

## U3A Browns Bay SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP NEWS March 2010 Newsletter

### Ancient Civilisations:

(2nd & 4th Tuesdays 10 am)

The first meeting in February commenced with a preview of the PowerPoint presentation which had been prepared for the full U3A meeting in March. Comments and suggestions were asked for. Discussion then centred on the role of Julius Caesar in ancient Egypt. This covered the Roman Civil War period, the death of Pompey at the hands of the Egyptians and Caesar's relationship with Cleopatra.

What did his assassination mean to Egypt?

### Anthropology:

(1<sup>st</sup> Friday 10am)

Musicophilia an interesting subject about the effect of music on the brain, and how music and singing can be beneficial when language has been affected by a stroke for instance. Some people can smell, taste and see different colours when they hear music. It developed into a wide ranging discussion. We went to Saudi Arabia, a country of twenty seven million people, no rivers, no lakes and a very different life style from the land in which we live. This gave us more food for thought.

### Archaeology:

(3<sup>rd</sup> Monday 1.00pm)

The white horse of Uffington, in Oxfordshire, was the first topic in our talk given by Stella. This very ancient and very large hill figure is outlined by trenches cut into the top of a hill and filled with white chalk. We can only guess at its purpose and origin. The second topic was Roman building in Britain and how these people had to adapt their building methods to the materials available at the time in that country. They used more wood and less stone than in other countries. Thank you, Stella for a stimulating afternoon.

### Art History & Appreciation:

(3<sup>rd</sup> Monday 11am)

Our members discussed the exhibitions we visited over the summer, including those at the Christchurch and Dunedin galleries, the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, the Sculpture Exhibition at the Auckland Botanic Gardens and many other small dealers' galleries and craft shops including The Flame Tree Gallery. We also planned an interesting programme for the rest of 2010.

### Computers:

(2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 9.45am)

We started our meeting by dividing up into 4 small groups that will have an extra meeting each month round a computer. Then, in turn, we talked of the main ways in which we use our computers now, and what we would like to learn to do this year. This gave us several suggestions for both our main and small group meetings. Discussion and problem sharing followed. A busy meeting ended with Lew, Pam and Helen exploring some aspects of computer history, and Neil telling us about Word Art which he used to decorate his Christmas message to the group.

### Creative writing:

(4<sup>th</sup> Thursday 1.30 pm)

Our January meeting produced stories of Summer Madness. They included tales of tattoos, sharks, Paradise Bay, the wonders of a garden, a holiday liaison and the job overseas that included walking a huge dog. **Our congratulations to Elaine who has had one of her stories accepted into a book in Australia.** The book will have 74 stories chosen from over 600 entered in the competition. Well done Elaine.

Creative Audio-Visual No report this month.

### **Exploring Art for Fun:**

**(3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday 10am)**

The first meeting of the new decade was held at the Boston's and started with the planning of our year's activities. That successfully completed, we had a presentation by Roy Boston on British Watercolour painters from Simon Benning to John Yardley. Simon Benning was a sixteenth century British watercolour painter who painted in the style of the previous century's oil painters. Roy showed how Turner, probably the greatest watercolour painter, was influenced by earlier styles and went on to have a lasting influence on future watercolour artists through to today's great artist, John Yardley.

### **Film appreciation:**

**(3<sup>rd</sup> Friday 10am)** No report this month.

### **Français pour rire:**

**(4<sup>th</sup> Monday 10am)**

In February we started off with some French expressions about worry. We each repeated the 3 expressions which Bill put on the board. Bill showed us a folder of jokes and handed around a list of speakers for monthly talks. Also were handed out a passage about Noël to read for homework. Last month's question was: 'Qui est l'auteur de "l'Avare"?. Answer: Molière. Next month's question is: 'Quel Français devint généralissime des armées alliées en 1918?' After the break we turned to Leçon 7, and in groups of three, read the dialogue at the start of the lesson. We played "I Spy" in French, organised by Cecily. Moira speaks next month.

### **Geology:**

**(1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays 1.30 pm)**

The meeting on 3rd March is at Ruth Court's, 80/21 Fairview Ave., Albany Ph: 478 8549 and on 17th March at Peter Stewart's, 16 Spencer Rd., Browns Bay Ph: 478 8769. As there are three Wednesdays in the month we may have the postponed field trip to Rangitoto Island on 31st March. Tutor: Tom Turnwald.

### **Literature group:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Friday 10am)**

We had a lively meeting and discussed:

We would like to encourage some new members, possibly an all male group or film/literature group for men.

We decided to select a theme – 'Australian Writers' - for the next two months. This would provide a focus for the first half of the meeting. We will spend the second half of each meeting sharing our reading experiences. This is enjoyable, thought provoking, certainly promotes discussion and encourages participation of all members.

We had contributions from:

Ruth: P.D James -Talking about Detective Fiction - conventions of detective writing.

Shona: Diane Ackerman – 'The Zookeepers Wife' - WW11 story, Polish couple hiding and supporting Jewish people.

Shona: Dorothy Fowler – 'What Remains Behind' - Archeological work in Kaipara Harbour.

Margaret: Jared Diamond – 'Collapse' - a journey around the globe, history of people and why civilisations have collapsed.

### **Local History:**

#### **(2<sup>nd</sup> Monday 10am)**

In February Malcolm Ross spoke to us about the engineering marvel, the Denniston Incline on the West Coast, described by the locals as the eighth wonder of the world. Because of the steepness of the incline a reliable braking system was essential. Water was used to check the action of the pistons and this had to be constantly replaced otherwise it would boil. The wagons weighed 12 tons when fully laden and the weight of this would pull up the empty wagon. Opened in 1879, it subsequently brought down thousands of tons of coal from the Mount Rochfort Plateau, 1700 feet to the rail head, until it was closed in 1967. Our next meeting will be at the home of Joy Atkinson, 12a Montgomery Ave. Rothesay Bay. Ph: 478 9550. Patricia Langford will speak about Colonial Farming in NZ.

### **Making History:**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays 10am) [replacing Asian Studies]**

We are pleased to welcome six new members to our reinvented group. Our studies began with the Gurkhas, a race of Aryan-Mongol blood, who settled in the province of Gurkha, Nepal in the 18th century. A military people; they enlisted in specific Gurkha regiments of the British India army where they became indispensable. Recent history has seen actress Joanna Lumley, daughter of a British officer in a Gurkha regiment in WWII, leading a drive to win UK residential rights for those people.

### **Modern History:**

#### **(3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday 10am)**

At our Feb. meeting June and David Thorpe gave us an interesting and well researched talk on Margaret Thatcher. Margaret was inspiring in moving from being a daughter of a small Grocer, study at Oxford University (read Chemistry) and later trained as a Barrister to becoming Britain's first female Prime Minister in 1979. Slow economic recovery but then in 1982 the Falklands War brought a large resurgence of popularity to her and in the next Election she was returned to Parliament with a massive Majority. Her hard line against Trade Unions (Coal Miners in particular), her survival of the I.R.A. bomb attack on Brighton Hotel, her tough talking opposition to the Soviet Union, started the nicknames e.g. "The Iron Lady", "Attila the Hen" etc. After 1987 her Poll Tax plan was very unpopular and her view against the European Community did not help. She finally resigned as Prime Minister in 1990. Like her or not Margaret was a lady not to be trifled with.

Our next Meeting is on 17th March and details of the venue will be advised later.

### **Music Appreciation and History:**

**(3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday 10.00am)** No report this month

### **Music – Mainly Classical:**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Monday 2- 4 pm)**

The group's year began with a comprehensive outline by Jill Carter of the Suzuki method of music education. Dr Shinichi Suzuki [1898-1998] believed that as children mastered the complexity of their mother tongue, these natural steps could be equally adapted to learning a musical instrument. The teaching process should include such basics as, a warm positive environment, high parental involvement, careful repeated listening, small steps, motivation, and importantly love and respect by all. Jill's daughter and her 4 year old granddaughter demonstrated the early steps in violin teaching. Every step is carefully defined and meticulously practised within an encouraging atmosphere. We saw a comprehensive DVD on the philosophy and results of the method and Jill, who currently teaches Suzuki piano, demonstrated the techniques used on the keyboard.

### **Play reading:**

**(4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday 2.00pm)** No report this month.

### **The Story of Art:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday 2.00- 4.00 pm) Community centre.**

#### **New members are very welcome**

Our Talk was about van Gogh (1853-1890). Periods in his art were Nuenen, Paris, Arles (most productive period of career) Saint Remy, Auvers. He was supported, financially and emotionally by his brother Theo and befriended by Paul Gauguin. We saw lovely paintings, illustrating the different periods in van Gogh's life in a book by Gerhard Gruitrooy.

Georgie revealed to us the works of Nek Chand an uneducated Indian roads inspector who has become a world celebrated artist. The architecture of Chandigarh, India, was redesigned by Le Corbusier in the 1950s. It also contains the 40 acre sculptural garden Chand built, secretly, from garbage, now acknowledged as the greatest artistic achievement since the Taj Mahal.

### **Travel:**

**(4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday 10 am)**

Helen and Lew gave a comprehensive talk on their recent trip from Istanbul to Prague, at our January meeting. They covered the history and the politics of each country as well as the main tourist sites. They moved West by road along the Black Sea to join their river boat and proceeding through Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia, finishing in Vienna. They travelled by road to Prague. Lew gave a detailed overview of the construction of the Main-Danube canal which completed the link up of the Atlantic to the Black Sea.

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### **Walking:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays 9.30am)**

#### **12 February:**

We had a grand beginning to our year with a trip to Tiritiri Matangi. For some of us this was our first visit, and surpassed any expectations. We all agreed to make it an annual event.

### **World Religions:**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 1.30pm)**

Our February meeting was postponed until March as several folk were unable to attend. The March meeting will be at Lorna's home. We have some vacancies.