



November 2015

www.u3abayofislands.wordpress.com

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President's Report

This year there were only going to be two Bledisloe Cup games played. However, fate has served up a third game, the Rugby World Cup Final, played for the Webb Ellis Trophy on neutral ground. It will be interesting to see which of the two countries has the most ex-pats in the UK. Twickenham will look magnificent decked out in Black and Gold.

I hope you enjoy this month's Newsletter, and if it prompts any ideas or suggestions to make our U3A more exciting too, please let someone from the committee know.

On a personal note, I have assisted in the area of garden tidying – well lighting and supervising a bonfire. Plus I had forgotten how tedious shelling in excess of 10 kg of broad beans can be. All in the freezer now – should I look forward to more produce?

So, as summer is fast approaching, have a happy read and “Go the ABs”.

Stuart Leitch



Report on October General Meeting

The speaker at our October General Meeting was Kerry Sinclair, President of FNSAR (Far North Search and Rescue) a charitable organisation of professional volunteers responsible for carrying out search and rescue operations over an area of 8000 square kilometres from Towai to Cape Reinga, plus 1750 kilometres of mainland coastline and 500 kilometres of island coasts.



Kerry explained how the organisation, started in the 1930's has grown to a volunteer force of 4000 divided into 60 groups over 7 regions. Northland Group has 30 members aged between 17 and 70 years based at Kerikeri airport. Initial callout is always from the police and can involve lost trampers, hunters, children, boaties or those with dementia, the despondent or intellectually disabled. The average search lasts between 8 and 12 hours. There are different ways of searching dependent on the time of day and the weather. It was interesting to learn that hikers will keep on tramping as do hunters and that dementia sufferers walk in a straight line regardless of the terrain.

FNSAR can also be involved in police evidential searches and with Local Council civil defence operations. All this requires constant training and maintenance and updating of gear. The trailer alone carries in excess of \$70K worth of equipment. So next time you set off on foot or in your boat make sure you are prepared or you might need the services of the gallant FNSAR teams to bring you home.

Moirá Warnock

New Members

We are delighted to welcome six new members this month: Shirley Thomson, Robin Ahlsen, Heather Mackay, Gwyntha Taylor, Helen Toms and Cheryl Wise. We hope that they will enjoy all that U3A Bay of Islands has to offer.

Christmas Parade

Sad to say only two members volunteered for this adventure so we will not be joining the parade this year.

Group News

Our facilitator of the **Geology and Cosmology** group, Mary Johnson, has asked that the name of this group be changed to **Science** to more accurately reflect what the group is discussing. Please note the change in this month's schedule.

New Groups

We still need more applicants to allow these two new groups to get started. Please give me a call or send me an email if you are interested.

Picture This

Are your photos full of fingers and thumbs or are they blurred or boring? Would you love to work together with others to make much better photos? In this new "out and about" group, you will go out each month to try to take interesting and exciting photographs on a specific subject, e.g. doorways, street features, water, etc. You will learn to look at the local environment through new eyes. This will not be a technical photography group but, from time to time, we may have a professional photographer share ideas on aspects such as composition, use of light or camera angles. A "point and shoot" camera will be quite adequate or you may like to start off with a phone, perhaps moving on to a more sophisticated camera later. Photos will be shared and discussed to help you to discover what makes a really good photo. We are grateful to David Welch who has kindly offered to facilitate this group.

Greek Odyssey

The popular Greek Odyssey group has finished but Iris Steensma has kindly offered to run a new group in the New Year for those people who missed out last time. The Oxford Dictionary defines an odyssey as "a series of wanderings, a long adventurous journey". Using several series of DVDs, this group will look at the history of Ancient Greece starting with the Minoans, wandering on to Homer and Troy and then travelling further on in time. For a good idea of the varied activities the group might undertake, please see the report of the previous group in the May 2015 edition of the newsletter on our website. <https://u3abayofislands.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/u3a-boi-newsletter-may-2015.pdf>

The group will meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 1.30 pm.

There are still one or two spots left in **Natural History** which will begin in February with meetings to be held on the first Wednesday of the month at 10.00 am.

Unfortunately we do not have enough applicants to go ahead with Art – Alternative Approaches at this stage but we may look at another art group next year.

Margaret Rasmussen - rasi@clear.net.nz or 09 402 8949

Featured Groups

Current Affairs - Monday

The Monday Group of Current Affairs (shown here enjoying a break) has an open approach to topics. This means that everyone needs to keep up to date with international, national and local events as the members do not know which topics will be introduced. The exception is the member who has prepared an item to discuss.

This month the opening topic was the apparent change in advertising approach on television. In particular, the use of scenic material to capture interest, followed by a low-key message. One example discussed used film of a train winding through our beautiful South Island scenery before one realized that we were being pulled into the message of enjoying rail travel! Some trends were not appreciated so much, for example the little girl who keeps shouting, “get lost” amongst the superb views!



A perennial subject surfaced again – our unwillingness to cease using plastic bags and the willingness of supermarkets to put our purchases into as many bags as possible to isolate all the different types of produce. One member asks for their supermarket purchases to be returned to the trolley, without bags. They were subsequently loaded from the trolley direct into the car, without bags. Others took their own bags with them, but because of the larger capacity the bags were almost too heavy to carry. So, although we all agreed that plastic bags should not be used, we couldn't agree on the most effective way to achieve our aim. We recognize the effects on the environment of discarded plastic bags, especially those which are not biodegradable. NZ needs to make more progress here.

Another topic raised again was the exodus of people from the Middle East and Africa and the effects of those refugees on the countries they passed through and finally chose for their place to settle. As the numbers increase and more information becomes available we find our views changing.

We learn that there are large numbers of unaccompanied children, that the cell phone is probably the most important item these people carry with them and that, for some countries, the injection of population growth is essential to develop new businesses and to pay for future pension growth.



We look forward to finding out our new topics next month.

Left: Syrian refugees walking to Germany

John Gibb

Philosophy

Over the past months we have discussed a variety of philosophical themes, consequentialism, utilitarianism, evidentialism, the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of science. The last two topics widened our debate to our recent sessions where we are exploring the strange subatomic realm of quantum physics.

Here our world of Newtonian laws or classical physics no longer applies but the 'spooky' science, as Einstein called it, prevails where an action on an electron in one place has effect on a similar electron at an infinite distance, but they are so small we cannot see them. The term 'quantum' was invented in 1900 by Max Planck. He realised that light was transported not in waves but as bits or particles of energy he called a 'quantity' of energy thus, 'quantum' of energy. We now know that particles of light are particles when observed but are waves when unobserved as demonstrated by the 'Double Slit' experiment.

We discovered there is a dichotomy of views on the beginning of our Universe. One theory is the 'Big Bang' a singularity from nothing, which is a misnomer since if there is nothing there is no atmosphere to transmit any bang. There are two obstacles to this theory, one is the ability to get something from nothing, the other is the total matter (stars and galaxies) in our Universe is only 4%, the remainder is 21% Dark Matter and 75% Dark Energy. This 96% is called 'Dark' because we do not know what it is.

The second theory is the 'String' theory, matter is not made of particles but of sub-microscopic vibrating strings. This theory ran into trouble when it was found that there were too many types of string theories. It developed into the string being a very large, two-dimensional very thin flat vibrating 'Membrane' consisting of Dark Matter. Many of these membranes exist and when two membranes touch, energy is transferred and matter begins to develop. There are an infinite number of these Parallel Universes in absolute time. We intend to continue this intriguing line of investigation. If you enjoy stretching your mind, come and join in.



Max Planck

Robert Wright

I Spy – Inaugural Meeting

There was a very good turn out in pleasant weather for the first meeting of the I Spy group. Our guide gave us a talk on the history of Aroha Island then, pointing out native trees along the way, he led us along a track to the summer nest site of a kiwi. The nest (shown right) is not currently in use. There were lots of small round beak holes in the soft soil made by kiwi searching for food. The guide told us that the kiwi are used to being observed. They will go right up to where people are sitting in the dark and carry on looking for food totally unworried. It would be interesting to go back for a nocturnal visit to observe the kiwi through the special night vision glasses. Later at the Visitors Centre we were shown a kiwi egg they keep in the freezer. Sadly the chick failed to hatch.



We were accompanied by mallard ducks and saw tui, grey warblers, doves, magpies and, most excitingly, a heron on a nest in the trees bordering the top camping area. Apparently had the heron not made so much noise the previous night no one would have been aware of the nest. Our thanks go to a young German tourist who spotted the nest, pointed it out and assisted us to scramble through the bush for a closer look.

The glorious perfume of the hangehange was greatly appreciated and, when we encountered it, masked the aroma of dead possum.



Left: Hangehange blossom. Above: Dove

Below: Group Members sharing botanical knowledge

After our ramble we thoroughly enjoyed drinks and muffins (thank you Stephanie – they were delicious) at the Visitors Centre.

Our next outing is a farm walk. We will be taking samples of the various plants, grasses and weeds that grow in the pastures, exploring the wildlife and plants in and around the stream and keeping an eye out for birds. Then we will discuss our discoveries over morning tea.

Moira Warnock



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