

## From the President, Lesley McNaughton ...

What a fine start we've had to this year. In February our groups were buzzing as we caught up with friends and settled down to enjoy some aesthetic or mental stimulation. In March we started five new groups and another group will start in the first week in April. I hope all those who attend these new groups enjoy them. I certainly enjoyed the two I've attended so far and the feedback from other groups indicates that they have also been really interesting.

This is a good time of the year to start new activities and meet new people. There is space for extra people in most of the new groups, and also in our 'old' groups, so why not look for an extra group to join. It only takes a quick email or phone call to ask the facilitator if there's space in a group.

We have a very interesting speaker for our general meeting this month. Blinded at the age of 12, Ivan Pivac's life has been one of involvement in many areas - sport, music, travel, education and work. He is an accomplished speaker and has entertained many audiences speaking on various topics. His Dalmatian ancestry gives him a special interest and insight into the lives of the gum diggers of Northland.

I hope to see you at this meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

*Lesley*

## Kauri gum, gold of the north

### Ivan Pivac

will speak about the history of the Northland gumfields and the experiences of the gum diggers.

### U3A April General Meeting

10:30 am Monday 15 April

St John Ambulance Hall,  
Kerikeri Road

Please bring a plate of finger food  
for our shared lunch.

Kitchen Duty:  
Current Affairs 1, the Friday group



# From your committee

## New members

Welcome to Carol and Mike Dee and Christine and Eric Cronshaw, who have joined U3A since our last newsletter. We hope you'll enjoy U3A. Please feel free to try out a variety of groups.

## U3A Display in the Proctor Library

Many thanks to Pam Jenkins, Veronique Lautenslager, Ngaire Bates, Marilyn Lescher and all the others who helped with this display. We've had enthusiastic feedback with members saying that the variety and colour made the display particularly attractive and interesting this year. It was an excellent advertisement for U3A.

Pam will remove the display on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March. If you lent things, you can pick them up at the library between 10.30 and 11.30 on the 30<sup>th</sup> or contact Pam by email to arrange a suitable pick-up time. Her email address is pmjenkins@xtra.co.nz



**Group news** - see the Course Schedule for more information and facilitators' contact details

**Antarctica group:** This group has now finished. Many thanks to Dave Lawton for running it. The members especially enjoyed the meetings with Graham French and Garth Matterson talking about their experiences in Antarctica.

**New groups in March:** In this newsletter you will see reports from the new C19<sup>th</sup> NZ History, Western Civilization and Philosophy groups. The new Current Affairs group will start after the deadline for this newsletter so it's first report will appear next month. The Western Civilisation group is now full but the other groups could fit one or two more members.

**New Opera Group:** Elva Clark, a long-term aficionado of opera, will share her enthusiasm and knowledge of this art form with this new group as well as the first Opera group. At the first meeting of the Wednesday group, members will watch the 1994 Convent Garden version of Verdi's *La Traviata*, conducted by Sir Georg Solti and starring the marvellous Angela Gheorghiu.

Since all the above groups are established now, contact the facilitator if you would like to join a group.

## Facilitators' Meeting

The annual Facilitators' Meeting will start at 2 pm on 21<sup>st</sup> April, at the McNaughton home, 31 Paretu Drive, Kerikeri. We would like all current facilitators and facilitators of groups that ended after last April to come and share your experiences. If necessary, a group can send a different delegate.

2012 - 2013 Committee			
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## From the groups ...

### Music Appreciation: Stephanie Beggs reporting

This month we marched into March with a selection of marches, both choral and instrumental from around the world. The session got off to a rousing start with the *Stars & Stripes Forever* by JP Sousa. *The March of the Kitchen Utensils* by Vaughan Williams came next - a really fun piece that had us all conjuring up visions of cutlery and saucepans marching around the room. *76 Trombones* and *Bagpipes* were also on the menu.

Marches by Oscar Strauss (a new name to many of us), the *Funeral March* by Chopin, *March to the Scaffold* by Berlioz, and *Marche Joyeuse* by Chabrier were also on the list. My own personal favourite was an arrangement of *Lift Up Your Heads* by Handel, played on the organ of Westminster Abbey, which made the floorboards in our house vibrate.

We finished the session in grand style with the *Grand March* from *Aida* by Verdi and the *Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves* from *Nabucco* also by Verdi. It was good selection of music with something to suit all tastes.

Our next meeting comes in the week after Easter, so we have chosen 'Spiritual Music' as our theme.

### History of Aviation: Kay Boese reporting

Our subject was seaplanes, which have played a vital role in aviation history both in war and peacetime. They were commonly used for delivering airmail, island hopping - especially in the Pacific - and for training pilots at the Walsh Bros. Flying School at Mission Bay using Boeing seaplanes.

The RNZAF used Catalinas in the Pacific to patrol and rescue. Doug talked about his father's war, based in the Solomon Islands, and the use of Catalinas. He showed us a two-sided silk map his father used. These were used as they could get wet without damage, could be folded up very small and concealed in their uniform.

In 1959 a Sunderland flying boat made a low pass over the newly opened Wellington airport and was hit by a down draft. It scraped its hull on the concrete runway ripping it open.

We saw many interesting photos on the iPad and, once again, examined a scale model of a Spitfire on floats that Maurice had made.



Spitfire on floats

Next month's topic is 'Fighter Aircraft' starting with the very early ones.

### French Conversation: Hazel Brown reporting

After a large group last month, just three of us met in March, but we enjoyed an interesting and fluent conversation covering a wide range of subjects, and learning quite a bit about our various experiences. We welcome new members, both the fluent and those who are feeling their way - we are all learning a lot. We also have access to quite a number of French books of various levels.

### Iberian Studies: David Fisher reporting

In March a subset of the Iberian Studies Group met and finished the historical section of our book, and noted the book's enthusiasm for the resurgence of Iberian arts and culture on the Peninsula post Franco and Salazar, though it came as no great surprise to discover much was rather artificial, being driven by the tourist trade. Mind you it was nice to discover that soccer had displaced bull-fighting as the Peninsula's favourite spectator sport.

Our plans to meet up with a young Spanish miss have come to nought, so next time on Friday 12 April we will start a review of the regions as history has left them.

## Philosophy: Ngaire Bates reporting

The new philosophy group got underway this month with our first meeting at Jennie Abbott Barnaby's place at Dove's Bay. Jennie will be hosting our meetings. We have been lucky to gain the expertise of Robert Wright to guide us in our topic.

He started the session with an outline of what he would like us to do. The aim of our discussions is to be 'How can we know things'.

Our next meeting in April will see us starting our epistemological journey. Epistemology defined narrowly in Stanford's dictionary of philosophy is the study of knowledge and justified beliefs. So we will begin with looking at Plato's 'Theory of Forms', which are considered by some philosophers to form one of the two main issues of modern philosophical thinking. Great!

## Art History One: Veronique Lautenslager reporting

Easter was the theme of our meeting. The subject of our discussion, a painting by Salvador Dali: *Vision of St John of the Cross*, probably the most enduring vision of the crucifixion painted in the 20th century.

The painting is based on a drawing by a 16<sup>th</sup> century monk and Dali got an American actor to pose for it. It was painted from photographs. We admired the composition and the perspective. There seems to be two different planes, the sky above and the Earth below. Light seems to come from several directions. The crucifixion, pictured without blood, thorns or nails, becomes a vision of hope. Christ is 'floating', moving without touching physically. We remembered the influence of the atomic age on Dali's work - how things can be affected without touch.

It was interesting to hear that the painting, including its copyrights, was bought by the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow. Its purchase in the early 1950's caused riots, people considering the money could be better spent at a time of hardship. This was a time of conflict between Catholics and Presbyterians. The painting was always seen as controversial. Dali's sincerity was questioned. It has been a financial success, earning the museum back the original cost many times over. But is this just a well-promoted product or a sincere religious painting?

## Art History Two: Ngaire Bates reporting

This month we had a look at *Christ of St. John of the Cross* which may be the most beautiful, the most breath-taking painting not only from the studio of Salvador Dali, but in all of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. It's that stunning, that iconic, and that heart-stopping!

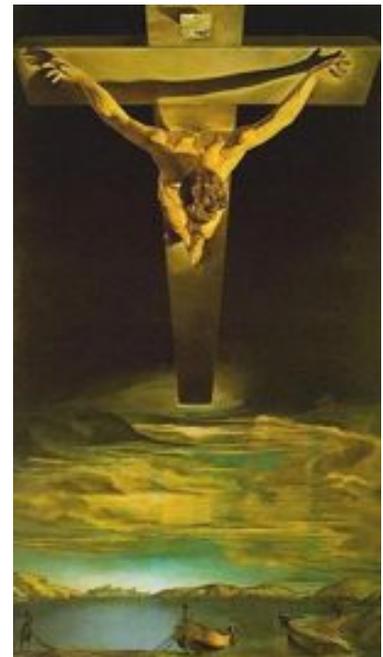
*Christ of Saint John of the Cross* is a painting by Salvador Dalí made in 1951. It depicts Jesus Christ on the cross in a darkened sky floating over a body of water complete with a boat and fishermen. Although it is a depiction of the crucifixion, it is devoid of nails, blood, and a crown of thorns.

The painting is known as the '*Christ of Saint John of the Cross*', because its design is based on a drawing by the 16th century Spanish friar Saint John of the Cross. The composition of Christ is also based on a triangle and circle (the triangle is formed by Christ's arms; the circle is formed by Christ's head).

It was a fantastic painting to see in the run up to Easter.

One of our group members, Tom, had seen it in the Glasgow Museum many years ago and was most impressed with it.

Next month both groups are going to be looking at the final episode of *How Art Made the World*, which is titled, *To Death and Back*.



Vision of St John of the Cross

## Current Affairs: John Gibb reporting

With the census nearly upon us at the time of our meeting, it was the first subject on the agenda. We then moved on to staffing levels in the police force, especially in Russell. Members were reminded that, if assistance is required, the 111 number should be used rather than trying to contact a policeman at the 'local' police station.

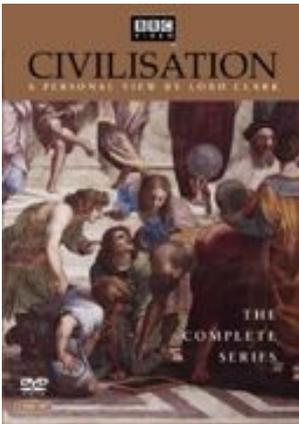
The Novopay saga looked as though it had some way to run. One member suggested that the new computer input method might have led to incorrect input from the schools, further compounding any problems with the system.

Asset sales and shark attacks and the amount of media attention on both were discussed.

The meaty subject of whether NZ should be a republic was debated at some length with arguments for and against. Also, our lack of a single Constitution document was considered to be a hindrance to understanding and progress. One of our number was able to give a concise description of what a Unitary Authority meant for the Far North whilst we all listened intently.

Our April meeting will be held at the home of Tui and Bruce Rear.

## Western Civilisation: Judy Barrett reporting



This was our first group meeting to begin viewing Kenneth Clarke's documentary *Civilisation*. We met and mingled over tea and coffee and then settled down to watch the first episode titled, *By the Skin of Our Teeth*. Clarke took us on a journey through the Dark Ages, the era after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

We started in Paris with wonderful pictures of Notre Dame Cathedral and quickly moved to Roman and Greek architecture, and on to the fall of Rome.

Then came the Vikings, with their amazing boats and voyages, followed by the Barbarians with their wonderful craftsmanship and love of gold and gems.

The episode concluded with the Moorish occupation of Spain and the early Christians on the islands off the coast of Ireland and the Hebrides.

The photography was brilliant, especially when you consider this was filmed some 40 years ago. We enjoyed his commentary - although maybe didn't agree with all he said - and the chanting and plainsong were hauntingly beautiful.

We had some discussion on the meaning and interpretation of 'Civilisation' and the present meaning of 'Barbarian'. A lively conversation ensued as various opinions were put forward about the presentation as a whole, and we are looking forward to the next session: *The Great Thaw*.

## Book Discussion One: Marilyn Lescher reporting

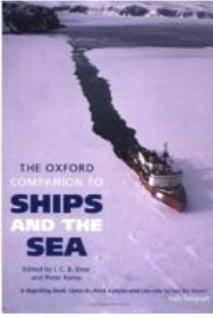
Our topic of 'Books set in Africa' yielded up some excellent titles from Wilbur Smith right through the spectrum to *The Poisonwood Bible*. Bryce Courtenay's *The Power of One* was known to most of us. *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie set against a backdrop of the Biafran War was also familiar.

There was an enormous tome of *African Folk Tales* liberally illustrated with photos of ancient artefacts, some as early as 7 BC. This was certainly not a volume to be read in bed.

Two other interesting titles were *Reunion in Barsoli* and *To The Heart of The Nile*. But my favourite contribution was *Desert Flower* by Waris Dirie, a gorgeous Somali photographic model who had been a child of the desert, escaped and made a new life in the UK. Some years ago she came to New Zealand in the throes of a campaign against FGM (female genital mutilation), or female circumcision, as an ambassador for the UN.

Following this theme, next month we are to read 'Books set in India'.

## Book Discussion Two: Margaret Lindsay reporting



Our topic was Land, Sea and Air. Books about the sea included *Phantom Fleet - The Scows and Scow men of Auckland*, by Ted Ashby. These "Workhorses of the Gulf", built in the 1870s, carried timber and material on their decks.

*The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*, by Peter Kemp, must contain every nautical fact from yachting, boat building, literature and language of the sea.

*Ships that serve New Zealand - the British and European Lines* by I.G. Stewart tells of the founding of the shipping companies, from sailing ships to engine power and refrigeration, up to the 1960s.

James Crowden's *Flowers in the minefields - El Alamein to St. Honorine* is a short appraisal of the life and poetry of John Jarman, a war poet, whose poems were written by moonlight in the trenches.

General Sir Peter de la Balleire wrote *Supreme Courage - Historic Stories from 150 Years of the Victoria Cross*, and tells of the development of the Victoria Cross, and the recipients, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*Walking the Amazon - the impossible task - the incredible journey* written by Ed Stafford told how he walked the length of the Amazon, encountering complete wilderness.

Lastly, *A Scandalous Life: The Biography of Lady Jane Digby*, a beautiful aristocrat, 1807 - 1881, who married at 17, was divorced by an act parliament 2 years later, had 4 husbands, and a series of exotic lovers, before marrying a Bedouin sheikh. She lived in the desert in a goats-hair tent, and owned a mansion in Syria.

## Opera: Mary Johnson reporting

Any opera starring Cecilia Bartoli is bound to please me and this production of *Così fan Tutte* was no exception, well sung and sensitively directed by Jurgen Flimm of the Zurich Opera Company.

Ferrando and Guglielmo, two officers boast that their fiancées will be eternally faithful. Don Alphonso lays a wager with the two men that in just 24 hours he will be able to prove that they, like all women, are fickle. This misogynist exercise is orchestrated by Don Alphonso with the help of the mercenary maid, Despina, and the two officers masquerading as lovesick Albanians.

Cecilia Bartoli and Liliana Nikiteanu, well-cast as sisters, were finally pestered into submission at the eleventh hour, then reviled by their fiancés supposedly returned early from their army posting.



The collaboration between Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte proved to be a perfect combination and it is interesting to note that Salieri, Mozart's rival, attempted to write a score for this libretto but failed. The comic nature of the work was fully exploited with surprising stage props like a magic lantern projecting pictures and, symbolically, in the mock-wedding scene, a stuffed ostrich and stuffed goat.

The moral of the story seemed to be that a happy man will be able to laugh at life. The women had to grin and bear it.

From Elva: our April opera will be Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, recorded in Vienna in 2002.

## Shakespeare One: Marilyn Lescher reporting

*Much Ado About Nothing* was the title - and a very appropriate one it was too. There was no substantial plot or story line other than the shenanigans that involved the matching up of two young couples. As always, classy young people in gorgeous attire, our guys and gals were subjected to the usual scheming and lies, and sheer skulduggery. But, in the usual Shakespearian fashion, true love won in the end and there was much dancing and celebration.

Next month we are set to enjoy *Antony and Cleopatra*.

## Shakespeare Two: Margaret Lindsay reporting

Last month we enjoyed *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was about conflict, complication, climax and suspense: Hermia loves Lysander, Lysander loves Hermia, Helena loves Demetrius and no one loves Helena. Oh, and Egeus wants his daughter killed off if she doesn't follow his plan of marrying Demetrius. In the end, the three couples are married in Athens. *Pyramus and Thisbe* is performed, and Oberon, Titania, and Puck bless the house and the couples. We thoroughly enjoyed this play, with Helen Mirren playing Titania.

At the end of March, we will be viewing *The Taming of the Shrew*. We are looking forward to watching this playful comedy, with its fast paced and witty dialogue, which is abundant in bawdy humour and clever punning. The *Taming of the Shrew* has been the subject of much analytical and critical controversy, but the play is essentially a farce. We will be interested in forming our own opinions.

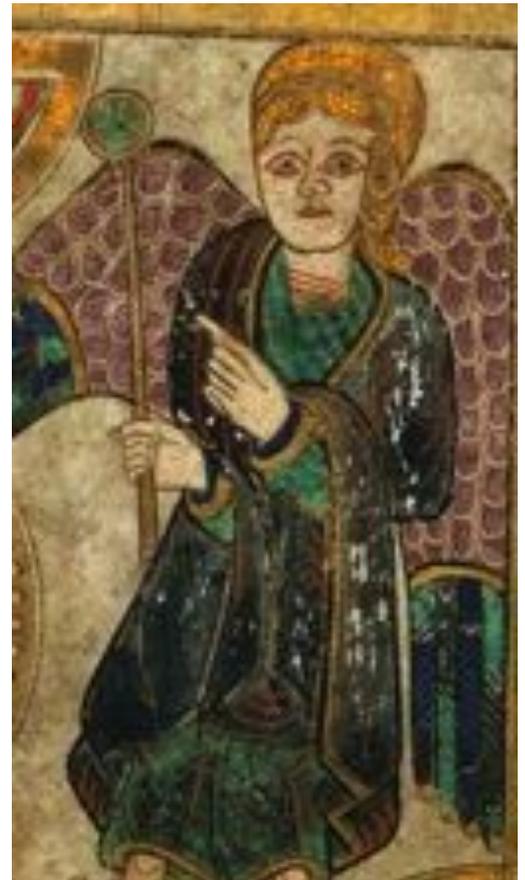
## History of Ireland - Monday & Wednesday groups: Lesley McNaughton reporting

Last month we saw the story of St Patrick, who is often credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland in the mid 5<sup>th</sup> Century. There were already Christians in Ireland then, probably as a result of contacts with Roman Britain and Gaul, and with Irish colonies in Wales, Cornwall, Devon and Scotland. In 431 AD, before Patrick returned to Ireland as a missionary, Pope Celestine sent Palladius "to the Irish believing in Christ, as their first bishop". However Patrick and his successors were far more successful at spreading Christianity than Palladius.

Most of what is reliably known about Patrick comes from his two works; his Confession, which is a spiritual autobiography, and his letter to Coroticus, objecting to the enslavement of Christian Irish. Later stories of miracles and dramatic confrontations with druids were hagiographies, written by monks to enhance his reputation and, by association, the status of their monasteries.

The Coptic traditions of hermits and monastic communities spread from Egypt along the Atlantic sea route, reaching Ireland by the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. As in Egypt, a typical Irish monastery was a simple church and a few separate cells for the monks.

Evidence of Egyptian influence around 800 AD, includes a claim that the Irish liturgy was derived from the Egyptian liturgy, mention of seven Egyptian monks buried in Antrim and illustrations in the Book of Kells of angels holding flabella, long hand-held fans used in eastern churches to keep flies off the Eucharist.



Angel with a flabellum in the Book of Kells

## Creative Writing: Lyn Corr reporting

As always the Creative Writing group continues to surprise, producing just what the name of our group envisages and identifies: creative writing! Although small in membership this group continues to write poetry, prose and reflections, comparable with many established writers and in some cases better than most. This was discussed as we evaluated our recent exercise to write about 'a machine'.

Creative inspiration is infectious, and delightful stories were read and received with enthusiasm. Lively discussion followed, prompted by sharing previous works that we had filed away after we committed our inspiration to paper.

The subject for next month's meeting is 'a clock'.

If this has whet your appetite to find out what happens at Creative Writing you are welcome to join us. E-mail [joyolds@ihug.co.nz](mailto:joyolds@ihug.co.nz).

## Antarctica: Dave Lawton reporting

The unit for last month was about co-operation between the nations on the subject of the Antarctic Treaty. The material was very thin once again and so was attendance illustrating the low level of enthusiasm for the course material. There was little to discuss so the group moved on to an article from the Listener that was much more interesting. Indeed, a course based on articles from the Listener and perhaps another journal such as Nature would prove to be a much more successful basis for a course on Antarctica.

The group voted to disband so there will be no further meetings.

## C19<sup>th</sup> New Zealand History: Pam Jenkins reporting for both groups

As this was our first session, we looked at a timeline showing events in the Bay of Islands before the 1845 war in the North and considered the pressures on Maori with increased British involvement in the Bay of Islands. This led to Hone Heke and Kawiti demonstrating their dissatisfaction by chopping down the flagpole at Kororareka and, ultimately, to armed conflict with British troops.

We then watched the first episode in *The New Zealand Wars* series in which James Belich gave a detailed analysis of the conflict. Next month we are 'Heading for Taranaki'.

## Exploring The Power of Myth: Keith McNaughton reporting for both groups

Following her excellent talk to the U3A open meeting in February, Kate Martin invited the combined Myths groups across to Russell to hear about the myths surrounding the "Hell hole of the Pacific", Kororareka. We learned that this was not a contemporary term, but applied later to what had been the principal trading port of the Western Pacific, with up to \$20 million of trade annually (in present value). No doubt the smells of abattoirs and tanneries made conditions "hellish", as Charles Darwin described them from his comfortable cabin on board the *Beagle*, but the brothels and grog shops were only a small part of the story.

Based on the evidence found in contemporary letters and ship logs, Kate debunked the myth that New Zealand almost became a French colony in 1831. The ship's log shows that Captain Laplace had anchored his naval vessel in the Bay solely to rest his crew who were suffering from scurvy, and the ship's officers had surveyed the inlet near Paihia solely to keep them occupied while they recovered their fitness. Kate also debunked the myth that it was the Maoris who burned Kororareka in 1841, and the myth - put about by Protestant missionaries - that Bishop Pompallier was there to take Maori land.

We thank Kate Martin very much for her myth-busting talk and her demonstration of the value of careful research in discovering the truth about our fascinating history.

Next month our topic is 'Love and the Goddess'.

## Computer/Camera: Helen McInnes reporting



It was a very small group this month but we still had a great variety of results with our insect pictures. We also managed to spend some time on the computer sorting out some problems people were having with Picasso. We were unable to do anything with Photoshop, as there was an error in the program but will try getting pictures into Photoshop at our next meeting when the subject will be Birds.

Judy captured this 'daddy-long-legs' against the light of a peachy sunset

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