

Learning for Life



Newsletter # 21

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Editor
Diana March

It's wonderful to see our U3A members back in force, once again taking part in the activities they love. How many of you, like me, promised yourselves during lockdown to brush up on your newly learned skills (especially languages) so as not to lose momentum? Promises, promises!

If you're like me, you enjoyed staying in your PJ's a little longer than usual ... maybe even rising a little later than usual. I sometimes felt a bit guilty but more often than not prayed that nobody would just drop by and see me. Of course all that worry was unnecessary as nobody was "dropping by" on anybody.

We must remember that COVID 19 has not disappeared. As such, we ALL have a responsibility to keep ourselves and others we come into contact with, safe.

U3A Riverland is operating under the COVID Safe Plan prepared for the RSL premises which we use as our home base. The Committee has implemented a number of processes that will assist with limiting the spread of the virus. PLEASE follow the guidelines AT ALL TIMES, particularly because of our ages, we are deemed a higher risk category.

PLEASE STAY HOME IF YOU FEEL UNWELL

Social distancing is still a requirement—guidelines recommend 1.5m distances between individuals. You will have received a flyer outlining your responsibilities and we ask that you take them seriously. We have all seen what can happen when people become complacent (just look at what's happened in Victoria).

I am delighted to be U3A active again and enjoyed the first gathering of the sock knitting group who met for lunch at the Big River Tavern in Berri before getting down to business ... knitting socks. The Tavern generously allows us to use their fully-glassed, well-lit space and we are grateful to them—good light helps us avoid dropped stitches! Actually, I think it's the wine that's really responsible for the 'mistakes'.

Now that state borders are re-opening, I know that some of you will "bolt" north. If you are travelling, please stay safe and return to us in a healthy state.

This newsletter is earlier than usual because I am spending three weeks in Queensland in July/August. Hopefully it will be warmer and I'll be able to return.



Firstly check the current schedule of activities that was emailed to all members. Not all activities have been rescheduled for Term 3—some will resume in Term 4. Remember that the latest schedule is always posted to our website: www.u3ariverland.org

If you would like to see a new activity scheduled please let someone on the Committee know or contact Anne-Marie, our Courses Co-ordinator.

How It All Began

It started in France

The Université du Troisième Âge (University of the Third Age) was founded in 1972 at Toulouse University, France. By 1975 the idea had spread to universities across Europe. The original French model required U3As to be associated with traditional university systems. Their course content and presentation were a mix of open lectures, negotiated access to established university courses, contracted courses, study groups, workshops, excursions and physical health programs.

The British changed it

U3A reached Cambridge in 1981 and they adopted a style which ensured no distinction between the tutors and those being taught. Members could become teachers as well as learners. The strengths of this self-help approach include: minimal fees; accessible classes run locally; flexible timetables and flexible teaching styles; a variety of

courses ranging from the highly academic to arts, crafts, social and physical activities.

Now it's very Australian

We have the French to thank for a brilliant idea and the awkward name. Troisième âge (third age) is a term for the years of 'active retirement' that come between working life (second age) and dependent frail old age (fourth age). Some people are confused by the name or intimidated by the use of 'university'. That is why we are "just U3A" to our friends. We have the British to thank for the system which works very well in Australia where many of us live a long way from a university and in an era where education has become a user-pays commodity wiping leisure classes off curricula across the country.

Staying active

Research shows that staying mentally alert, physically active and socially engaged wards off the worst evils of ageing and helps seniors live independently in their own homes for longer. This is what makes U3A a first-rate positive ageing organisation.

u3asouthaustralia.org.au

B matter

Honey bees and other pollinators are under threat worldwide for a number of reasons, including:

Diseases and pests

Honey bees are susceptible to a number of diseases. With global movements and the intensification of farming practices, the prevalence of a number of bee diseases is increasing. Australia is, for now, the only continent that remains free from the Varroa destructor mite, responsible for spreading viruses and contributing to large scale colony losses globally.

Habitat destruction and access

A loss of access to nectar and pollen resources makes it difficult to impossible for commercial beekeepers to maintain a viable business and therefore sustain enough healthy and strong hives for pollination services. Habitat destruction results from clear fell logging practices and from urban encroachment. Beekeeper access to public lands is also impacted by government policies and varies widely from state to state.

Use of agricultural chemicals

Products like insecticides, fungicides, herbicides and fertilizers can all be highly toxic to bees but are commonly used in agriculture and horticulture, impacting bee health and numbers.

Decline in commercial beekeeping

Commercial beekeeper numbers are decreasing in Australia and across the world for a number of reasons including reduced access to resources, low honey prices with increasing production costs, an under-appreciation of the value of pollination services, and the impact of serious bee diseases.

www.wheeneefoundation.org.au

FOOD
SECURITY
NEEDS
BEE
SECURITY

.....
and its not
just
European
honey
bees

As well as the European honey bees which grace our gardens and can be cultivated in hives, there are over 1500 species of native bees, with 500 species in South Australia alone. The native bees we get in SA are solitary and don't give us honey. However, that doesn't mean we should ignore them. They play a really important part in the pollination of Australian native plants and in fact there are many plants which can only be pollinated by native bees. They are also great pollinators for our vegies and fruit trees and are said to be ten times more effective at pollinating flowers than the European honey bee. The **blue banded bee**, for example, is perfect for pollinating our tomatoes and eggplants and these crops will taste better if pollinated by these native bees.

Native bees come in a range of shapes and sizes from 2-25mm long and are often confused with other insects such as hoverflies. They can be brightly coloured or black and brown. About half of the native species nest in the soil and the other half use existing crevices or hollows in wood. The **blue banded bee** is one of the prettiest and I usually hear them in my garden before I ever see them. Their buzzing is louder and lower than a honey bee and they have black stripes over a stunning teal blue body. They are also larger than a honey bee. Leaf cutter bees protect their offspring in their nest by cutting pieces of leaves and resin bees make a resin to close the nest to protect its young.

An excellent website about native bees: www.aussiebee.com.au

What can you do?

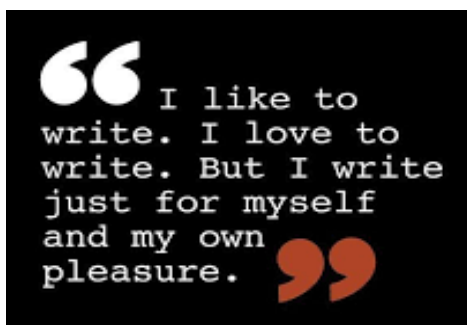
Every backyard has the potential to be a sanctuary for bees. You just need flowers, lots of them, lots of different types including local native and exotic, lots of different shapes, flowering at different times of year. Current landscaping styles which use just one or two varieties of strappy or spiky plants with lawn or paving, do nothing to provide for bees. What flowers? Start with a range of herbs as bees just love them and you get the added bonus of being able to use the produce in the kitchen. If you have rosemary, sage, thyme, mint, basil, parsley and chives that is a great start. Add in some French lavender and you will have flowers most of the year. Borage self-seeds all around my vegie patch.

I haven't just got it because its blue flowers look pretty, or are worth more per kg than gold, as people who do cake decorating love to crystallise them, I have them because they are beloved by bees. Another group of flowers that bees love are daisies, so in my vegie patch calendulas abound on the edge of paths. The shape of the flower acts as a landing pad and bees are always gracing their blooms. As far as colours go, apparently bees see the ultraviolet spectrum so the colours we observe would be different for them, however they appear to like yellow, orange, violet, purple and blue. They cannot see red!


www.sophiespatch.com.au



Consider building your own native bee "hotel". These provide shelter for solitary native bees and other insects.



ONE COLD NIGHT

Jenny Sanders

Tess opened the door of the tavern, leaving the warmth and chatter behind. It was icy and she wished she had worn a warmer coat. There was a waning moon which didn't cast much light and it was darker than she expected.

"I wish Terry had come," but Terry was home editing his endless reports for work and in a fit of petulance she had come out alone.

Still, it wasn't far to walk and if she moved quickly she would soon get warm. A shadow moved at the end of the yard – she shivered – just someone out for a smoke, she thought.

Clouds moved across the moon. She walked faster, suddenly aware of the darkness. Menace hung in the air. Why hadn't she brought a torch. Home suddenly seemed an impossible distance away – why had she come out alone – she must have been mad.

She thought she could hear footsteps on the cobbles behind her but looking around she could see nothing. "Who's there," she asked but no-one answered.

"I'm being hysterical," she told herself but the footsteps came closer—much closer.

Then a hand on her shoulder. A scream rose in her throat.

She swung around prepared to fight. "Well that's a nice welcome – I thought I may as well join you," said Terry. "Why are you in such a hurry?"

The 'Writing for Pleasure' group continued writing during COVID 19 lockdown, sharing their works with each other electronically.

The group was recently challenged to write "Flash Fiction". No, it has nothing to do with people wearing overcoats, lurking in bushes! Flash fiction is extremely difficult to write well because the writer has to cover a lot of ground with few words—the secret is brevity.

One of the most famous "micro stories" is that by Ernest Hemmingway. Six words paint a graphic story.

"For Sale. Baby's shoes. Never worn."

PENSIVE

Brent Morrell

He closed his eyes and could see.

He saw tanned legs beneath a netball ring, a flash of sports knickers as she leaped for the ball. Saw loud bravado, a callow youth showing off to impress, a gaggle of gigglers glancing askance.

He saw hooped skirts on the dance floor, rock and roll and slow waltz, the ritual preceding the ardour that followed.

He eyeballed the golden eagle, then turned to see a veiled bride floating, coming to him. Saw a shining joy that mirrored his own.

Then a wan, tired, ecstatic face with a newborn at breast came into view. An instinctive nurturer, with love ever expanding. He saw it again and again.

The visions blurred and then they

were older. Misty eyes at graduation, one two, three. Saw her staring at photos on the shelf, bereft until the grand-children came.

He saw the Eiffel Tower, Big Ben, Pompeii, cheap rooms and fast trains. Los Ramblas, Montmartre, Trafalgar, hand in hand. Circled the red land, seen through the windscreen. Together.

Spring in the garden, summer with family, autumn meant travel, winter by the fire. So much they shared. He could see it all.

He saw a private sunset that the whole world could see.

Schoolgirl, lover, bride and mother. Matron, companion, gran and comfort. He could see it all. Undimmed by years, bifocals not needed.

His hands warmed the cold urn he was holding. He opened his eyes, blinded by tears.

And smiled.

IT TAKES MORE THAN TWO TO TANGO

Marian Woodberry

Esmeralda, Millicent, Maureen and Gertrude ... diverse personalities but supportive or indifferent to each individual's opinions ... had lived quite harmoniously for quite a long time.

One evening their landlord informed them that as from tomorrow two new girls would be joining them in the house. It wasn't about the space—it was a large house. It was about the disruption "intruders" would mean to their lifestyle and upset the balance of their living arrangements.

On arrival, the quartet eyed the new occupants from a distance and made no effort to be friendly or welcoming.

Understandably, Rose and Rebecca were a little timid and not really knowing what to expect from the

group, decided initially to keep to their designated quarters for the time being.

After a boardroom discussion Esmeralda, the self-appointed spokesperson for the group, approached the new arrivals and in an extremely frosty manner informed them of the rules of the house, according to them and the consequences if they broke those rules.

They then began preparing their dinner—no invitation to Rose or Rebecca to join them

The standoff continued for several days but eventually when the quartet realised the newcomers were no real threat, they decided that being friends had more advantages than being enemies.

With tensions removed all the girls in Cluckingham Palace got down to conducting the business they were especially good at ... supply an egg a day to their landlord.

If this sounds like something you'd like to try, why not join the "Writing for Pleasure" group which meets fortnightly at the Renmark Community Centre on Monday mornings.

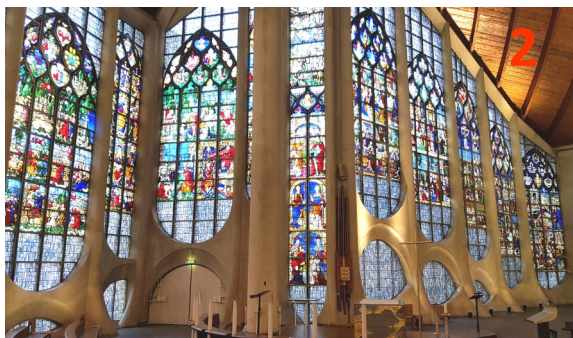


1 Let's keep travelling

Do you have any idea where you might find the following sites?



Let's indulge ourselves. Let's pretend the international borders are open ... that planes are flying and taking you to destinations you've always dreamed of. (solution on next page)



HOW TRUE BLUE ARE YOU?

ESCAPE.COM.AU

The first surf lifesaving club in the world was founded at Bondi Beach in 1906.

The Great Ocean Road was built by returning WWI soldiers as a memorial to mates who died fighting and to connect isolated communities on Victoria's rugged coast.

Only 5 countries are bigger than Australia: Russia, Canada, China, USA & Brazil.

In 1958, Ross Arnott of Arnott's Biscuits attended the Kentucky Derby. The winning horse was Tim Tam.

Renmark was the birthplace of the "goonie", "space bag", "chateau cardboard" ... the wine cask.

Of the 25 deadliest snakes in the world, 21 are found in Australia.

Anna Creek Station, in SA is the world's largest cattle ranch—34,000sq kms.

If you visited one beach in Australia daily, it would take more than 29 years to visit them all. The nation has 10,685 registered beaches.

The world's largest sand island is Fraser Island. 120km long, it was named for Captain James Fraser, who starved to death there.

In 1890 "Shorty" Bradley created a culinary icon in Pt Pirie. It was the pie floater—a meat pie in a plate of thick green pea soup.

The Dog on the Tuckerbox statue,

erected in 1932 is at Snake Gully, about 8km from Gundagai. It celebrates the loyalty of a drover's dog that guarded his master's lunch box until he returned (he never did).

The Australian Alps in Victoria and NSW get more snow than the Swiss Alps.

In 1953, David Warren of the Melbourne Aeronautical Research Laboratories invented the black box flight data recorder, now installed in all international planes.

The Aussie train once known as the Afghan Express (now the Ghan) has operated since 1878. Named for Afghan camel drivers who once trekked the remote interior.

Sally needs your help collecting plastic bottle caps for an art project



You know the type—found on milk/juice bottles, vitamin bottles, vegemite jars etc. This will be a large project and requires LOTS of caps of different sizes and colour. See how effective this can be ... not to mention keeping these plastics out of landfill.



A clearly labelled collection box has been placed in the U3A art room. I'm sure Sally will appreciate your contributions. If you don't have many, ask your friends or neighbours to collect too. **PLEASE:** rinse before delivering as stale milk smells! **No metal caps.**

"You may surprise yourself at how addicted you become once you start knitting socks. I had no intention of knitting fourteen socks."

Famous last words ... from a person who went on to knit not just 14 socks, but 18 pairs of socks! But that's not the record ... that belongs to a 'fanatical' knitter who's notched up 36 pairs. Yes, that's correct, 72 individual socks! **You're a sock knitting legend Ute Young!**

WARNING: Sock knitting is addictive

Sock knitting is hugely popular for a variety of reasons: Socks are much more portable than sweaters, they're ideal for gifting and there are so many wonderful, fun yarns to knit with. Also, it's not as difficult as it might seem—as long as you've got the right number of stitches and pay attention to the instructions, it will all work out ... mostly!

The first U3A sock knitting group gathered in November 2017 ... with the promise of wine while they knitted ... I think that's what drew them in!

Other groups ran in March and July 2018, May 2019 and July 2020. Each activity ran for 5-6 weeks, after which knitters continued to gather weekly. Each group filled quickly and attendees had a lot of fun. There's no doubt that knitting is therapeutic and if you haven't yet tried knitting a pair of "Funky Socks", why don't you register your interest for 2021.



FUN FACTS:

Number of regular knitters	30
Pairs of socks knitted	194
Individual socks knitted	388
Average time per sock	12 hrs
Total time for 194 pairs	4656 hrs
	194 days
Average yarn per sock	320m
Total length for 194 pairs	124,160m
	(124km)

That length of yarn would stretch almost to Mildura from Renmark (136km).

You'll agree—it's not a bad addiction.

QUIZ ANSWERS:

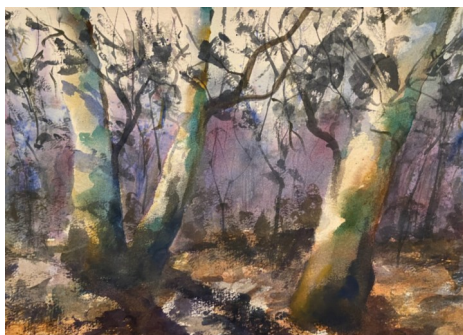
1 Fisherman's Bastion, Budapest, Hungary 2 Church of St Joan of Arc, Rouen, France 3 Peterhof Palace, St Petersburg, Russia 4 Kizhi Island, Russia 5 Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, Germany 6 Château d'Estaing, Estaing, France 7 St Basil's Cathedral, Moscow, Russia 8 Alms giving, Luang Prabang, Laos 9 Dom Luís I Bridge, Porto, Portugal

The magic of watercolour

with
Alan Ramachandran



Painting is my way of expressing how I appreciate life and the beauty that I see in even the most ordinary and mundane things. My emotions dictate the actual palette and composition.



Five U3A members spent an exhilarating day at the Ramco Hall on Sunday, 12 July, attending the Alan Ramachandran, Semi-Abstract Landscape workshop, organised by the Rain Moth Gallery, Waikerie. Alan is an internationally acclaimed water colour artist—see more at www.watercoloursbyalanlouis.com

Alan started the day with exercises in blending watercolours—a technique not used before by most of the 15 participants. He also discussed the 'lost and found' in a painting. In this case the 'lost' blurred background and foreground and the 'found' detailed trees. He likened it to not using all the spices in the kitchen in the one dish.

In the afternoon we started on our painting of two trees using various watercolour techniques: wet in wet, wet on dry, scraping, splattering ... and generally having fun! 15 participants, 15 very different results and 15 very happy, stimulated, tired students ... by Kate Yates

Above: U3A artists Ruth Pfeiler, Heather Shearer, Bev Hartigan, Carmen Borowski and Kate Yates whose watercolour is shown at left.

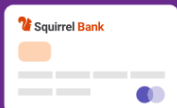


Be Connected

Every Australian online
www.beconnected.esafety.gov.au

Be Connected is an Australia-wide government initiative empowering all Australians (especially older Australians), to thrive in a digital world.

There are online learning resources, as well as a Network of community partners - the Be Connected Network - who offer support so you can develop your digital skills and confidence.



Online banking

Learn how to use your computer to perform common banking tasks securely from home. We have developed our very own online bank, **Squirrel Bank**, to provide examples and practice activities to help perfect your online banking skills in a safe environment.



All about myGov

Did you know you can use myGov to find all of your online government services in one place? We show you everything you need to know to get started safely with myGov, including how to link services, claim a Medicare refund and use My Health Record.



New practice area!

If you are new to smart devices, using the smartscreen can be challenging. Our new practice area is designed especially to help you build skills and use your smart device with confidence.



This is an extremely informative and user-friendly way to become savvy with a number of online practices and digital technologies such as:

- Online Banking
- Using Government services
- Buying and selling
- Online hobbies
- Avoiding scams
- Using smart phones and tablets
- Internet safety
- Socialising online
- Watching and listening online



New games!

Designed especially for smartphones and tablets, we have fun new games to play. Perfect your swipe, scroll, tap and zoom skills whilst beating your best score (or your best mate!).



Buying and selling online

We look at common online shopping options, as well as popular sites like eBay and Gumtree. We also show you how to set up PayPal and other helpful tips for being safer when buying and selling online.



Quick reads

A short guide on the topics you want to hear about. Find out how you can spot the latest scams, stay safer online, and much more.

Can you spot a scam?

We cannot always be sure that people are who they say they are. If you are unsure about a text or email message you have received, do an internet search for the company it appears to be sent from and contact them directly. **DO NOT** click on any links **OR** open any attachments as they may download a computer virus. Find out how to protect yourself.