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MEETING PLACE

Royal Oak Bowls, 146 Selwyn St, Onehunga
10am on the 2ND Thursday of most months

NEWSLETTER

December 2024

Next meeting
10-12noon
Thursday, 13 February 2025

Greetings to you all

December is the time when our secular society celebrates the largest Christian Festival, namely Christmas. That is remembering the birth of its founder, Jesus of Nazareth. Somehow as we celebrate this Christmastide society seems to have forgotten the simple tenets of faith to love God and our neighbour. We seem to want to focus on what we want as opposed to what we need. We have this kind of forgetfulness when it comes to caring for our world and some principles to live by. We seem to have forgotten in a short space of time about what is important in our lives. This kind of societal amnesia seems to determine how we live our lives ie wanting not needing.

Sometimes I am likely to forget things. Do you? This month I needed to be reminded to write the report for the newsletter. Hence I apologise for lateness. This is forgetfulness which we seem to have more of as we age.

It's like humanity as a whole. We forget our past history and want to focus on the new. This is great if we remember and act on the knowledge of our past so we can be focussed on future things. That gives us hope and joy. But the difficulty is when we ignore the lessons of history we as humans lose something very important. Namely why do we exist and how we care for people and our planet.

We need more peace on earth for our planet and all people. When we live by a value of acquiring, using, consuming and ultimately abusing people and the environment, the future offers less peace and goodwill in every way.

So this Christmas what will you remember?

Hark the herald angels sing

Advertising wondrous things

Or perhaps it might be something different like care. Which means to feel for, cry for and to lament and reach out beyond ourselves. The challenge is ours. What will we be remembered for in our words and activities? This Christmas what will we focus on? Let us not be forgetful and focus on what human existence is all about, namely have love, care, nurturing friends and family, humanity and our planet Earth.

This Christmas may you find joy and peace and reach out to those special people in your lives and society.

Blessings

Duncan

EPSOM U3A EXECUTIVE

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Interest Group Co-ordinators

Joslyn Squire - 021-168 0680

Bill Hagan – 021 611 247

Guest Speaker Organiser:

Ian Jost - 027-488 7037

Legal Advisor

Mike Matson - 022-630 7968

Newsletter

Jeanette Grant – 638 8566

Greeters:

Don Buchanan - 620 7572

Ngaire Mune – 624 0226

INTEREST GROUP CONVENERS

Appreciating Performing Arts

Shirin Caldwell – 630 1662

Architecture

Brian Murray – 021 026 68396

Art Appreciation

Kaye Buchanan – 620 7572

Big History

Emily Flynn – 021 0902 5094

Christine Keller-Smith – 021 140 9021

Book Chat

Helen Holdem - 021 260 3510

Comparative Religions

Duncan MacDonald - 021-316 661

John Locke- 021-187 8061

Current Affairs

Shirley McConville – 622 3542

Fabric & Fibre Crafts

Charmaine Strang – 027-4177 556

Famous & Infamous Group

Gary Preston – 021 297 3087

Foodies

Graham Gunn – 027 445 0929.

Garden Appreciation

Betty Townley - 626 6673

Introduction to Family History

Bryn Smith – 027 280 5235

Latin

Phyllis Downes – 630 5867

Lunch Club

Shirley McConville - 622 3542.

Medical Matters

Diana Hart – 021 284 4402

Music Appreciation

Carleen Edwards – 624 6298

19th Century History

Helen Holdem – 021 260 3510

NZ History

Kaye Buchanan - 620 7572

Philosophy

Jocelyn Hewin - 634-1552

Recreational Drawing

Grant Coupland – 638 7496

Scrabble

Joslyn Squire – 021 168 0680

Social Golf

Kay England 629-3281

Te Reo Maori

Jenny Whatman – 027 353 2487


Travel

Diana Hart- 021 284 4402

Walkers & Talkers Group

Don Buchanan ph:620 7572.

<p>NOVEMBER SPEAKER REPORT</p> <p>By Kaye Buchanan</p>	<p>Following the more serious focus of an AGM we were able to relax with some light-hearted memories from our Speaker.</p> <p>Jenny Lynch began her career as a journalist in the print media and became well-known to many of us during her time as editor of the New Zealand Women’s Weekly (NZWW). Her presentation to us was named “Luscious Lips, Lazy Livers and Medicinal Gin” and provided an overview of advertising in NZ particularly prior to the arrival of television.</p> <p>Describing the period following the Great Depression as one where incomes were increasing and expectations were expanding, people looked to the print media and radio personalities for answers to health and other problems and advertisers were quick to respond. Many products were promoted with few restrictions on their safety or efficacy, alcohol and cigarettes to name just two.</p> <p>Jenny worked through a list of “remedies” that many of us had been given (often by parents) and a PowerPoint display of adverts from such publications as the Weekly News were instantly recognizable. In fact the audience was word-perfect when encouraged to join in Jenny’s rendition of the Geddes Dental radio jingle, originally sung by Pat McMinn.</p> <p>As the decades moved on through the post-WW2 years, advertisements began to emphasis “wants” rather than “needs”. e.g. the perfect body shape, skin or hair condition, travel destinations. Clothes, cosmetics, soaps, deodorants were touted as essential to meet an advertised “perfection”, along with the development of labour-saving devices to ease the time spent in domestic tasks. The timing of much of the advertising around certain times of the year certainly encouraged many an unsolicited birthday or Xmas “present”.</p> <p>Advertisers countered any criticism about their presence by stating that they were “truly meeting the needs of customers” when questioned about the validity of many of the product claims. And the presence of advertisements helped ensure the financial stability of many publications and other media, with the NZWW reaching a circulation of one million by 1980.</p> <p>As a footnote, Jenny reminded us how much the picture had changed since the advent of the internet, where advertising revenue has moved away from the traditional media and has resulted in many job losses, failures or downsizing of magazines, radio and TV programmes .</p> <p>But, for an hour, we had been able to share in the memories of familiar names and products that had been such a background to our lives in earlier years.</p>
<p>SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION</p>	<p>The 2025 Epsom U3A subscription is \$50 per person and is now payable, due by 31 March This should be paid into our ASB bank account – 12 – 3067 – 0204618 – 00 Please enter subs in the “code” section and your name in the “reference” section in order for us to have a record of your payment.</p>
<div data-bbox="113 1516 392 1706" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>LIFE MEMBER AWARDS</p>	<p>[1] Mike Matson</p> <p>Mike Matson is richly deserving of this Life Membership Award. Mike joined U3A at the beginning of 2016 when I (John Locke) was president. He has participated fully in many interest groups including: the walking group, ancient history, current affairs, the movie group and art appreciation. Mike took over from Heather Walker as speaker organiser and did that job for about 3 years. He resigned from the committee in 2019 because of other commitments but after a year morphed back onto the committee and was there until November 2023.</p> <p>Mike has become the area- wide expert on constitutional reform. He prepared the revised the U3A constitution in September 2017 to comply with new legislation and he discussed it with the Auckland U3A network for a standard constitution for all U3AS in 2018 and 2019, and this year, as we know, he has also again fully revised our own constitution. All this legal expertise he has provided for free. He is also a very pleasant and caring person who has made a great contribution to the interest groups he has participated in.</p> <p>Once again, congratulations to Mike, from us all at Epsom U3A.</p>

	<p>[2] Allan Watkins</p> <p>Congratulations to Allan for this Life Membership award. It represents the acknowledgment by all the members of Epsom U3A, of his outstanding contribution to the life of the Epsom branch over the last eight years. Allan joined when I (John Locke) was president in 2016. He was tapped on the shoulder to become the president in 2018 and he made such an outstanding job as president that he was nominated to run again in 2019, the first time this had ever been done.</p> <p>Allan was a delegate for many years, to the regional U3A and led the walkers group for several years. Allan is like a highly respected elder statesman. His personal attributes are widely appreciated by all members. He tells me that, courtesy of his former profession as an engineer, he is a problem-solver and doer. This attitude, coupled with his ability to listen to others, made Allan a competent and caring leader. Congratulations again to Allan on winning this award.</p>										
<p>2025 MEETING DATES Thursdays, 10am</p>	<table><tr><td>13 February</td><td>13 March</td><td>10 April</td><td>8 May</td><td>12 June</td></tr><tr><td>10 July</td><td>14 August</td><td>11 September</td><td>9 October</td><td>13 November</td></tr></table> <p>NB Always wear your name badge and be seated ready at 10am</p>	13 February	13 March	10 April	8 May	12 June	10 July	14 August	11 September	9 October	13 November
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EDITORIAL

As another year nears its end, I would like to wish all our fellow members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for the future. No-one can predict that future (just as well) but we can hope for peace and prosperity for all – not just ourselves.

I really appreciate the favourable comments I have received about my collection of 'jottings' – and would welcome any contributions that you may encounter.

Have a great holiday – and we look forward to getting together again in February 2025.

Regards
Jeanette

RING AROUND EARTH?

Saturn's rings are iconic, but new evidence suggests Earth might once have sported one of its own. This ring would have caused chaos on the surface. We know Earth has gone through a lot of different phases in its lifetime. Early on it was covered in magma oceans, and much later it was a giant snowball for a while. Landmasses have broken up, drifted apart and come back together over hundreds of millions of years. But a period where it sported a ring is a relatively new idea.

Researchers from Monash University in Australia have now hypothesized that a rocky ring formed around Earth about 466 million years ago, and it persisted for a few tens of millions of years. This conclusion was the result of some rigorous geological detective work.

Around that time, during what's called the Ordovician period, there seems to have been an increase in impact craters on Earth. The team mapped the locations of 21 known craters of this age, and used models of tectonic plates movements to track them back to where they were at the time of the impact. Intriguingly, all of them seemed to have struck within 30 degrees of the equator. Normally, they would be expected to hit at completely random locations around the world. That's an odd finding, but it could potentially be a sampling error.

To find out, the researchers then calculated how much of the continental surface from the time would be able to preserve craters for so long. They focused on stable, undisturbed sections of crust that date back to before the mid-Ordovician, excluding regions that have been buried, eroded or affected by tectonic activity. The best results were found in Western Australia, Africa, and sections of North America and Europe.

The team then used the same tectonic models to rewind time to find where on the planet those prime locations were back in the Ordovician. And sure enough, only 30% of this suitable land was found to be near the equator. Having all 21 craters hit within this minority of land is a statistical anomaly, the team says.

What would cause an influx of meteorites to be concentrated around the equator? If Earth captured a passing asteroid around 466 million years ago, it could have ripped it to shreds and formed a ring. This debris would then rain down on the planet, focused on the equator, over a few tens of millions of years.

The ring theory could also explain a few other mysteries of the time too. Meteorite debris in those craters shows signs of not having spent much time in space before crashing to Earth, which is consistent with material from a relatively recent breakup of a large asteroid into a ring.

About 20 million years later, Earth entered the Hirnantian Ice Age, where temperatures plunged to their lowest in the last half-billion years. *"Because of the Earth's tilt relative to the Sun, a ring around the equator would have shaded part of the Earth's surface, potentially causing a global cooling event,"* said Professor Andy Tomkins, lead author of the study.

It's an intriguing idea, and even raises the possibility that rings are a phase Earth and other planets go through multiple times in their lifespans. After all, Saturn's rings could be as young as 10 million years – meaning Earth was the trendsetter in this case – and they could be gone in another 100 million. Mars is also currently tearing one of its moons apart, which could form a new ring in 20 to 40 million years.

Next, the team plans to model how asteroids break up and form rings, and how that ring evolves over time. Later work will attempt to model the effects that rings could have on the climate.

The research was published in the journal *Earth & Planetary Science Letters*.

Sources: Monash University, The Conversation

GATEWAY TO HELL

This discovery took place in 1991, in Siberia. The Batagaika or Batagay crater, nicknamed the "Gateway to Hell," is threatening the planet.

This mega-subsidence, the largest in the world, is *"due to a degradation of the permafrost due to a rise in temperatures and precipitation in the Arctic,"* indicates the daily newspaper Nice-Matin. And according to the scientists who are closely monitoring the situation, its evolution does not bode well.

The crater is widening at a worrying speed, releasing various greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, contributing, at the same time, to global warming. The crevasse is therefore aptly named "Gateway to Hell." While it was 790 meters wide ten years ago, it is now 200 meters wider, or 990m, indicates Sciences et Vie, relayed by Nice-Matin.

"As it collapses, the Batagay crater exposes layers of permafrost that had been frozen for thousands of years. This represents a volume of one million cubic meters per year," since 2014, figures that could even be underestimated, reports the scientific community.

On the one hand, global warming causes and leads to an accelerated melting of the permafrost and on the other, the greenhouse gases released contribute to the rise in temperatures. A vicious circle.

However, researchers note that if the crater continues to widen, the permafrost that would remain inside would only be a few meters thick, limiting its development.

Source: Nice-Matin

WORLD'S OLDEST CHEESE

Bizarre clumps of organic matter found buried alongside Bronze Age mummies in China have now been identified as cheese. New DNA analysis has finally solved a long-standing mystery, and it makes it the oldest cheese ever found, dating back 3,600 years.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) made this discovery after sampling and analyzing DNA from the clumps found preserved next to the bodies of the Tarim Basin mummies, who were first discovered in the early 20th century and were buried in the region that is now modern-day Xinjiang...

And it's not just any cheese – cow and goat DNA, as well as the bacterium *Lactobacillus kefiranofaciens*, has indicated that these clumps were in fact kefir cheese, providing insight into the history and evolution of probiotics and human health. *L. kefiranofaciens* is still a key microorganism in kefir soft cheeses. The researchers also identified the microscopic fungal species *Pichia kudriavzevii*, which is a type of yeast found in kefir grains today...

In modern-day kefir production, there are two main *Lactobacillus* bacteria groups, one from Russia – which is predominantly used today – and another from Tibet. Through phylogenetic research, the scientists traced the mummies' cheese microorganisms as being most closely related to the Tibetan strain. Until now, it was believed kefir originated in North Caucasus, yet this Bronze Age cheese discovery predates the timeline that has Russia at the center of where this fermented product was first made.

Source: Chinese Academy of Sciences via Scimex

BELIEVE it or not....

1] Air New Zealand has taken out the top spot in two categories in the Conde Nast Traveller 2024 Readers' Choice Awards. Voted the best airline in the world for the 2nd time (2017) with an 89.08 rating ahead of Singapore Airlines with a rating of 88.47, and in third place Qatar Airways, rating 87.11. Air NZ was also dubbed better than the rest for in-flight meals, winning best airline for food.

2] Paper specifically for use in the toilet was invented in 1857 by an American, Joseph Gayetty. In the 1880s, the Scott brothers began selling toilet paper on a roll. [I can still remember seeing torn up squares of newspaper stuck on a nail in rural privies in the 1950s.]

THREE CHANCE DISCOVERIES

1] CORNFLAKES; Today's breakfast staple was invented by chance one afternoon in 1894. Michigan sanitarium director Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and his brother Will Keith Kellogg were attempting to make granola when they absent-mindedly left the wheat to dry out. They pressed the stale grains anyway and produced the first ever batch of crispy cereal flakes. A religious family, the Kelloggs were convinced a grain-based vegetarian diet would suppress carnal passions and "unhealthy" urges. Having obtained a patent, Will Keith Kellogg decided to mass-market the creation in 1906. He swapped corn for wheat and added malt sugar to make the flakes more palatable, causing him to fall out with his anti-sugar brother in the process. Marketed as a healthy breakfast cereal, corn flakes were a big hit with the American public from the get-go. By 1910, Will Keith Kellogg's Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company, the precursor to The Kellogg Company, was turning over \$1 million a year, and corn flakes have gone on to net the firm billions of dollars over the years.

2] SUPERGLUE In 1942, Eastman Kodak scientist Harry Coover Jr. was looking for a suitable material to create clear plastic gun sights for the war effort, and stumbled across cyanoacrylate. Frustrating Coover no end, the substance was ridiculously sticky, bonding to almost anything. Needless to say, it was rejected as unsuitable for the project. Several years later, Coover was working with his Eastman Kodak colleague Fred Joyner on heat-resistant jet plane canopies. Joyner discovered Coover's work on cyanoacrylate and the pair re-tested its properties, finally waking up to the substance's incredible commercial potential as an ultra-strong, fast-acting adhesive... The adhesive was launched in 1958 as the rather prosaic Eastman #910, and gained its Super Glue moniker in the 1970s, along with bona fide household name status. Tubes of the stuff flew off the shelves. By the late 1980s, sales of ultra-strong instant glues had hit \$100 million a year.

3] BOTOX Botulinum toxin, or Botox as it's commonly known, was first used to treat eye muscle disorders in 1977. Vancouver-based eye specialist Dr Jean Carruthers (pictured) started treating her patients with the toxin during the mid-1980s and began to notice a very curious side-effect. When injected in the forehead and eye area, the toxin smoothed fine lines and evened-out deeper wrinkles. In 1987, a patient who had been successfully treated for eye muscle spasms became upset when she was told she no longer required Botox injections, having become accustomed to a wrinkle-free visage.

Dr Jean Carruthers told her dermatologist husband, Dr Alastair Carruthers about the patient's reaction, and they realised they'd discovered a near-miraculous anti-ageing treatment. Receptionist Cathy Swann volunteered to be a guinea pig and was delighted with the results. The Carruthers published a scientific paper in 1991 that won over colleagues concerned about the toxin's safety, and Botox was eventually granted FDA approval for cosmetic use in 2002.

Since then, millions of people worldwide have been treated, and the Botox industry is forecast to be worth a staggering \$13.5 billion (£10.6m) by 2035.