



June 2015

www.u3abayofislands.wordpress.com

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From the President

Time really does fly, especially when you are enjoying yourself! Here we are in June and January was only yesterday!



I do hope everyone found the time to view the wonderful and colourful U3A display in the Library window. It reminded me, visually, of the wide range of U3A 'courses' there are on offer here in the Bay of Islands.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to Sue Robertson who, ably assisted by Ian, took on the lion's share of mounting and dismantling our display. Thank you, Sue.

At the AGM we have the chance to hear from Ian McGill of the Northland Conservation Board. I would like to encourage as many of you as are able to attend. The AGM is your opportunity to have your say - the committee does not have a monopoly on good ideas. I look forward to hearing from the membership about things they have enjoyed and also any suggestions for our future. Don't be shy!

This will be followed by a shared lunch and opportunity to catch up with other group members. I look forward to meeting you all there.

Stuart Leitch



U3A Annual General Meeting 2015

10 am Monday 15th June

St John Ambulance Hall, Kerikeri

The AGM will be followed by a talk by Ian McGill, Deputy Chairman of the NCB, about

The Role of the Northland Conservation Board

including current projects to save the kukupa and prevent the spread of kauri dieback.

Friends interested in U3A or Ian's topic are welcome.
Please bring finger food and stay on for our shared lunch.
Kitchen Duty: Atlantis Group.



Membership Subscriptions

Membership subscriptions for the 2015-2016 year were due in May. Thank you to all who have paid their subs already. If you haven't paid yet, we would appreciate it if you pay before 10th June so that we can give you your new nametag quickly at the AGM. However, you can also pay and collect your nametag at the AGM. The details for paying the \$20 sub are on the invoice sent with the last newsletter. If you pay online, please include the information requested on the invoice and also email the Treasurer at U3A.Bay.of.Islands@gmail.com to give her your latest contact details and confirm that you are happy for them to be included on the membership list distributed only to members.

New members

We would like to welcome Ngaire Attwood, Catherine Gossage, Rosie Hajnal, Avril Manley, Cam McNicol, Merle Rowles and Don Wise. We hope you all enjoy being part of U3A.

Group News

Carry on Sketching Group

Cherry Park House being closed for re-roofing, two members dropping out and several being away for the winter – the class has been put on hold for the next three months. We will then see what support still exists for re-engaging, either as a sketching group or perhaps a painting group.

Sing-along Group – starting on 2nd June

This group will get together for musical fun and the enjoyment of making music. Please see the Group Schedule for more information and contact the facilitator, Christine Chronshaw, if you'd like to join.

New groups starting soon – apply now so you don't miss out

We expect that the groups below will start in July or August. If you'd like to join either group, please contact Lesley McNaughton at U3A.Bay.of.Islands@gmail.com or phone her at (09) 407 6936.

• Natural History Group

The Natural History group will view and discuss programmes from the five miniseries in the excellent *BBC Natural History Collection 2*. In *Life* and *Life in Cold Blood*, David Attenborough provides a comprehensive survey of animal and plant life on our planet. *Galapagos* explores the natural history of the Galapagos Islands and their role in the formation of Darwin's theory of evolution. *Wild China* and *Ganges* show how the landscape shaped the culture and wildlife of China and northern India.

• Art History 2 Group

There is space for a few more applicants for Iris Steensma's new Art History group. It will begin with Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New*, a history of Modern Art from the threshold of the 20th century. Episodes will be interspersed with sections of Simon Schama's *The Power of Art* in which eight artists are featured, using biographies and historical context to help explain the true power of their works. These DVDs will be supplemented by Iris's own knowledge of art and her extensive collection of books.

2014 - 2015 Committee

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Group Reports

Western Civilisation

At our last meeting we viewed *Once upon a time* narrated by Dr. Nigel Spivey. He concentrated on the power of art, movement and music to stir our emotions and hold our interest. From the movies of today where music, movement and the ability to engineer otherworld backdrops keep us enthralled, he took us back to the beginnings of visual art and the stories it told to a populace unable to read or write.

From scratchings and paintings on cave walls and ceilings we moved on to elaborate friezes carved and placed on palace walls depicting long ago battles and glorifying kings, then to the somewhat less gory myths played out by the ancient Greeks. They employed the artful use of flickering torches upon lifelike sculptures to put movement into their tales of the adventures and triumphs of their heroes and Gods.

Next we travelled to the Roman Empire where we viewed the Trajan Column, a towering commemoration of the Emperor Trajan's famous victories in the Dacian Wars. This column, still standing in Rome today, is carved from the base to the top with depictions of his many battles and the death and destruction of any who dared to oppose him. It shows in lifelike detail the victors and the conquered, but somehow still lacks emotion.

Finally we visited Northern Australia and saw the many cave paintings, thought to be the oldest in the world. It was interesting to note that all these paintings related to the world of the aboriginal tribes, both their spirit world and the animals around them. There are scenes of hunting but no paintings of battles or the glorification of chieftains. As Dr. Spivey watched present day painters at work he realised that these artworks were variations of the cave paintings, that each of them had a story to tell, and they were not just random lines and dots, making an abstract pattern. So in a sense we had travelled through time from the present to ancient Mesopotamia, the glory days of Greece, and the Great Roman Empire to the other side of the world where Australian aboriginal people still make pictures similar to their original cave paintings. It brought us full circle to realise that Aboriginal art is a mix of music, dance, movement and ancient beliefs intrinsically entwined and as such is able to engage our emotions in a way that carvings on palace walls would never be able to do.



Judy Barrett

Current Affairs Thursday

I suspect there are many similarities between the two current affairs groups and subject matter probably has been very similar. The last few months have seen interesting elections and referendums whether you look locally, nationally or internationally, and one never ceases to be amazed how the shenanigans of politicians seems to be much the same wherever you may be. Local issues that rear their heads regularly appear to be the state of the roads (and more recently – bridges!) health care - whether it is out of town provision or distances travelled to seek more specialist consultations.

The other matter that attracts our attention is that of business and unemployment. We seem to have high unemployment without job creation or if the jobs are created, sustainability. I believe our view is that rhetoric is not in short supply, but action is.

On the international stage, where does one start ... We have discussed the atrocities perpetuated by ISIS; looked at the Ukraine predicament of conflicting pulls both East and West; the Greek economy or lack of one, and finished on a 'high' note of particular interest to island dwellers – the unanswered questions relating to more recent air disasters.

There will always be occurrences that stimulate our interest...!

Stuart Leitch

Art House Films One

In this digital age of the DVD and the download, films have become like books in that so many are available that we can't hope to see all of them. We take the chocolate box approach to film selection, as in "My momma always said `Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get'" (*Forrest Gump*). We dip in here and there, picking films from all over the world: some oldies, some newies, some great cinema classics and some little films of special or local interest. We watch foreign-language films in their original languages, as their makers intended (but with subtitles). Our one, over-riding rule is that the film must be worth talking about.

This year's films can serve as examples. We have watched, and then talked about, *Christmas in August* (Korea, 2003), *Illustrious Energy* (New Zealand, 1988), *Carmen* (Spain, 1988) and *Samson and Delilah* (Australia, 2009). At our June meeting we will watch and discuss *The Last Metro* (France, 1980).

Unfortunately for those wanting to join us, both film groups are full to capacity. However, members sometimes have other commitments so we then have spare places. If you want to join a standby list then let me know and we may be able to fit you in now and then. You will also be standing in line for a regular place when one becomes available.

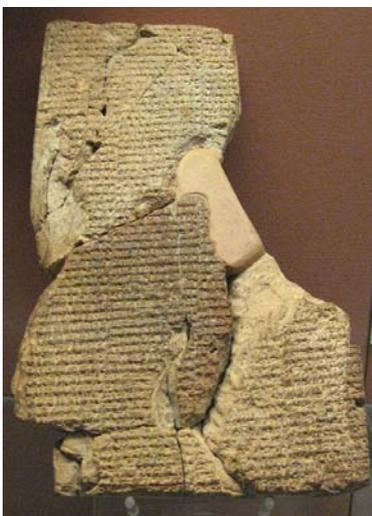
Keith McNaughton



Philosophy

Philosophy is the love of knowledge. But what is knowledge? How do we know something? Can we know anything? The Ancient Greeks thought there were certain things known from our senses, all other things were strangely 'there', known, but outside our senses. Nineteenth century philosophers, Hiedegger, Nietzsche and Sartre, believed that nothing existed beyond the senses. The future may reveal to us what happened the moment before the creation of our Universe; then all our knowledge would be rendered meaningless.

The above is a brief overview of our range of discussion. In particular we looked at things outside of the senses – metaphysical things. Things like justice, courage, faith, morals and sub-atomic particles; how do we know these exist? For example, if we engage in moral practices we must presuppose these exist. However, we have no proof of their existence, we could be wrong. Then, is it a mistake to engage in religious practices, as there is no proof of God? This dilemma urged us to examine the origin of the Christian religion and led us on a journey into the history of Mesopotamia and its myths of Atrahasis and The Flood.



The Epic of Atrahasis was written on Cuneiform tablets in Babylonia in the C17th BC.

Another of our discussions centred upon morals and ethics based upon the understanding that morals are the rules a society adopts to live by, and ethics are the standards by which these rules are judged. What emerged is interesting since, in general the rules a society sets itself are mostly metaphysical; that it is 'wrong' to lie, cheat, steal, kill and so forth. But why is it wrong? It appears so because it just 'seems' that way, but why is this? Our group believed that evolutionary forces played an enormous role in shaping our moral attitudes. Our ancestors grasped that it was more advantageous (made more babies) to be considerate to one another.

Our group does not have answers, only opinions supported with argument. We do philosophy, not simply observe it – it's fun.

Robert Wright