



Benalla and District Inc.

Newsletter – February 2016

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Newsletter deadline—fourth Monday at midday

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our two enrolment days were successful and we have over 30 new members joining us this year. Welcome to all of you!



Ian Burkinshaw, who is in our 90+ yr old age group, enrolling at Cooina with executive members Bill Parris and Corrie Witlox.

With approximately 220 members we are offering thirty one courses and we will use five venues.

Graham Mitchell gave me an article from an Ensign printed in July 1996 which reported that U3A was re starting and offering four courses. It is thanks to all the volunteers over the years that U3A continues to thrive.

Our first Meet & Mingle meeting for the year saw 42 members gathered to hear Bill Sykes speak on life after politics. The March Meet & Mingle includes our AGM and marks the end of my first two year term as President. While I am happy to stand again, it is a good time to ask each of you to think about taking a role now, or in the future.

I would like to express our thanks to Wendy Rush, the outgoing 'Games' Convenor, for her valued work in facilitating the Games group for three years. A position description for this voluntary role is included on the back page. Please contact me if you are interested.

I hope you all have an enjoyable year with U3A.

Terry Case
President

Newsletter

- The deadline for the newsletter is now 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 28 March** 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: Invasions



Vale of the White Horse, with the hillfort, Uffington Camp.

The 361-foot-long White Horse, cut out of the chalk in the Iron Age. By the 10th Century Anglo-Saxon estates in the area followed the Iron Age and Roman boundaries; suggesting some sort of continuity. Incredibly the present day parish boundaries follow the line of the Anglo-Saxon land grants very closely.

Archaeological discoveries using new technologies continue to give us new insights into past civilisations. During 2010 when I was last in Britain I read of the largest Roman Villa discovered (so far) there. In 2013 British Archaeologists were rocked by the discovery that farming was being undertaken some 6,000 years prior to what had previously been established. It is all so different from the life portrayed in history books from my school days.

This year I am going to try and tell the story of the period of the Roman invasion of Britain to the Norman Conquest. It is also the story of how Christianity was to become the new religion in Europe. I hope to reach the period of the Crusades by the end of the year.

I invite you to sit back and enjoy the wide range of DVDs I have collected to illustrate the history. If you want to pursue the subject in more detail I suggest you try:- **The Domesday Quest in search of the roots of England.** Wood, Michael. London: BBC, 2005

Michael Wood is a talented historian who has also produced a number of television documentaries, some of which will be used in this course. He challenges the idea that the Norman invaders made revolutionary changes to the direction of English/British history. He focuses on what survived from the Celtic, Roman and Saxon/Viking periods and was adopted by the new Norman invaders. By using the Domesday Book to illustrate the lives of ordinary people he develops a story of continuity.

Wood sets out to try and answer what he thinks is the most important question in British history. How much of the Celtic and Roman past went into the Anglo-Saxon culture and what survived the Norman times?

Armchair Traveller

The first meeting of Armchair Traveller will be held 10.00 am – 12 noon on Tuesday 15th March in W4. For further information contact John Avery 5762 1818 email jcavery@bigpond.net.au

Art Appreciation

There have been two Art Appreciation activities at the Benalla Gallery since the last Newsletter. In early December Dr Will Twycross gave a most enjoyable lecture on the collection of his great grandfather John Twycross, a Melbourne wool merchant, gifted to Museum Victoria by Dr Will. The exhibition included three authentic 19th century Japanese woodblocks, vases, sculpture, carvings, paintings, porcelain and lacquer boxes and a large wall print of the original Royal Exhibition Building in Carlton. Dr Will's lecture covered many subjects associated with the exhibition and he happily digressed on to peripheral history that was occurring when his great grandfather was alive.

Our February activity was lecture by Bryony Nainby on Aboriginal Art currently on exhibition at the gallery. Bryony was able to bring the exhibition alive with her well-presented lecture and knowledge of aboriginal art and the audience responded enthusiastically. The artwork in the exhibition is

from a number of artists from three separate regions of Northern Australia and whilst some of paintings do have images and styles that could be seen to be overlapping or classed as similar, the three regions consider themselves to have separate styles. Some are semi figurative. The Bungle Bungles are obvious in one artist's work. Others have symbols obviously meant to produce images the viewer will recognise. Some have images of totem animals that are distorted into surreal shapes. Others have symbols that are not meant to convey any meaning at all but have been produced simply for arts sake. Some show figurative images depicting everyday human activities.

On a final note, each month Art Appreciation group members make a donation when attending the sessions arranged with Shanley Cleeland and other Gallery staff. The group's collection for 2015 of \$459.00 has now been donated to the Gallery.



Astronomy

We are a small friendly group who are looking for new members. If you have a desire to know 'what's out there', please join us. Beginners are welcome, no knowledge or experience is necessary.

At our first session for 2016 we welcomed Rupe Cheetham back as our tutor and also members who were unable to be with us last year. Rupe drew up a list from A to Z of interesting objects in the Universe and we each selected our personal fields of interest to research and prepare presentations to share with the group.

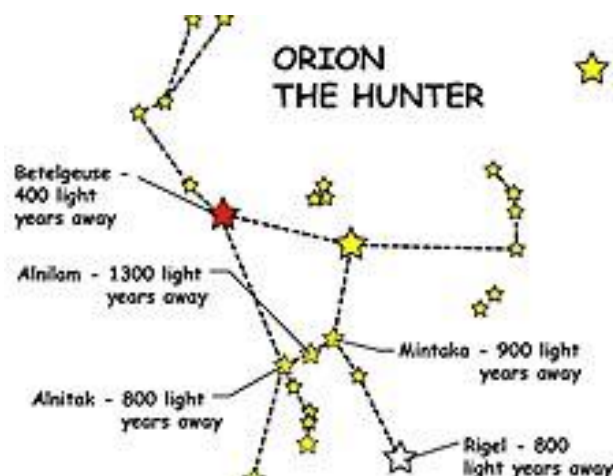
With advanced technology, we all have great access to the many new and exciting discoveries being made in space and published by scientists and the different Nation's Space Agencies, all eager to share

their knowledge so it looks like a good year for Astronomy. We heard that there is excitement in Astronomical circles in the new theory that a hypothetical Planet, named Planet X is "Out there" in the far reaches of our solar system, waiting to be discovered. Two Astronomers, Batygin and Brown, have noticed that some dwarf planets and icy objects tend to cluster together, being influenced by the gravity of a larger object. By analysing their orbits they have predicted that a large planet, ten times the size of Earth is hiding far beyond Pluto, so the search is on for the ninth Planet to replace demoted Pluto!

After a cuppa, Rupe took us on a sky tour around the constellation of Orion the hunter and his dogs naming the various stars and their distances from Earth. All so many light years away! Orion, named from Greek Mythology is one of the most prominent constellations in the night sky.

Some of us have visited the new art museum MAMA in Dean St, Albury, to see the fantastic exhibition of time lapse, night sky photography, filmed on the salt Lake Tyrell near Ouyen. This is Astronomy and an art work and allows visitors to experience the vastness of the night sky as the world turns. Ends 28th of February and is highly commended.

As we are a smaller group this year it was voted that we now meet once a month (on the 1st Tuesday), so that we will have adequate time for preparation of projects.



Bird Watching

There was an excellent response from members to the new U3A Birdwatching program. Over 20 people attended the first meeting, and were introduced to

printed field guides for Australian birds, several smartphone apps, websites, and instruction on how to adjust binoculars for your individual eyesight. Bev Lee has kindly put this information on the Birdwatching page on the U3A website.

We spent some time discussing the unexpected appearance of an Eastern Koel in Benalla before Christmas. It is a large cuckoo with a very loud, persistent call, and it woke one of our participants at 3am one morning.

After morning tea, most of the group reconvened at Lake Benalla for a short walk to practise their new binocular skills. We had good views of 20 native bird species, including both Brown and White-throated Treecreepers, a Restless Flycatcher and a pair of Sacred Kingfishers, not far from the library car park.

Thanks to Geraldine and Bev for their assistance.

Brain Games

Nearly a dozen of us took up the challenge of re-charging our neurons, though the first word power page nearly destroyed everyone's confidence! However we had some interesting ideas thrown in for discussion and did better on a few visual and creative exercises.

Bushwalking

Mid-week walk – Wednesday 9 March
Mount Buffalo – Lake Catani circuit.

Starting beside the lake, we walk along its edges as far as possible and then head for the Chalet car park for lunch. After lunch we visit the Monolith before returning to the cars.

Ring Vaughan Cowan 5762 1980 and meet at the Centre at 8.15am for 8.30am 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.

Chat n' Chew

Chat n' Chew met for lunch at the Royal Hotel on Friday 19th February.

Our March Chat and Chew will be held at the Saigon Station Restaurant (Victoria Hotel) on Friday March 18th at our usual starting time of 11.45 am.

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

Collectors

Our first session for the new program 'Collectors' was well attended. Most who attended brought along several items from their collection which were displayed and talked about.

We had a very varied collection with shells, scales, jewellery, a silver samovar, theatre programs, a Royal Winton cheese plate and dish. There was also a beautiful and delicate Shelley demitasse coffee cup and saucer, Royal Doulton plates, Depression Glass float bowls and Sylvac pottery. One member brought along a blue and white plate which was examined by others and it was discovered with the benefit of a magnifying glass, and to the delight of the owner, that it was made by Spode, a much admired name in collecting circles.



Others brought along family memorabilia including photos. It was a very interesting session where we saw these various items and heard something about the background of each and how and why they were being collected. We also had a suggestion from a member, passed on to her by an antique dealer, on how to care for china and pottery pieces.



Comparative Religion

Our group of 9 members, with one apology and one absent, met in room W4 at 1:30pm till 3pm. After some housekeeping from President Terry Case and brief introductions from the group members we watched just over half of the animated musical movie "Sita Sings the Blues." This movie is a parallel story about the love lives of two women, one the American writer/director Nina Paley and Sita, the Hindu Goddess who was treated rather badly by her husband Rama. This was not a particularly religious movie but it was chosen as an entertaining introduction to the vagaries of religion and life in general.

After some brief discussion about the movie we spoke about what topics the group should study in coming sessions. Some of the topics will include the American Amish communities, Druids and the ancient Mithraic religion. For our March session the main topic/study will be to define the origins and purposes of religions and how they manifest in the world today.

Our meeting time has been confirmed as 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm with the option of staying an extra half hour to 3:30 if required on the day.

E Book Group

There are many accounts of those contemplating life in a new country. One that stands out is *Dreamwheeler* by Deb Hunt, the story of Jane Lambert, who moves from her familiar world in London, to a little known region in France. But Jane's not just anybody. She's no longer young, she's in a wheelchair, and speaks not a word of French. The obstacles should be insurmountable, but, incredibly, are not, due to her persistence,

determination, and belief in herself. She makes numerous friends, establishes the most beautiful garden, and finds Rene, the love of her life. In Jane's world, the word "can't" doesn't exist. She pushes the boundaries in every direction, and demonstrates just how joyous and fulfilling life can be.

This novel provoked a lively discussion about the many challenges faced by the not so young, equally determined to live life to the full.

Film and Literature

We had planned to watch Tootsie at our February meeting, but the length of the movie was too long for the available time, being nearly 2 hours. Another plan was made and we watched Turner and Hooch. There was comment during the movie about how much younger Tom Hanks, who played Turner in the movie, looked. It was a light movie, and generally all enjoyed.

There was some brief discussion around how to introduce some literature into the session, as well as some Agatha Christie movies that are not Poirot or Miss Marple based.

In the future we will commence our session at 1:00pm, so that we can see some of the longer movies and also allow some time for a literature element. This will allow us to watch Tootsie in March.

Garden Appreciation

Welcome to our new members.

Feb 25th

We will visit the garden of Heather & Max Roll, 39 Grant Drive, Benalla 5762 5569. Lunch at Green & Grow. Meet at Heather's 10 am. BYO morning tea and mug. Hot water, tea, coffee, milk etc. will be available.

March 24th

Easter Thursday 10 am. Meet at Shirley Kearney's, 9 Reilly Avenue Benalla for morning tea. BYO morning tea and mugs. Hot water, tea, coffee, milk etc. will be available. Then we will visit Lorraine and Ray Wittingslow's garden 15 Reilly Avenue. We'll decide about lunch on the day.

April 28th

Bus trip to Dame Nellie Melba's Gardens, Coldstream. Meet at Rose Gardens at 7 am. Cost: Bus, Garden Tour and Morning Tea \$55 pp. Then to Chocolate Factory and café for lunch--own cost. We

will need money in by 16th March. Money can be left at RedB4 bookshop addressed to Gwen Turner – please put your name and U3A Garden Application on the envelope. There have been many early bookings already - with only two seats left as at 23/2, we will be starting a waiting list.

Please, if you are planning to come to any of our outings, ring me to put your name down.
Gwen Turner Ph: 5762 7017 Mob: 0438627010.

Garden Team

Half a dozen garden team members put in a productive hour before Shirlie persuaded them to retreat into the cool for afternoon tea.



Our next gathering is at Kathy's on leap day and on March 21st we'll be at Bill and Jane's.

Investment

At the first meeting of Investment for 2016 we welcomed sixteen members. This included three new members of U3A Benalla, namely Geoff Bath, Stan Bellingham and Les Rodgers.

We started the meeting with a comparison of economic conditions as they are in 2016 as compared to 2014 and 2015, and then noted several major events which had happened to listed companies since our last meeting. The stock market had fallen 5.5% during January 2016 which is a substantial fall. However, we studied several upward trending shares which had gone against this dramatic decline in share prices.

We also looked at how Commsec was showing the reporting season this year on their website. Half year reports can explain sudden increases or decreases in individual shares and are worth following especially for stocks that you own.

The next meeting of Investment will be on Friday 4th March 2016 at 1.15pm in W4.

Let's Talk Books

A great roll up of 22 for our first meeting of *Lets Talk Books*. We welcomed some new members to our group. It is always nice to have some new faces in whatever group is running and they were assured that they didn't have to read a book during the month to come along. Sometimes it is nice to sit and listen and perhaps take some notes on books others have enjoyed. Laurie Melgaard told us how reading a normal print book is difficult with fading eyesight. Laurie has discovered the 'libraries' available to download on his iPad and the wonderful choice of books from Vision Australia.

A great range of books were discussed. Dave Barry bought along a family book *At the Toss of the Coin he came to Australia*, a personal story written by his niece. We then ranged from the new J K Rowling novel, Danielle Steel; *A Fortunate Life* by A.B. Facey; *The Lie* by Helen Dunmore, written about a soldier returning from WW1, to *Lilian's Story* by Kate Grenville, which didn't get a very good review. A reread of *Billy Connolly* written by his wife Pam Stevenson and *Our Souls at Night* a book full of love, humour and gentle shocks. *Dream Wheeler* by Deb Hunt was enjoyed whilst the Bill Bryson book *A Walk in the Woods* was not too popular.

Others mentioned were *South of Darkness* by John Marsden, 'a good read'; *Burial Rites* by Hanna Kent; *Cane River* about slavery in Louisiana; *The Changeling*, a Phillipa Gregory novel; *House of the Hanged* by Mark Mills; *Kingdom of the Brave*, by Australian author Tamara McKinley; *The Curiosity*, a Sci Fi book and lastly Christine Falls an *Irish Mystery* by John Banville.

Such a nice way to spend a couple of hours in the afternoon! We look forward to seeing you all on March 1st at the Library. Happy reading.

Lifeball

2016 has started extremely well for us this year. Our membership had decreased to about 16 by the end of last year, but at this year's registration, six people have enrolled, and since the start, we have gained another two as well. So we are thrilled to welcome all these newcomers to our happy group. Few people recognise what we Lifeballers enjoy week after week, however these newcomers have adapted really quickly, and are enjoying a different experience with new-found enthusiasm and energy.

Our usual playing venue had been closed to us because the floors have been brought up to international standard in the Indoor Recreation Centre, so we were relegated to playing in the Drill Hall for 3 weeks. Rupert, Gerry, Shirley and I used masking tape to mark all the necessary lines for the playing area on the court, and we were all delighted it ended so well.

However, as from 22nd Feb, we will be back at our usual venue, the Indoor Recreation Centre in Ackerly Avenue, at 9.45am, ready to start playing at 10am. If the weather is hot, we turn on the air-conditioner so playing stays quite comfortable.

Why don't you pop in, if only to see us at play - or you may want to join in for a session. We will make you feel really welcome, and even try to convert you to a whole new way of having fun.

You can phone me on 5762-1404. Marg Merriman, Secretary.

Meet and Mingle

The first Meet and Mingle meeting with Bill Sykes as guest speaker was well attended. Terry has provided more information in his President's report at the beginning of the Newsletter.

Music Appreciation

27/11/15 - John commenced with *Meditation* by Massenet, followed by the music of little known composer Karoly Goldmark (1830 – 1915). The music was the Symphony entitled *The Rustic Wedding*.

The second session was conducted by Bev Lee who presented many musical memories from the time she spent in Madrid, Spain. These included

- Tunas (university student troubadors)
- Bagpipe music from Galicia
- Tenor, Placido Domingo
- Folk and Flamenco dance
- 'Zarzuela' (Spanish light opera)
- Bullfight music, and more.

12/02/2016 - We welcomed new members.

John presented the music of three composers.

1. Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) *Gait, Parisienne* and *Offenbachiana*, played by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Monte Carlo.
2. Less known composer, Leopold Hofmann (1738-1793) 18th Century Symphonies.

3. Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847) *Music from A Midsummer Night's Dream* which included the overture.

We closed the session with a rousing rendition of Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*.

Patchwork



We are back up and running with many of our group choosing one of three project quilts. There is still room for anyone interested in doing one of these projects. As always 'No Pressure'. Everyone can proceed at their own pace with lots of help available along the way. For those of you on Facebook, I have found a helpful site called 24 Blocks. They have some very easy to watch tutorials. This might be a help to you as it has been to me.

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

Play Reading



The inaugural meeting of our play reading group was held on Wednesday Feb. 3. It was attended by 18 members all of whom seemed to enjoy themselves immensely while reading various roles in the play. The play, "Wives Have Their Uses", is a comedy written by Gwen Meredith. Gwen, of course, wrote "Blue Hills" - 5795 episodes and "The Lawsons" - 1299 episodes. "Wives" was described as a "witty and sophisticated comedy" by the experts and also "one of the wittiest, entertaining and best constructed comedies by an Australian author" and it put her to the front ranks of Australian playwrights. Our next reading is 'The Lady in the Van' by Alan Bennett. Jenny Sawyer and Bev Lee will co-facilitate this one as I will be away for a week at that time.

Politics and Current Affairs

With some new class members joining the Politics group, we got off to an interesting start to the year with the “affair of the missing piano”. This Benalla mystery was a power play which saw some leading actors bow to public pressure.

It is a pity that similar public and political pressure does not seem sufficient to make some companies pay tax. I presented a table of the top 10 Australian companies who pay no tax and their annual profits. This caused some surprise. How can companies whose profits range from 14 billion dollars to 4 billion dollars pay no tax? Approximately 600 of the 1,500 largest companies operating in Australia in 2013-2014 paid no tax. It would be interesting to know how much public money was spent on the infrastructure projects that benefitted these companies.

The question of who will be the next American President will also keep us occupied, or bemused till the outcome is known in November, in time for our final class.

Rail and Tourism

Railways/Tourism –in Western North America

Before Bill puts away his North American notes for ever, he will present an extensive study of North Western USA and South Western Canada! This information has been obtained over four visits – 1961, 1981, 1991 and 1999. The course will run on the first Tuesday of the month from March to September inclusive, from 09:30 to nearly noon!

The format will start with a presentation of the day’s subject, prior to morning tea, which will be followed by the relevant DVD—with a break halfway for a short discussion.

Week 1 – James J Hill – who helped build the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Canadian Rockies and who later built the Northern Pacific Railway across North West USA. DVD – is on the train “The Coast Starlight”.

Week 2 – All about the train “The Empire Builder” which runs between Chicago and Seattle/Portland. Looking at the famous “Izaak Walton Inn”. The DVD to be shown is “Donner Pass” – on the Sierra Nevada’s climb from 200 ft to 6000 ft – remarkable photography!

Week 3 – Kettle Valley Railroad in South West Canada and also The Union Pacific Railroad through the Blue Mountains of Oregon. DVD is a very good “Winter in the Blues”!

Week 4 – South West Canada – “Calgary to Field”. Canadian Rockies. DVD not yet selected.

Week 5 – South West Canada – “Field to Revelstoke”. Canadian Rockies. DVD not yet selected.

Week 6 – South West Canada – “Revelstoke to Kamloops”. Canadian Rockies. DVD not yet selected.

Week 7—South West Canada – “Kamloops to Vancouver”. Canadian Rockies. DVD to be shown this final day is “British Columbia Steam” – between Vancouver and Squamish.

Singing for Fun

Thirty five members including three newcomers began our first singing session for 2016 and we still have seven yet to start. It was good to see Elspeth Shaw back after a few years spell.

Leaders Faith, Brian and Margaret were in fine form as was our wonderful pianist Gwen. Each leader has a distinctive style and the choice of songs varies greatly. Leaders all have new songs in the pipeline and we look forward to adding those to our already large repertoire.

Tech Savvy

27 ‘Tech Savvy’ members met on Wednesday 10th February in W4. Guest speaker David Gipp from the Telstra Shop at Stolz spoke of the services they provide and responded to a wide range of questions from class members. Of particular interest - the 2G and 3G networks will be phased out and replaced with a new 4G network by the 1st December this year and the NBN should be through Benalla in 2017. The problem of blackspots around and out of town was raised with David by a number of class members. Ringing Cathy McGowan’s office to complain was discussed as a strategy which could assist evidence gathering which may lead to change. Before the coffee break members introduced themselves and spoke of their interest in coming to Tech Savvy, providing a fertile base for connecting up with others during the break. After the break

the group was briefed about planning for the new Tech Savvy Drop In. Dilemmas facing the planning group in managing the disparate learning needs of over 50 enrollees were discussed. A second time slot was considered and recommended as was dividing the Drop In group timeslots between Apple and Microsoft/Android users. Input was also sought on the idea of using targeted 'packages' to provide a theme for part of each Drop In session and for individual/small group mentoring. It was noted that with the high demand for the Tech Savvy Drop In sessions there will be a greater than expected demand for mentors - and that the mentors are likely to need mentoring too!

Next Tech Savvy session Ian McLeod will present 'Entertainment II' (an entertainment related 'package' for the reasonably confident internet user) followed up by 'bloggers', 'mentors' and 'tech heads' working group meetings.

Tech Savvy Drop In

With over 50 enrollees, the welcome/orientation session of Tech Savvy Drop In was presented twice and an additional Drop In session has been timetabled. The original 'third Wednesday' from 1.30 to 3.30 pm Drop in will focus on Apple/iPad/iPhone users, while the added fourth (and fifth) Monday session from 1.30 to 3.30 pm will focus on Microsoft/Android users.

The first session began with an introductory questionnaire and sharing activity. There were sounds of identification as a number of members shared stories of tablets or smart phones being given to them by their children –in one instance with a scrappy page of notes and the instruction to 'Go for it, Mum!' The mentors planning group from Tech Savvy and other Tech Savvy members who had come along to provide added support and mentoring were introduced to Drop In participants. Mentors will be a key resource for the Drop In, along with a wide range of free learning materials available through the 'Tech Savvy Drop In' website at <http://u3abenallatsdropin.weebly.com>.

An extended coffee break and website Treasure Hunt activity provided the opportunity for lots of sharing and problem solving, with a number of participants learning how to connect up to WiFi. The idea of using 'packages' in planning the group – such as 'Grandparents', 'Memory' and 'Entertainment' packages, was taken up positively.

Towards the end of the session participants were asked to fill in a form relating to their individual learning goals, the last question on which was 'How will you know when you're there?' Answers included 'When I can take photos and send emails'; and 'When I have skills in Banking online; Facebook, Skype/Facetime; Maps and Directions'.

We hope the Tech Savvy Drop In will prove effective in helping participants to achieve their learning goals & more.

Towards a Sustainable Future

Our convenor John Lloyd began the year reading part of a thought provoking poem by Drew Dellinger found in Bob Brown's book, "Optimism - Reflections on a life of action"

*It's 3:23 in the morning and I'm awake
because my great, great, grandchildren won't let me sleep.*

*My great, great, grandchildren ask me in dreams
what did you do while the planet was plundered?
what did you do when the earth was unravelling?
surely you did something when the seasons started failing
as the mammals, reptiles and birds were all dying?
did you fill the streets with protest when democracy was stolen?
what did you do
once
you
knew?*

Food for thought at a time of apparent environmental unravelling as fires continue to ravage Tasmanian wilderness forests. John then reviewed 'The Invention of Nature', a book about Alexander von Humboldt who is considered responsible for our understanding of nature as an 'organic whole' and for introducing the concept of ecosystems.

We then watched the excellent Catalyst program on battery technology; discussed the Ockham's Razor program 'The Zillion Year Home' and read articles relating to environmental flows in the Broken River Catchment; wetland habitat restoration across the mid-Murray; the ongoing health of the Murray Goulburn Basin; and the increasing devastation of Australia's coastal seagrasses which absorb carbon dioxide 40 times faster than seagrasses, offsetting carbon emissions by acting as a carbon sink over the long term.

Time was spent in our second session getting to know our two new members, Charlie and Bill. Both have a long term interest in environmental matters, Charlie through Landcare and Land for Wildlife; Bill through working in accounting/management roles in the agricultural sector in Northern Queensland. We discussed the role of our group and other local environmental groups such as BSFG, the Benalla Food Cooperative and Winton Wetlands before moving on to our read articles relating to some positive moves and continuing dilemmas in our transition from a dirty coal based economy to a cleaner solar and other renewables based economy.

Wine Appreciation

Welcome to the nineteenth year for this popular activity. We will visit a variety of wineries, some small and less well known.

Wednesday 26 February 2016 – Meet at the car park at 10.30 am (later than usual because local) for visit to Morrison's Winery at Glenrowan and to hear from Bob and Dianne. Lunch is at the Winton Wetlands café.

Wednesday 23 March 2016 – Meet at the car park at 10.00 am to travel to Cobram to visit Kensal Estate Winery and meet winemaker, Tom and Wendy. Lunch is across the river from Cobram at Barooga Golf Club. *Noel Meagher 5762 3149 Keith & Heather Rogers 5762 4086*

Writing Workshop

It was wonderful to have seven new members with a range of writing interests at our first session for 2016. This session focused upon the way in which our writing projects largely draw upon the topics suggested in ABC Open's '500 Words' project.

By way of example, Carole and Bev presented holiday project writing on the topic 'How I came here', while for the topic 'What I was wearing' Godfrey shared the story behind his 30 year old Italian fine woollen suit. As always happens, the stories stimulated sharing of memories of similar times, places and experiences.

The topic for our next session on March 21st is 'Heartbreak' 'Tell us about your experience of a broken heart'. It could be a light hearted story of a fling or online date gone wrong, or a deeper story of love. What were you hoping for, and what went wrong? Was there a positive side to the experience? What did you learn about yourself? The alternative topic is 'Easter', or a topic from the

alternative topics list which includes the holiday topics of 'How I came Here' and 'What I was wearing'. The 'first Monday' catch up will be at the Gallery Café on Monday April 4th, 2.30 to 3.30 pm.

Website news

Our website is now being visited by 300 'unique individuals' a week, with 2002 Individual pages visited in the week ending 23 February. The posting of group notes from the newsletter to individual group web pages every month leads to a wonderful resource for visitors finding out more about our programs as well as providing an historical record and a ready reference for members.

Having a scrolling 'calendar' on the front page is proving very useful. This month, however, we realised that any information on the calendar's location line links automatically to a 'map'. Clicking on to the map link next to the Garden Team location entry "meeting at Kathy's" directed one member to Kathy's Garden Supplies in Canada; clicking on the map next to 'W4' directed another member to an address in London! Full venue address details are now added to the location line when this doesn't affect member privacy.

A reminder that the old website address has now been phased out. Please change your bookmark/favourite/shortcut to <http://u3abenalla.weebly.com>

Position Vacant: Convenor – 'Games'

A volunteer convenor is sought for the Games group which meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday from 1.30 to 3.30 in W4. Duties involve setting up the room with card table/s; distributing games; arranging for milk for coffee break; setting up urn and of course welcoming and supporting members. There is a perk to the position –the work also involves playing games such as cards; scrabble and mahjong with other members for two hours! Some light lifting required. If you are interested or would like further information, please call Terry Case on 5762 1700.

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