

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP NEWS March 2009 U3A Browns Bay

Ancient Civilisations: Fact or Myth? The Israelites in Egypt present an intriguing mystery. They came about 1700 BC, settled, increased, were resented then expelled to the Levant. The Phoenicians of the 5th c. BC and the Greek Strabo, held differing versions of this event. But - there is no Egyptian record of enslaving an entire tribe nor of the calamities that befell that land. The "Israel Stela", depicting the victory hymn of king Merneptah's defeat of the Israelites (c.1200 BC) is the earliest known Egyptian history reference. The papyrus plant, regarded as the heraldic emblem of Lower Egypt, was carved in limestone and sandstone columns, in the belief that papyrus "pillars" held up the sky. The lotus or lily was the symbol of Upper Egypt, the blue species being the commonly depicted and described as the sacred lotus.

Anthropology: George took us through some of the history of the Congo up to 1960. This is a huge area of Central Africa, holding about 250 different tribes and groups. It is now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. This area, rich in rubber, forests, minerals and diamonds, was taken over by Belgium in 1908, to their great advantage and the peoples disadvantage. Then John, using an old family book, "Kohi Kohanga", told about Vernon Roberts, who ran two shops in New Zealand in the 1880's. Interesting opinion on Maori / Pakeha relations and life at that time.

Archaeology : At our first meeting, we discussed our future and heard about the Fishbourne Roman Palace. Located near Chichester, in Sussex UK, Fishbourne Palace is the largest domestic Roman building yet discovered north west of the Alps. It is about the same size as Buckingham palace, comprising four wings set out in the form of a hollow square with formal gardens in the centre of the square. It was constructed in the last quarter of the 1st century AD. At the height of its glory it must have been very impressive both in size and in its luxurious appointments such as its under-floor heating [hypocaust]. In 1960, a digger was excavating a drain when the driver noticed something hard in the ground. The archaeologists who were summoned, located part of a mosaic floor which was one of many to be excavated. We saw colour photos of four of the mosaic floors which were in remarkably good condition. Read more about this site on www.sussexpast.co.uk

Art History & appreciation: Many years ago in Stuttgart, Jennifer saw the painting "The Little Yellow Horses - 1912" by Franz Marc. She was fascinated by his work, followed up this interest with research and a determination to visit the area where he lived and was part of his inspiration. Last year in 2008 she visited the town of Kochel (south of Munich) and explored the area as well as visiting the newly rehoused and reopened Museum of Franz Marc's work. Thank you Jennifer for bringing the source of Marc's landscapes alive and in such vivid detail.

Asian studies: On his return from IRAN, David Johnstone shared with our group his many and varied experiences. Iran has been invaded countless times over the past 2,500 years yet has never succumbed completely to its conquerors. Instead it has assimilated and adapted those aspects that it admired. Many make a similar distinction regarding their government. The present Islamic Republic has imposed restrictions on public behaviour: gambling, alcohol and drugs are forbidden: women must be covered from head to toe etc. However, when not subject to these restrictions eg. travelling in other countries, many quickly assume the identity of their host country.

Computers: Janet brought up a discussion about those kind of emails that we all get asking us to "forward this email to 10 friends and you will be amazed at what shows up after they are sent" or "send this off to 5 of your closest friends and something good will happen to you within the next 5 minutes," or even those asking you to sign your name to an email petition. These are simply bogus methods by some spammers to get your, and all your friends, email addresses. Resist the temptation. The best way to handle these emails is to delete them. We also discussed ideas on different speakers for the upcoming year; a person knowledgeable on family genealogy using the computer was suggested as well as Janet's computer technician that she has recently used to get rid of a virus in her computer. Janet also has ink cartridges available for an Epson R-210 printer. Does anyone want them? Helen has recently had a Word Pad document sent to her and she was inquiring how to open it. Neil thought it best to first see what the file extension was before suggesting a program to open it. Bev brought up the question of buying new ink cartridges vs. having them refilled. Computer Food on Tawa Drive was the popular choice for purchasing new ones at a reasonable cost. Edna wanted to know how to set up her Skype account and asked if anyone had done this before. Bev and Pam were very helpful as they both use it to stay in touch with their children and grandchildren.

Creative writing: Our January meeting produced amazing stories. Feb meeting the title for stories is "High Flyer".

Exploring art for fun: On Thursday February 19th, our merry band of artistic funsters gathered at the French Bay home of eminent artist, Colin McCahon. The home - a typical 1950s batch, has been beautifully preserved and our guide and mentor, Cynthia Smith was immensely knowledgeable about not only Colin McCahon but also the social history of the time and the biology and botany of the bush surrounding the home. A very satisfying visit that can be recommended to the remainder of our U3A members, nor members of our group.

Family memoirs – Writing group: Our first meeting was down in numbers. Some members are writing ongoing chapters of their stories. "The Gables" in Russell had an owner who waged a battle to try to get the staff to speak correctly, such as saucepans instead of pots and potatoes instead of spuds; wartime England has many aspects to write about and this month centred on Plymouth Hoe and the bombing; a description of a sleek river vessel that plies the River

Rhine between Basel in Switzerland and Amsterdam in Holland; and the uses and misuses of telephones and party lines in the country.

Français pour rire: In January, an introduction to future planning by our group by the convenor, Barbara. Bill showed us a collection of popular French items for the month. We discussed items of organization and general. We had a question of French interest. Quelle ville se trouve au confluent du Rhône et de la Saône? Lyon. Answer some proverbs which were for homework. We were given a passage of French from which we had to answer the questions for homework. Margaret gave a talk on the painter, Claude Monet.

Geology: This year we will be looking at different aspects in the book "Ghosts of Godwana" and are planning a trip to the top end of the Coromandel Peninsula. Tutor: Tom

Literature group: Some members saw *Slumdog Millionaire* which received mixed reviews due to violence and cruelty in the film - well acted. *Australia* enjoyed - scenery beautiful but over-long. *Female Agent* -gruesome but a superb film. *Revolutionary Road* -not recommended. *Marley and Me* - light but sad, enjoyable. Rona gave a talk on the book Slumdog Millionaire was adapted from called Q and A, by Swarup. Ruth P also gave a talk on Jack Foley and "The Art of Foley" which was about the development of making sounds for the early films. Group hope to see *Barcelona* (for Spanish fans) and *The Sticks*. Report from Joy.

Local History: 17 members attended along with new member Ann Outwin. Joy gave a very interesting talk on the history of The Bridgeway Theatre which was followed by a book report by Des on Between the Kitchen and the Creek- Judith Campbell- an autobiography of her life as a child on a farm in Matakana in the 40's-50's. Russ gave us an interesting talk on the sea defences of N.Z. and Auckland in particular from 1855 when it was the Russian threat through to 1940's and the Japanese and German threat. the subject was of great interest to him, he has a book on this coming out in June. The meeting was very ably led by Des. Next meeting he will give a talk on the Riverhead Area, with mention of Hobsonville, Herald Island etc.

Modern History: At our February Meeting June gave us a very interesting presentation on the History of Sri Lanka. She enhanced this by describing the two years she had spent living and schooling there as a teenager. David then gave a full report on the continuing war with the "Tamil Tigers" and the corresponding huge loss of life and terrible property destruction.

Music Appreciation and History: In February, we met at Jennifer home. All members brought a piece of their favourite music to share with the group. Also at this meeting we planned the programme for 2009. Tina will be making the presentation for the March meeting which will be held at Jenny's home.

Play reading: At our Tuesday meeting we read excerpts from Versailles by Catherine Davis and other one act plays.

The Story of Art: Shirley had a line drawing of Picasso. Janet visited Terry Stringers bronze sculptures Park on Maharangi beach Rd, Kauri glade. Lillypond way out house \$10 entry Nikau Gallery same Rd Brick bay sculpture Garden with 2 km walk restaurant at Matakana Thurs to sat \$10. Short Toledo in Spain. Susan's House and Garden article on Helen Perrett Whose sculpture Heads with bodies group had seen on their Devonport trip. Pictures by Jean August Ingress. Patricia's interesting trip to San Francisco meeting Homosexual artists, one being Gary Bukobniki with his 23 yr contract to produce a new poster each for San Francisco Symphony. Now has several posters, one she has had framed, lovely frilled yellow and red tulips. Joyce's insight into Shona MacFarlane's early W.C. Paintings, Norfolk Is, Tinakori Rd, cabbages, husband Alan Highet on beach. Georgia's video of Metropolitan museum of Art informed us of Degas 'Little Girl' wax, 41 in 14yrs Degas never married or painted male ballet dancers, he found his inspiration in Monte Martre with working classes Marie In 4th ballet position was his first in wax. Show opened 1881 to an empty show case. Video to be continued.

Travel: At our January meeting we welcomed five new members to hear a talk about India. Joan recently spent four weeks both in the North and the South of the country seeing the vast contrasts in wealth, living conditions, agriculture, climate, religions, and food. India is friendly towards tourists and is becoming a popular destination. The poverty of many was a shock as there is no welfare for those who cannot earn. The ancient Forts were magnificent particularly in Rajisthan. The backwaters of Kerala showed life as it is lived by the farmers of the region.

Walking group: Friday 13th proved to be good weather and pleasant walk between Browns Bay and over Waiake Reserve where we viewed local children kayaking and sailing, coffee in Browns Bay. Tina Rose will lead next walk. Meet Freyberg Park at 9.30 on Friday. We are always interested in advice where local North Shore walks and walkways are hiding.

World Religions: At the first meeting of the year, Lorna spoke on the Emperor Constantine who reigned between 312AD-337AD. In his rule Christianity rose to become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. Historians have debated at what period of his life, did he himself become Christian. Constantine was equivocal and for a period he practiced religious syncretism. That is seen in an old painting where Christ is represented with features of a pagan God. Between 324 and 330AD, Constantine built a new imperial capital at Byzantium on the Bosphorus, known as Constantinople (now Istanbul). He built only Christian churches. Less ambivalent with the Eastern people he taught them to despise their temples and images. Today he is a revered saint of the Eastern Orthodoxy.