliere – 1875 to 1956
5. Nikolai Tcherepnin – 1873 to 1945

We also had music, accompanied by DVD pictures, composed by Mussorgsky, concluding with Flight of the Bumblebee by Rimsky Korsakov.

11/03/2016

We welcomed a new member. John then presented the Viola Concerto by Franz Hoffmeister – 1754 to 1812. This was followed by Symphony No. 5 by Tchaikovsky – 1840 to 1893. What a delight.

Patchwork

As always, if you have any enquiries give me a ring on 5762 2116. Dorothy

Play Reading

Our March play reading, 'The Lady in the Van', by Alan Bennett, proved a memorable choice. With convenor Keith away on a relaxing Probus holiday, class member Jenny Sawyer stepped into the breach, preparing a list of thoughtfully allocated roles and providing an encouraging environment for members to enjoy the play. Not only was the play touching, thought provoking and life affirming, it also proved timely, with the recently released film starring Maggie Smith as the singular Miss Shepherd, to be screened at Benalla's BPACC in late March/early April and almost certainly on an upcoming Swanpool Cinema program.

There will be a Friends of the Benalla Library fundraiser at BPACC on Sunday 5th April, with afternoon tea at 3.45 and the screening of 'the Lady in the Van' at 4.30 pm. Tickets are available for \$20 at the RedB4 bookshop, BPACC or at the Library.

Our April play reading is 'The Ideal Husband' by Oscar Wilde. Keith will be back at the helm as director of this beautifully written play by one of his favourite playwrights. Thank you, Jenny, for filling in for Keith in March – think of us in April if you visit the London street in which Miss Shepherd parked her van outside Alan Bennett's home for so many years!

Politics and Current Affairs

Our early March class had two guest speakers from the Council's Executive team. Veronica Schilling, General Manager Development & Environment took us through problems Councils have in running a successful Tip and complying with State and Federal authorities. This was fascinating politically, and from environmental and economic perspectives. Jane Archbold, Manager Community Development gave us a short presentation

on the latest community consultations her team are undertaking.

After enjoying our break we talked of the rise and rise of Mr. Donald Trump. Certainly the Republican Party hierarchy have had a rude shock. "Who stole our Party Dude?"

Rail and Tourism

Finally, on the 1st of March, this course got under way!

With a good attendance, Bill detailed what the 7 days course would entail. For today's course, it was explained that possibly the most important person involved in the planning and construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Rockies was not a Canadian, but a young USA citizen who ironically was born in Eastern Canada! James J Hill had a remarkable life and was probably one man who could be classed as a 'genius'.

Starting with one very small railroad, going north along the Red River, towards Fort Garry (Winnipeg), he either bought or built others to eventually form the Great Northern group! In this process, he became known as "The Empire Builder" and now has possibly the most popular Amtrak train named after him! His life's work presented a fascinating story! He is responsible for Seattle's success. To complete the day, Bill presented a very good DVD on 'The Coast Starlight' Amtrak train which runs between Los Angeles and Seattle.

Next course day is Tuesday 5th April at 09:30—please note the earlier start!

Having investigated the man – today will be all about the Train – 'The Empire Builder'.

Along the way, we will look at the famous Tourist Hotel – 'The Izaak Walton Inn', which has its own request stop in Glacier National Park. The DVD to be shown is 'Donner Pass' – part of the original Trans USA Railroad, and the climb from 200ft at Roseville to 6000ft at Donner Summit.

Singing for Fun

We look forward to tackling a wide variety of new songs in the coming weeks. These include songs from "Cabaret"; 12th Street Rag; Wunderbar from "Kiss me Kate" and "I love a piano" from Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade".

The Harmony group will be learning parts for "All I have to do is dream", "The three bells" and "Harbour Lights".

St. Patrick's Day was celebrated with great gusto by the singing all of the Irish songs in our books. It's amazing how many we have. Ross Hillis was welcomed into our group. We still have a strong contingent of men but we need to persuade more of them to join our Harmony Group. Ian has been a stalwart in this area. Many of us do not read music but our leaders are very skilled at teaching us the parts.

Come and have a try!

Tech Savvy

Our guest spot for March featured Tech Savvy member Ian McLeod who presented an overview of freely available entertainment sites on the internet.

From www.radiotunes.com we listened to country and classical guitar music; later comparing this site to the music play lists available on YouTube. Ian explained that streamed audio files such as those from radiotunes.com use less memory than youtube files which feature both video and audio files. Ian then demonstrated links on www.tunein.com using Edinburgh radio stations amongst others, adding that listening to Scottish radio helps him to keep his accent! Ian explained that YouTube has effectively replaced Wikipedia as his online encyclopedia, using examples drawn from the class to demonstrate its versatility in resolving problems.

'Free Movies' and 'Streamed Movies' on YouTube; the SBS On Demand movie site and the free trial version of Netflix were all demonstrated and the use of VPN for downloading of movies briefly discussed. Class member 'entertainment' suggestions included 'Spotify', which has scope for creating playlists; watching full length classic movies such as 'Grapes of Wrath' or historic film footage such as Rachmaninoff playing Rachmaninoff on YouTube; subscribing to BigPond movies and entertainment packages such as 'Stan' and i-View.

After the break the 'Mentors' working group shared ideas for upcoming Tech Savvy Drop In sessions; while 'Bloggers' and the 'Tech Savvies' discussed aims and directions for their activities for the rest of the year. April's presenter, Terry Dillon, will be discussing extending our phone/tablet skills. Topics which Terry will be discussing are accessible for preview on <http://teedee.com.au/devices>.

Tech Savvy Drop In

During our first month we became concerned that a month between sessions was too long for most learners. Fortunately additional timeslots became available on the timetable! We have now been able to schedule seven sessions for each group this semester. From the 11th April the **Microsoft/ Android** group will meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday (12th and 26th April; 10th and 24th May; 14th June), the **Apple** group on the 1st Tuesday and 3rd Wednesday (20th April; 3rd and 18th May; 7th and 15th June), all sessions between 1.30 to 3.30 pm in W4.

The Microsoft/Android group began their March session with a short presentation by Terry Dillon on some basic features of the Android mobile/tablet 'smart devices'. Terry has included beginners' resources on the <http://teedee.com.au> website he is currently developing (links on TSDI website). Learners then formed into clusters, pairs or worked individually with mentors on particular issues.

The Apple group continued on their steep learning curve in March; beginning by discussing 'Apps'. This was followed up by work on the treasure hunt for the Tech Savvy Drop In website; adding websites to home pages –and lots of problem solving together and with mentors. Many participants took photos using their iPhones and iPads, then emailed the photos to Bev as attachments.



Check out the Tech Savvy Drop In page to see more results!

Thank you so much to the many mentors who have attended the drop in sessions to date and to those who are providing one to one support for some learners. Thanks also go to our learners for sharing their learning with one another – our drop in sessions are certainly 'mutual aid' groups.

The interest in both groups on photography/editing photographs will be reflected in our next sessions.

Towards a Sustainable Future

This month, in addition to considering recent research on climate change science, we shared news of sustainability initiatives by local businesses.

Benalla/Mansfield Toyota's manager spoke to John of his concern about large power bills and consideration of strategies which will lead to independence from the grid such as solar panels and Tesla batteries. Class members reported on the clearly visible commitment to renewables evident in the number of solar panels on the Ellen Frances Hotel in Violet Town; the office buildings of McNulty's Timber Yard in Sydney Road and the workshop roofs of the engine reconditioning plant, also in Sydney Road. As residents or potential residents of residential settings which demonstrate commitment to renewables, we read of an innovative housing estate being built in Lancefield with built in solar systems & water recycling in all homes.

Plastic waste remains an ongoing concern. We found ourselves reminiscing around the coffee urn about glass soft drink bottles in the 'pre-plastic' age. John spoke of an early job delivering 'Loy's' soft drinks; we all remembered returning glass bottles as children to get pocket money, pre 'Coca cola' brand names such as 'Slades', 'Marchants' and favourite drinks such as 'Passiona'. We noted with interest a recent ABC Science report on a bacterium which produces a plastic eating enzyme and could hold the key to safely degrading millions of tonnes of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) (code '1') plastics which end up in waterways or landfill each year.

The political will to act on climate change by conservative parties in Australia and the United States is another ongoing concern. John introduced an on-line journal article from 'The Conversation' which provided an 'interesting little history lesson', describing inconsistent political positions over time in conservative climate policies and citing occasions when John Howard, John Gorton, and Malcolm Fraser pursued more enlightened environmental policies; when Joe Hockey, Greg Hunt and of course Malcolm Turnbull accepted the scientific consensus on climate change; and when the UK's Margaret Thatcher and US Republicans Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon also pursued more enlightened environmental policies. With elections in the offing our group will be continuing to monitor the 'political will' towards a sustainable future by all parties!

Wine Appreciation

Wednesday 27 April 2016 Meet at the car park at 10.00 am to travel via Avenel to Nagambie to visit David Traeger's long established winery. Note - access is by stairs. Lunch is at Nagambie Lakes restaurant.

Wednesday 25 May 2016 Meet at car park at 10.00 am for travel to Bullers at Rutherglen, last visited by our group nine years ago. Lunch at Tuileries restaurant.

Writing Workshop

At our March session seven members shared stories on the topic 'Heartbreak'. Stories included heartbreak at the gradual loss of a much loved mother; when adult children refuse to speak to one another; when a beloved cat 'Sheila' died aged 22 and another, 'Nigel', passed away unfairly before his time; when passed over for a position in which one had been acting for some time; plus two family history stories - one about a great grandfather's experience of multiple tragedies; another about a great aunt admitted to Kew psychiatric hospital in 1914 with post natal depression who remained there until she died in 1969.

Three members presented on the alternative topic - 'Easter' - resulting in a change from a fairly sombre to a more festive mood! Childhood memories of holidays in the country at Easter with farmer relatives; of Easter fairs and tractor pulls and of beautifully iced Easter eggs which proved impossible to eat all stimulated sharing of memories of similar experiences at Easter. Not one of the stories presented followed a clichéd path and many kept the '500 word' goal in sight.

The topic for our next session on Monday April 18th between 1.30 and 3.30 pm is *"My Other Life" - Are you a collector of model trains, a swing dance enthusiast or a weekend activist? Share a story about something unusual you get up to outside of work, or a side of yourself that other people don't normally see.*

Alternative topic suggestions are 'Anzac Day', 'Easter' (for those who didn't choose it last time), or a topic from the alternative topics list. We have decided not to hold the 'first Monday' cafe catch up at present as group members are all quite busy and keen to focus on the monthly topic.

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