September 2014 www.u3abayofislands.wordpress.com

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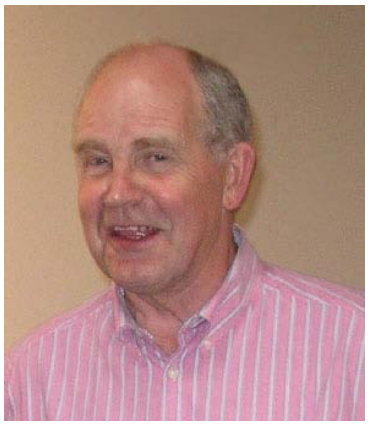
From the President



When I was reminded that the President's report was due I was amazed at how quickly time had flown since I last set pen to paper (or type to Word doc)!

It was good to see so many of you at the recent General Meeting and I hope you enjoyed Tony Norman's presentation about Cook's voyages. I had the opportunity to meet many members for the first time and to make the acquaintance of some guests, several of whom have now joined us - welcome.

Yet again, I'd like to convey my thanks to all those who helped setting up the hall, those involved in kitchen duty and those who assisted clearing the hall afterwards – many hands make light work.

I was talking to other members of the Committee after the meeting, considering topics for new groups for next year. We'd already had a lively discussion about this at our last Committee Meeting and various topics had been approved. Further topics were suggested to Margaret Rasmussen at the general meeting and it struck me that the Committee do not have a monopoly on good ideas. Clearly any member who has thoughts on new topics we might pursue could contact Margaret. As our membership increases, we have the dilemma of what groups have spaces for our new members to join, so suggestions for new topics will be gratefully received.

I'm also aware some people don't offer their suggestions being fearful of having to facilitate their idea; however, this is not the case – although always possible! We need your ideas, please, even if only brief.

Sitting here writing this – the sun is shining, boding well for a beautiful Spring.

Stuart Leitch

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General Meeting Report

Most of us would have first learned about Captain James Cook at school, either in depth or the basics, depending on where we went to school, so it was very enlightening to hear more about this fascinating person from Tony Norman. Tony has been a keen yachtsman for over 30 years and sailed more than 26,000 nautical miles racing and delivering yachts in the SW Pacific region, then another 26,000 nautical miles in his own yacht. He became interested in navigation, collected many rare books on marine history and developed a special interest in the most impressive of the marine navigators, Captain James Cook.

Cook first came to the attention of the Royal Navy as a cartographer during the Seven Years Wars, when he successfully surveyed and charted the St Lawrence River in Canada, at night from a rowing boat.

He is probably better known to us however for his Southern Hemisphere expeditions, sailing over thousands of miles of mostly uncharted areas of the world. It was especially interesting to link well known landmarks here to people Cook knew (Palliser, Howe, Young Nick, Green to name a few). As a leader he would have faced many challenges in the logistics of food and water for his crew. How do you decide what provisions to put aboard a ship when you don't know where you are going, how long you will be at sea, or where you can resupply? It was interesting to see the north and south poles from 'an albatross viewpoint' on the navigational charts.

Bridging the gap between Cook and the present day, the Apollo 15 Command/Service Module Endeavour was named after Cook's ship, HMS Endeavour, as was the space shuttle Endeavour. Another shuttle, Discovery, was named after Cook's HMS Discovery – a far cry from when Cook was using the recently invented ships' chronometer to help him chart his voyages.

After the talk we enjoyed chatting over lunch. Thanks go to the members who brought food and the Greek Odyssey Group for organising the delicious spread and for washing up.

Judy Ramsey

Group News

Members are enthusiastic about our three new groups, Poetry for Pleasure, Political Ideologies and Cooking, which have all made a good start.

We are beginning to plan our new groups for next year and we are looking at a science group studying geology and cosmology and a 20th Century New Zealand history group. As always, we welcome your ideas for new topics so would love to hear from you if there is something you would like to learn about. Our Poetry and Politics groups were both set up at the suggestions of members.

The Local History groups have really enjoyed visiting historical sites and learning about the local area so we would like to do something similar looking at our beautiful natural environment over summer. If you are knowledgeable about birds, trees, the seashore, rock formations or some other aspect of nature and you would like to share your knowledge with others please send me an email.

The final session of the Sketching course will take place in September but Mike Dee has agreed to continue with a more advanced course, beginning in October. We will call this Carry On Sketching and it will be open to those who have attended the introductory course and others who have some previous experience at sketching. If you are interested in joining as a newcomer, please give Mike a call to have a chat about the course. (09) 401 9607.

Margaret Rasmussen

New members

Welcome to Anne Bacon, Robert Brevig, Martin Ough Dealy, Jennifer Lloyd and George Pengelly. We hope you will enjoy belonging to U3A.

Group Reports

The Greek Odyssey Groups

Although our head of state is a **monarch** New Zealand is a **democracy** and this month there will be a general election. The results will be **analysed** by the **psephologists** and a new bunch of **politicians** will be in parliament. Will our prime minister be a **tyrant**? Will he be **ostracised**? Will there be **anarchy** in our country? And what does all that have to do with ancient history? Lots, because all those highlighted words have come into our language from the Ancient Greek. Both Greek history groups have just started watching two series about Classical Greece and the birth of democracy.

This last year we have looked at the history and culture of Ancient Greece starting with the Minoans. A series about Homer's Troy gave us an insight not only into the problems that archaeologists face, but also into the myths. These stories reappear in Western art, literature and even music, and so we watched Offenbach's operetta *La Belle Helene* about Helen of Troy.

The ancient vases are a wonderful source of information about the daily life of the Greeks and we have even "made" our own.

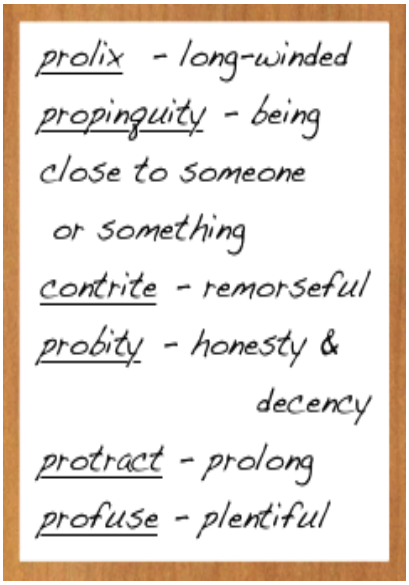
We have picked up a smattering of the language, can sing the Greek alphabet song (some more loudly than others) and have discovered new words in the English language. We can even play Hangman in Greek. And if you are still wondering what a **psephologist** is here is the dictionary definition.

> *Psephology, from Greek psephos ψῆφος, 'pebble', which the Greeks used as ballots, is a branch of political science that deals with the study and scientific analysis of elections.*

If you would like to join us there is room for a few more **Hellenophiles** in the Friday group.

Iris Steensma

Creative Writing



We try our hands at many different types of writing including short stories, poems, descriptive pieces and personal memoirs. From time to time we attempt an exercise to increase our knowledge of words. Recently we were challenged to use the following words in a piece of writing – prolix, propinquity, contrite, probity, protract and profuse – not the easiest task but fun to try.

We thought you might enjoy reading two of the results. The authors prefer to remain anonymous.

Example One

It had to be propinquity – Why else would I be interested in someone who was decidedly prolix in his anxiety to share experiences, so profuse with words and so protracted in explanations. On the plus side he always demonstrated probity when dealing with my endearing but irritating parents for which I was grateful. I sometimes feel almost contrite when I contemplate the quagmire into which his affection for me has led him.

Example Two

Will the prisoner please stand.

A jury of your peers has arrived at a unanimous verdict and finds you guilty as charged on all counts. It now falls upon me to pronounce a sentence that fits this outrageous crime. I have in mind that the penalty should be such as to both convince you of the error of your ways and be a deterrent to others.

If in elaborating on how I arrived at my decision I am accused of being unduly prolix I suggest that I merely follow in the footsteps of your defence which managed to protract the trial to such an inordinate degree that we are all now exhausted.

Disregarding your profuse protestations of innocence the jury was clearly convinced of the probity of the witness who was able to establish your propinquity to the scene of the crime and testified as to the nature of the dastardly words that could only have been uttered by you. In spite of such incontrovertible evidence you show no signs of being contrite and I feel I have no alternative but to direct that you perform 100 hours of community service in a public place wearing a placard stating "Our Mayor is not a lecherous old fart."

You may stand down

Report by Margaret Rasmussen

Political Ideologies Group

Political ideologies could be summarized as sets of basic beliefs about the political, economic, social and cultural affairs held by many people in a society.

The Political Ideologies Group meets at my home and consists of people who have an embryonic understanding of political ideologies, and the philosophical arguments underpinning these ideologies, together with some knowledge of 21st century thinking.

We have discussed ideological beliefs from the far left of the political spectrum such as communism to the far right such as fascism. We have also considered totalitarianism and authoritarianism as ideological constructs.

At each meeting I give a 'chalk and talk lesson', using a flip chart, with YouTube videos to emphasise issues and consider situations facing politicians across the world. Then we relate that to New Zealand and use articles from the press to look at each party's point of view and come to some conclusions.

As our September meeting is just two weeks before the election we will look at the policies of the major, and some minor, political parties in New Zealand and discuss how their proposals relate to their ideologies.

I would like anyone interested in the world today to consider joining this group. The sessions are enjoyable and, although the subject is complex, our discussions are entertaining. The key motivational word used for the group is "fun". If you're interested, give me a ring on 09 407 3452 and have a chat, or email robertson8148@yahoo.co.uk

Ian Robinson