



**General Meeting for Members: Tuesday 6 October 10am – 11 30 am**

## *Zoom/Webinar meeting*

This month we are again having our main meeting using Zoom/Webinar. This will be a shortened meeting, with just a recorded guest speaker. The meeting will last approximately one and a half hours. Details on accessing the meeting and the required link will be sent out prior to the meeting by Garry Clark.

We will be unable to ask questions of the speaker, but he has intimated that he has anticipated the kind of questions we might have. Roll on a lessening of Covid restrictions so we can once again have face to face meetings with the opportunity to ask the speaker questions.

### **GUEST SPEAKER: Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley** **Title: The Rise of the Far Right**



**Distinguished Professor Paul Spoonley** is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Massey University.

He has been involved in some major research projects on immigration and diversity in New Zealand, including Capturing the Diversity Dividend of Aotearoa New Zealand (2014-2020).

He is the author or editor of 27 books ranging from political extremism to the nature of work, and he was Ranginui Walker's biographer (Mata Toa, Penguin).

He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand and the Auckland War Memorial Museum. He was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California Berkeley.

## **COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **AGM**

Our AGM will take place at the November meeting. If you want to nominate someone who is prepared to take on a role on the committee, nomination forms are attached to the end of this newsletter. The nominee must be agreeable to being nominated and must have a proposer and seconder.

The Agenda and papers for the AGM will be circulated as a separate mail out in October.

### **SIG meetings at the Community Centre**

Our Convenors Co-ordinator Elizabeth McNee has been advised by Debbie from the Community Centre that the centre is currently closed to community groups until further notice because of Covid 19 restrictions. Elizabeth will advise SIG convenors when the community centre will again be open to SIG groups.

### **Active Travellers**

In June 2008 Heather Brown joined five friends in the south of France staying at a B&B house at Nimes, in Marseillan, Alet le Bain (30 km south of Carcassonne) - a Monastery built in Napoleonic times and purchased from the catholic church in 1953 and now called Hotel de L'eveche.> We all had a common interest in patchwork and attended the 10th Anniversary of regional patchwork at Aniannez. The narrow streets were a great area to display quilts hung outside the houses and disused churches.> Another area of interest was Roman history exploring Roman Roads, excavations, ruins, aqueducts, amphitheatres and Museums.

### **Archaeology**

In Garry's Zoom talk a recent study shows that two million years ago three different human-like species were living side by side in ancient South Africa. Their remains were discovered in a cave complex [Called Drimolen] near Johannesburg. Three modern dating techniques [electron spin resonance, paleomagnetism and uranium - lead dating] establish the age of the bones at 2.04 to 1.95 million years. This established that there were at least 2 other types of hominids living at the same time as Homo Erectus and that our ancestors originated further south than has been thought. It's widely accepted that our ancestors were cooking 300,000 years ago, but evidence found at Wonderwerk Cave in South Africa suggests we may have started using fire to heat our food much earlier than that. There is a call to analyse the fat from early campfires to identify the animal diet. In human evolution modern humans have a smaller total gut volume to body mass ratio relative to the great apes and for humans this evolved because of cooked food. As technology evolves, even archaeological objects found in the distant past, when surveyed, reveal secrets we never dreamed of.

### **Art History**

At our Zoom meeting, Fay talked about the life and work of Colin McCahon. Never in any doubt as to his 'calling', he produced many paintings, evolving in style as he depicted the Nelson hills, the Canterbury plains, the Otago harbour and the Kauri around his eventual home at French Bay. Although not a committed Christian, he was fascinated by parts of the Bible, especially the crucifixion which he set against the Nelson hills. Despite much research, we are still puzzled by the 'word' and 'number' paintings. We were also saddened that his wife, Anne, gave up a promising career as an artist to support him and to mother their 4 children. Typical of the times, we thought.

### **Art Potpourri**

Most members had other appointments but two of us viewed a small exhibition of paintings by Cheong Hoong at the Mairangi Arts Centre where he attended painting classes. The artist, a retired mechanical design engineer, is Singapore born and a long term North Shore resident. His technique is hyperrealist and his portraits and landscapes have exquisite and vivid details. After viewing the paintings, we enjoyed seeing the wide range of attractive hand and locally made crafts displayed and available for sale at the gallery. The October meeting will be a member presentation, intriguingly called "Pandora's Box".

### **Book Group**

Once again a Zoom meeting and not a great deal of reading done this month.

*Remember Me* by Derek Hanson; *Closed Casket* and *The Mystery of the Three Quarters* by Sophie Hannah; *Island Song* by Madeleine Bunting; *The Good Turn* by Dervla McTiernan; *The Good Killer* by Harry Dolan; *The Giver of Stars* by Jojo Moyes; *Every Conceivable Way* by Despina Meris; *Finding Clara* by Anika Scott; *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens; *The Lying Room* by Nicci French; *To Kill the President* by Sam Bourne; *Riptides* by Kirsten Alexander and *Sleep no More* by Greg Isles.

### **Books and Beyond**

Our meeting was via Zoom this month (thanks to Fay), and we had 12 people joining in.

Heather H talked about the craft of writing poetry and how personal one's choice is. She discussed using poetry to teach uses of language, and devices to extend one's craft and then selected some genres and themes. Members of the group joined in with their selections, which made for a rich and interesting experience. Writers included Dylan Thomas, Laurie Lee, John McCrae (*In Flanders Fields*), Pam Ayres, Edward Lear and many others. We finished with some fun poems and then Nonsense rhymes.

Next month Thelma will review a book with the theme 'courage', and asks that we each briefly talk about a book we have read with that theme. There are six kinds of courage to explore - moral, physical, intellectual, spiritual, social and emotional.

## **Classical Music**

Paganini the brilliant violinist, lived as music was changing from patronage by aristocracy to concert halls and business ventures, from 1800 to 1840. He revolutionised the playing of the violin and composed most of the music he played. Paganini's music, like his playing, appealed at two levels- to the musical connoisseurs for its clear musical qualities, and to the public at large for his awesome technique, ability and showmanship.

We explored these two aspects by viewing on Youtube, two violin concertos (No 1 in D major and No 2 in B minor) with the instrument balanced against the full orchestra. Next followed a selection of his 24 Caprices (lively, humorous) to demonstrate his incredible ability and the versatility of the violin itself. We finished with Paganini's "Variations on God Save the King(George 1V). The first known rendition of this tune was in 1745.

**Creative audio visual** No report this month

## **Creative Writing**

Our recent topics have been varied, Neighbours, Gossip and Holidays with a side serving of Crime. Unsurprisingly these topics stirred many memories from younger days. Wonderful childhood recollections from beach holidays to country camping escapes! Another topic "Acts Of Kindness" caused us to reflect on an aging population with a determination to remain independent for as long as possible. A thought provoking piece from Brenda on kindness and the younger generation. From Wyn was " Neighbours" another uplifting tale of people helping each other in the days when that was " normal" ! - " mucking in" " helping out " - whatever happened to " working bees"? . Crime ; Ellen spooked us with the suggestion of the supernatural . Irene gave "An introduction to Murder" through the eyes of a detectives husband! Covid 19 lockdown was obviously a time for reflection .

September 24th is our next meeting hopefully in our usual meeting room. The subject for this month is The Prisoner written from the male perspective. Anyone who would like to join us for this please ring Irene ... We don't bite!

**Current Affairs** No report this month.

## **Cycling**

Weather was a problem for the Cycling Group in September, rather than Covid19! The normal cycling day was postponed because of bad weather; then the weather cleared up and one intrepid cyclist completed the ride. We tried again the following Wednesday, however most of our SIG group members had other activities they had committed to - so again, only 3 members completed the Bayview/Devonport ride, a very interesting cycle way. Thanks for trying twice, Sue.

## **Film Appreciation**

This month's Film Group was a continuation from the viewing of Gone With The Wind, two months ago. Held at Bess and John Reynolds' place, the group was led by Bess who wore her Scarlett O'Hara dress for the occasion. She provided an informative account of author Margaret Mitchell's life and her motivation in writing Gone with the Wind. John then showed a series of short excerpts relating to the film including the opening credits, the spectacular burning of Atlanta sequence, the aftermath of the battle with a spectacular crane shot, and the scene where Rhett Butler tells Scarlett O'Hara that "I don't give a damn". Each of these sequences was followed by lively discussions.

Next meeting Friday16th October

Because of the Election the Sherwood room will not be available on this day and our meeting will be held in the Rothesay Room (top floor) 9.45am to 12pm. Depending upon covid levels and the community centre actually being available. Joan Baker is going to be our presenter on this day.

**Français pour rire** No report this month

## **International Studies across Countries**

Nine members of the group met at the usual time via Zoom, to listen to Dorothy's description about the Northern Territories of Australia. It is 1.42 million square kilometres with a population of 245 thousand. The telegraph line linking Adelaide, South Australia, to Darwin, the port at the northern end of the Territory, was followed in 1880s by the railway, both of which opened up this area. By 1911, there were 53 thousand head of cattle on cattle stations, the main economy of the territory.

We heard about the 1966 Strike and Walk off by Aboriginal tribes demanding better work and living conditions and the return of their land.. This took 11 years and the intervention of the Commonwealth or state government to enable some land to be returned.

There are many interesting national parks, showing very old rock paintings showing many now extinct animals; huge rocky outcrops, Uluru and Mt Connor ; wetland and rivers and many crocodiles of course The territory is little visited by tourists but has a wealth of beauty and interest.

Next meeting will be Geoff on parts of Africa. All welcome

## **Inventors and Inventions**

12 members joined a Zoom meeting on Tuesday 15 September to view a fascinating video on the unravelling of the Antikythera mechanism. Found on the sea floor off the island of Antikythera near the coast of Greece, this artefact dated to be over 2000 years old was found by x-ray to consist of more than 50 brass toothed cogs and wheels. It was determined by modern specialists to be a 2000 year old computer used by the ancients to display eclipses and the phases of the moon to 9 decimal places of accuracy.

**Local History** No report this month.

**Mah Jong** No report this month.

## **The Maori World**

Our presentation this month was on Taonga Pūoro, the traditional musical instruments of the Maori people. They previously fulfilled many functions within Maori society including a call to arms, dawning of the new day, communications with the gods and the planting of crops. Many of the sounds of the instruments and tunes are imitations of the sounds of nature, including the wind, the seas and the natural world of birds and insects. The instruments were part of the toolkit of the tohunga (Maori priests) and if used for entertainment or recreation, it was a hidden and private practice. Via a slideshow, we saw many of the instruments and listened to their sounds before viewing excerpts from "Legends of Rotorua", the story of Tūtānekai, who, by playing his kōauau caused Hinemoa to swim to him across Lake Rotorua. This is a composition for a wide variety of taonga pūoro, string quartet, harp, flute, storyteller and soprano.

## **Medical Science and History**

### **August 2020.**

The main presentation was titled "The Incredible Foetal Circulation" Dr John Harry's presentation described the foetal circulation and the changes which occur at birth. The human fetus has a functional circulatory system for its blood. This system functions in co-operation with the mother's circulatory system. During birth changes occur that transforms this shared system into a single individual one which remains with that being for the remainder of its life. The mini-talk slot took the form of a discussion on the legalisation of cannabis (upcoming referendum) led by Denise: Data from Professor Mary Cannon's research from the Dunedin study which, along with other studies suggest that young people (ie under 25) who use cannabis frequently have an increased risk of developing acute psychiatric symptoms.

### **September 2020.**

A ZOOM Meeting. Fay's presentation was "What Bones Can Tell Us" Bones found in the soil may be of forensic or archaeological interest or may be a result of a war grave or a national disaster. It is possible to tell the sex of the remains [using the pelvis, or skull] but is harder in young people. Age can also be determined from bones, this is easier in young people because of the rate the bones fuse and tooth formation is also a key. The second half of our Meeting continued the debate from last month on the Legalisation of Cannabis – many interesting points from research and opinion were presented and discussed – many of us still "sitting on the fence"!

**Modern History** No report this month

**Music Appreciation and History** No report this month

### **Music - Mainly Classical**

At our September meeting we watched a DVD of a concert of the works by Johann Strauss Jr, by the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra. The program was a mixture of waltzes, polkas, and excerpts from the operetta " The Gipsy Baron." The concert was light and bright, with soloists and pictorial interludes, What was needed in these days of lockdowns. We then watched a documentary on the Strauss family starting with Johann Strauss Sr. then Johann Jr. and his two brothers Eduard and Josef. It traced their musical careers and "interesting" private lives.

### **Puzzles Patterns & Paradoxes**

Our Zoom meeting this month was most successful.

1. Penny showed us a mystery object which turned out to be an antique butter keeper.
2. Heather had us scratching our heads to come up with as many words as possible in 60 seconds given the first few letters e.g. 'shr'.
3. Ian introduced us to the many puzzling aspects of Peter Falconio's disappearance in the Australian outback
4. John showed us a number of word paradoxes, e.g. "Less is more" and introduced us to the "Buttered cat" paradox
5. Fay showed us the "Sator" square – a puzzling array going back to Pompeii. Another topic was an atrocity filmed and shown on Twitter. An investigative journalist tracked down the perpetrators and had them charged.

### **Renaissance**

In a Zoom meeting our topic was Veronica Franco, an Italian poet and famous courtesan. The illegitimate daughter of a courtesan and Venetian merchant, Veronica was well educated and followed her mother in earning her living serving wealthy men. The upper class of courtesans had quite a high status in society, and they were given luxuries and wealth in exchange for sophisticated conversation and entertainment. Veronica gained the patronage of a renowned poet and mixed in literary and intellectual circles. She published two volumes of poetry, 'Terze Rime' and 'Familiar Letters to Various People', which gained public attention, especially her views on women's place in society. After a plague epidemic she was charged as a witch by the Inquisition but acquitted because of her connections. Her last years were spent in poverty when her patron died but her legacy as an outspoken woman poet and one of Venice's most famous courtesans has remained.

Greta spoke on Da Vinci's Vineyard in Milan. The genius was also a vintner. His relaxation was gifted to him for his painting of The Last Supper by Duke of Milan Ludovico Sforza and enjoyed for several years from 1498. Leonardo was deeply attached to his vineyard; in his Will left it to two of his servants. The vineyard was forgotten until the 1920s when art historian Luca Beltrami [located](#) it in Milan. DNA discovery of the original vines showed them to be Malvasia Candida, a white grape. Topic for October meeting: Jan will speak about the demise of Majellan.

**Travel** No report this month

### **Ukulele**

This month we have been meeting every Wednesday on Zoom and using the UKULELE playalongs with the original artists and charts with words on the screen. Most of the songs are from the 3rd age era. Like Elvis song "Hound dog" and the many ABBA hits. A more recent song "Hallelujah" we play regularly. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQNzHsn0kTM>

The play along tracks can be used for Karaoke as well. A good song to finish a Ukulele session has been "Don't Worry be Happy" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F5TaK8IGCk&feature=youtu.be>

### **Walking**

#### **Friday October -Torbay Coastal.**

Meet 9.45am at Torbay shops, corner of Beach Road and Toroa Street. This is another easy walk, taking in quiet streets, sea views from the cliffs and some lovely beaches. This loop walk will take about one and a half hours. Coffee at the end in Torbay.