



December 2014

www.u3abayofislands.wordpress.com

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From the President

'Twas the newsletter before Christmas (with apologies to Clement Clarke Moore) – and this got me thinking about childhood memories.

Between the ages of 3 and 6, I lived in a very small village in Germany, very close to the border with the Netherlands. My Father was in the British Army and responsible for the running of an enormous munitions depot, which, by definition, had to be miles away from areas of dense population.

It was here, as a very young pre-schoolboy, that I found myself spending a lot of time with Elfreda, our live-in German maid. These certainly were the days of Empire, but for Elfreda this afforded her luxuries not available to the general post-war population.

I was at an age when the day of the week meant little to me, let alone the month of the year, or even the year itself; however, I remember what clearly was a very special day – the 6th December - St Nicholas' Day. This meant more to the population of Bracht than Christmas Day itself.

I was taken out of the house, certainly late afternoon or early evening. It was cold and dark and we waited by one of the main roads into the centre of the village. I then saw people walking from the outskirts of the village towards the village centre, and each group was clustered round a person carrying a paper lantern on a bamboo pole.

As the procession passed us, we joined on the end, were issued with a paper lantern and followed on behind. The various roads into the centre of the village all had their processions and we all met in the village square.

We children were then encouraged to go up the stairs at the front of the "Town Hall" and given, in the tradition of St Nicholas, gifts by the Burgermeister. These, as a result of rationing and austerity, consisted of glazed German breads and marzipan sweets. After this, everyone moved into the village church for a carol-type service.

This event fades in and out of my memory, but reminds me why I always associate marzipan with this time of year (and with a hairy, itchy, woollen balaclava!)

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee for their continuing hard work and support, and to extend to them and all of you my hope that you have an enjoyable holiday with family and friends, and will be looking forward to an exciting and enlightening 2015.

With my best wishes to you all.

Stuart Leitch



Group News

We have three new groups ready to start in February. They all have room for a few more members so, if you would like to join them, please contact me: ras1@clear.net.nz or 09 402 8949

C20th NZ History – a personal view

Pam Jenkins will facilitate this group and meetings will be held at the home of Tom and Margaret Lindsay on the first Wednesday of each month at 10 am.

Geology/Cosmology

This group will meet at the home of Mary and Lindsay Johnson in Haruru Falls with Mary as facilitator. The group will watch the BBC series, *The Rise of the Continents*, supplemented by *Wonders of the Solar System*. Meetings will be held at 10 am on the third Wednesday of each month.

Poetry for Pleasure

A second poetry group, facilitated by Sue Robertson, will meet at the home of Virginia Robinson. Meetings will be held at 10 am on the fourth Friday of each month.

The travel group and the Spanish conversation group will not go ahead at this stage but we may look at them again later next year.

We have had a few changes of facilitator in recent weeks. Maggie Murray-Lee will facilitate Book Discussion Group One, Ian Robertson will facilitate the Computers and Cameras group, Sue Robertson will facilitate the Kerikeri Local History group with assistance from Judy Ramsey and David Mowat will lead the History of Aviation group.

We are grateful to both our past and our new facilitators and hosts for their valuable contributions to the successful running of U3A. I know our members really appreciate what you do.

Margaret Rasmussen

From the Editors

Many groups have planned something a little different for their December meetings. Please remember to take some photos of your activities and send them to the newsletter editors so we can all share in the fun. Send each photo as a separate email attachment in jpg format.

New member: Welcome to Wendy Hamilton-Gates; we hope you enjoy being part of U3A.

Special invitation for the Poetry and Book Groups - and other U3A members

Members of the *Book Discussion* and *Poetry for Pleasure* groups have been invited to attend a private reading by James Crowden, poet, author and BBC commentator, who will read his poems from the West of England and a selection of war poems. *Other U3A members are welcome* to join them at the Social Centre, Kerikeri Village, 10.30 am – 12.00 noon, Monday 8th December. Please email Sue Robertson before 5th December to reserve a seat: robertson8148@yahoo.co.uk

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Group Reports

Cooking Group

Mid-morning on the fourth Monday of each month this new group meets at the home of our president Stuart Leitch to watch, listen and learn about culinary techniques suitable for those who reluctantly find themselves cooking for one. At present just four mere males gather in the domestic kitchen of our host (whose wife tactfully absents herself) in order to glean tips on how they can ensure their diet is adequate, tasty, inexpensive and satisfying.



While we watch the dish of the month being prepared (there is not room for all of us to be 'hands on') we chatter away feeling free to comment on how we would have done things differently, or more usually on what is clearly a fresh and better approach, and then reminiscing on the triumphs and disasters of our pasts.

So far we have collected recipes for bolognese sauce, a chowder base, a slow-cooked stew or casserole, and a stir fry mix; all of which can be frozen in portions for future use. We do not aspire to become cordon bleu cooks but are immensely grateful to our mentor for advice about simple things such as the importance of prepping, what ingredients in the pantry are essential and which might just be taking up space. So don't expect a rash of exotic entertaining by lonely males – after all we are essentially interested in cooking for one!

David Jull

Art House Film Groups

I have been asked several times what is an "Art-House" film. One definition is anything that won't find an audience at your local multiplex theatre. Foreign-language films is one such category. Films that don't conform to the usual precepts of Hollywood story-telling is another. These films can be quite serious and challenging, and the issues they raise are frequently left unresolved at the end. Ideally, the audience leaves the theatre thinking about, puzzling over, or just questioning what they have seen. On this definition, an Art-House film is one to get you thinking rather than to provide a nice entertaining, thrilling or whatever experience to go with the popcorn.



Miramax noticed that there was an audience for 'more serious' films out there and set out to capture it. Initially it bought rights to foreign films then re-edited them (sometimes severely) for American audiences. *Cinema Paradiso* is an example. After a short run in Italy this was bought by Miramax, edited down from 168 to 118 minutes, sent to Cannes (where it won) and re-released to become one of the world's favourite films. It became a golden view of childhood in a small Italian town. No difficult questions to think about. Gone was the question of what happens when one revisits ones childhood and finds that all was not as it seemed.

Miramax also champions the independent filmmakers in America, of the sort attracted to the Sundance Film Festival. Their films typically aim at an audience with tastes between mainstream multiplex fare and the traditional Art House offering. Think of *Brokeback Mountain* or *Little Miss Sunshine* as examples.

Miramax and its followers have been quite successful in capturing, and adding to the old Art-House audience. We sometimes see these crossover films at the Cathay Cinemas in Kerikeri. For real Art-House fare, however, we must rely on DVDs.

In U3A our Art House Film groups don't worry too much about all this. We just watch a sample of interesting films from around the world - - - as long as each film is worth talking about!

Keith McNaughton

Art History Group

What do these paintings have in common?



The Battle of San Romano
By Paolo Uccello (Florence c 1450)



The Census at Bethlehem
Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Netherlands, 1566)



The Third of May, 1808
By Francisco Goya (Spain, 1814)



Part of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (Spain, 1937)

In Art History we often get a “Mars Bar Question”.

A recent question was – “The painting we are looking at is a reaction to invasion and war. Name other artists – we have studied – whose paintings showed how they felt about their own country being attacked or ruled by another.”

The above paintings are significant in that they depict actual historical events.

They were ground breaking on a number of levels both artistic and political and they raise many questions about the events they depict. Three of them show war and its brutalising effects, and several the oppression and brutality of occupation.

Can such paintings, while beautifully executed, be beautiful?

Were these artists the equivalent of our modern war correspondents and photographers? What is the relevance of these paintings to the art audience of today? Are they history’s YouTube?

These paintings span six centuries of art and history. In the context of the world today they raise many disturbing questions.

Diana Sandifer