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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

26th March 2024

Nanette Tunnickliffe



Dear Members, Commencing duties again as President gives me much satisfaction – thank you for your belief in me that I am the right person for the job. I must thank all of you who have sent me emails – I have tried to reply to most but if I missed you out it was great to hear from you.

With a new Committee in place, I can tell you all that we are very excited to commence work. All members of the Committee have enormous enthusiasm and energy to get things done for the members. Term 2 – eleven weeks long with no General Meetings and only the two public holidays – will give us an opportunity for continuity in our classes, to spend more time together doing what we all enjoy. Do check out the timetable on our website – u3ageelong.org.au – as it is up to date. The new course booklet will be printed and available next week. With winter approaching I urge you all to take care – COVID and flu are still around. Wearing a mask is a good idea in larger classes – indeed I wore a mask whilst in Hong Kong over the past week just to be on the safe side – and of course please do not attend class if you are ill but please let your tutor or the Office know.

Class sizes have been kept to Council recommendations. Contained in this Newsletter is a wonderful report on the Geology trip last year to the Flinders' Ranges – it makes excellent reading. I must extend a huge vote of thanks to Martin Hughes our Geology tutor for this undertaking. This trip brought a completely new dimension to what we offer at U3A Geelong. Please keep an eye out for the Bulletins – they contain the latest class information as well as the details of our social gatherings and lectures. See you next week everyone. Kind regards, Nanette Tunnickliffe

INTRODUCING MEMBERS OF U3A GEELONG

SHARON SWANDER

TREASURER TO U3A GEELONG COMMITTEE

I am from the United States, have been in Australia 4 ½ years and have been the U3A Geelong Treasurer since 2021. I was a CPA in the US for many years and worked as Controller for private companies. I participated in a group like U3A before coming here and enjoy the opportunity for life-long learning. I really enjoy being a part of U3A.

I was raised in the Midwest and later, as an IBM wife, lived all over the US, finally settling in northern California. After my twin grandsons were born in 2000, I moved to their home in Austin, TX.

My former husband and I started coming to Australia in 1984 so that he could call on Telstra for IBM. We loved it, made a group of close friends near Melbourne and came often. My son loved it too and came to attend university at La Trobe in Melbourne. He met his future wife there. They settled in Ocean Grove and have 2 lovely children. I came to the Geelong area to be with them in 2019. Their youngest child was born with a severe birth defect and required extensive surgery. She is now doing very well with much help from and many thanks to the Royal Children's Hospital. I have applied to become a resident and plan to stay in Australia.



Tuesday's Office Volunteers,
David and Angela

"The reward is working with such lovely people and keeping our minds and skills active" (David)

U3A Geelong Flinders Ranges Geology Trip

2023

How would you like to get in your car, pretend it is a time machine, and, in less than 20 km, travel through 130 million years of dramatic Earth history, peering into the earliest days of multicellular life? That's exactly what we did, in Brachina Gorge, in beautiful Ikara-Flinders Ranges, last October. Fantastic!

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start at the beginning... After months of planning and a couple of meetings with interested U3A members, we set off on Saturday 14 October 2023, following our tutor/leader Dr Martin Hughes. Our first night was spent at Bushman's Retreat, Lake Cullulleraine, west of Mildura, then we drove to Burra, S.A., and stayed at Paxton Square cottages, which were built in the pattern of a Cornish village, as accommodation for the miners working at the rich copper mine in the late 1840s. The cottages are in three terraces, backing onto a central green. The afternoon was spent visiting miners' dugouts in the creek banks, where hundreds lived with their families until a big flood hit. We then explored the ruins of Hampton Village, on a nearby hilltop, where miners, by then more affluent, built homes of their own. Next we visited Redruth Gaol, later used as a girls' reformatory. The gaol was used in filming of *Breaker Morant* in 1979. Finally, for the day, we explored the underground cellars of the Unicorn Brewery, which at the time was very successful in supplying beer to the pubs of surrounding districts.



At the Monster Mine, Burra

The following day, Sunday 16th, we toured the Burra copper mine site, including the Morphett engine house (modelled on a traditional Cornish beam-engine pumping station), the powder magazine, Bon Accord mine museum, and the restored railway station where we inspected a partial *Diprotodon* skeleton. A giant wombat-like animal, and a key species in Australia's megafauna, the *Diprotodon* is long-extinct. After a pasty at the local bakery and filling up with fuel, the afternoon was spent driving via Jamestown,

Wilmington, Quorn and Hawker to Wilpena Pound Resort, in the heart of Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park. On arrival, we observed the local fauna, both native and feral, in the form of emus and goats in the forest adjoining our camp.

Next day, Tuesday 17th, we began our geological exploration in earnest, starting at the eastern end of Brachina Gorge, where Martin, with assistance of information posted in

the interpretive shelter, briefed us on what lay ahead. Heading west, we stopped to inspect fossilised stromatolites (ancient blue-green algae which build underwater mounds, and surprisingly are still extant today in saline environments such as Shark Bay, W.A.). Then we attempted to find an outcrop of ejectamenta resulting from a huge meteor strike (Acraman) about 300 km away and about 590million years ago, without success (Martin went back a few days later and found the deposit – too late for us, unfortunately). Then we retraced our route to visit the ‘golden spike’.



At the GSSP (golden spike)



On the stromalite bed

This was a great thrill for Suzanne and me as we had promised our geologist friend in New Mexico that we would see it. For those not acquainted, there is a ‘golden spike’ (actually a small bronze disc set into the rock) which marks the boundary between adjacent (in a time sense) geological periods, as a type location for that transition. ‘Our’ golden spike is the only one in Australia (in fact, the southern hemisphere) and marks the boundary between the end of the Cryogenian period (so-called ‘snowball Earth’) and the Ediacaran in which is found the first evidence of multicellular life. The first fossils of these soft-bodied animals were found by Reg Sprigg in 1946 in the Ediacara Hills to the west, but the golden spike is set in the rocks of Brachina Gorge where the boundary is clearly visible between the glacial deposits of the Cryogenian and the dolomite of the early Ediacaran. The Ediacaran represents the upper extent of the Pre-Cambrian, where, previously, experts, including famous geologist Sir Douglas Mawson, believed

that no multicellular life existed. The Ediacaran period extends from 635 million years ago (Mya) to 541 Mya, where it transitions to the Cambrian, in which occurred the explosion in multicellular life which continues to this day despite several mass-extinction events. The journey through Brachina Gorge is unusual in that it traverses a series of geological formations in continuity across 130 million years of deposition. The series includes quartzites, limestones, sandstones, shales, glacial tillite, siltstones and dolomite. A highlight was the outcropping of a fossil-rich rock built of Archeocyatha, the first (and now long-extinct) reef-building animals. The road through the gorge proved challenging in places, but our three vehicles negotiated it without incident. As well as the geological interest, the road provides a spectacular scenic drive.



Wilpena Pound



After the flight

Morning of Wednesday 18th dawned calm and clear, ideal conditions for a scenic flight, which four of us undertook. Out at the airstrip, our Cessna 206 Stationair awaited, in the care of pilot Jackson, who gave us a memorable aerial tour of Wilpena Pound and surrounds, explaining some of the history, and pointing out features such as the Hill family homestead (they farmed and grazed the interior of the Pound in the early 1900s) and St Mary's Peak, the highest point on the rim of the Pound. In the afternoon we hiked in to Arkaroo Rock to view the Aboriginal ochre and charcoal rock shelter art. It was very moving to think that people had been living a rich cultural life in these harsh surroundings for thousands of years.

No report on a visit to Ikara-Flinders Ranges NP would be complete without some observations about the flora and fauna. Of note was the regrowth, only 30 or 40 years old, of white cypress pine. This tree was completely cut out by the 'pioneer' settlers due to its rotand termite-resisting qualities. Regeneration has been slower than hoped because of browsing by feral goats. The goats have been heavily culled but are still a problem. Along the creeks are beautiful groves of river red gum. Wildflowers were past their best. Quite a few birds were seen, including emus, raptors (mainly kites), ringneck and other parrots, ravens, blackbacked magpies and a beautiful painted finch, with brilliant scarlet breast. Of mammals, we saw many kangaroos (sadly quite a few as roadkill), and a mother and joey euro (a species of small kangaroo). Interestingly, we saw no reptiles in the national park, but many on the roads – mainly stumpytail lizards (both live and squashed). For our final night together, we gathered at the resort restaurant for dinner and reflection on our experiences of the past few days. Heartfelt thanks go to team leader Martin for his time, effort, outlays and congenial company in accompanying us, and for sharing his extraordinary knowledge on everything from geology to world history, and stories of his remarkable life in so many countries and cultures. Thanks too to our fellow team members April, Martin 2 and Suzanne, for good company, good humour and the joy of shared experiences in a special part of the world.



Farewell dinner

From Kester Baines

Mah Jong, A Life Journey

Mah Jong.. *By definition is a tile based game that was developed in the 19th century in China and has spread throughout the world since the early 20th century.*

It is played by four players and is a game of skill, strategy, and luck.

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In 1983 my wife Judy had to travel to Hong Kong for work, and being the attentive husband as I am, I just had to tag along. That trip also started a life long obsession of travel for us both, but that's a story for another time.

Anyway..

Whilst in Hong Kong we did a lot of shopping. Naturally...Back then was the era where every alley and street had stalls galore, and it was fascinating to wander through them not knowing what you will come out with.

Whilst meandering through the many streets of colourful and brightly lit stalls and shops one evening, we came across a shop selling very attractive and unusual tile sets in various designs. At this point we had never heard of Mah Jong, let alone what it looked like or how it was played. We were informed that it was an ancient Chinese game that the locals play obsessively whenever they can.

We spent quite some time in the shop, to the point where we finally chose a set we thought was really pretty. Some serious bartering ensued at that point. The set we chose had English letters and numbers on the tiles that catered especially for us westerners.

It was a good marketing strategy.... And it worked. It was also helpful, considering we do not speak or read Chinese.

Upon returning home from that trip we had all good intentions of learning how to play this mysterious and intriguing game.

Well....The included instructions were in pidgeon english and we could not make any sense of them at all. After many attempts at trying to decipher the instructions, we finally gave up as it was just too frustrating.

At that time we both worked in different corporate offices in Melb, so we thought how hard could it be to put the word out to find someone who knew how to play. Another failed attempt. This was also the time before the introduction of the internet, so we couldn't even google it. So at that point, out of sheer frustration we put the game in the dark recesses of the back of the games cupboard. That way we would soon forget about it, and we did.

As a side note to the above, I have found that this scenario is very common amongst people who have Mah Jong sets at home.

We now fast forward this story to 2019, a whopping 36 years later. Upon us both just retiring Judy discovered the U3A. She was particularly interested in the French language and also the Yoga, but also noticed there was a Mah Jong group as well. We both joined U3A in term three and enrolled into the Mah Jong class. The tutors were excellent, (Anne Potter and Margaret Klein) and it was only a couple of weeks later that we were up and running.....and playing.

We found we had a real flair for the game, and it wasn't long before we ventured off (were kicked off actually) the learners table and started playing with the experienced players. In doing so we found we could hold our own. We finished out the year gaining more experience as we went.

The following year after term 1 in 2020, the current tutors (Anne and Margaret) decided they wanted to step back for awhile. I was approached and asked if I would like to take on the role. After much deliberation on my part (48 seconds) I agreed to become the new Mah Jong tutor, with Anne staying on as an assistant tutor.

I have been the Mah Jong tutor ever since, and must say that I find the role very rewarding and one I really enjoy very much. I'm sure all our current players can attest to my enthusiasm each week. I even wear colourful Mah Jong socks to prove it. I have also taken it upon myself to institute a lot of new changes within the class and have streamlined our play so that we are all playing by the same rules.

In the beginning I started teaching new players within the class, but then realised that I was missing out on actually playing. So I have now split out the teaching into separate classes. This system is working very well. The popularity of our game over the past couple of years has increased quite significantly, and surprisingly. At present we have 37 players.

However, with a very full schedule of learners coming through this year, by the time we reach term 4 we will exceed 60 players. As a consequence, the Mah Jong class has now totally outgrown the Chapel at Cobbin Farm. A proposal to change venue was approved and as of the start of Term 2 this year we are relocating to the Grovedale Community Hub. When we relocate, I am extending our playing time from 2 hours to 3 hours, and instituting a break and a cuppa at the half way point. That way we not only have fun playing, but get the chance to be social as well.

All round it will be a win, win.

I would like to sincerely thank all those who preceded me, and for laying down the foundations of a great Mah Jong group. Special thanks must go to Anne Potter and Margaret Klein, because without their knowledge, instruction and dedication to this wonderful game, I doubt I would have ever played it.

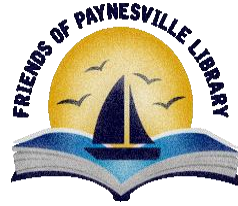
So that's my Mah Jong journey in a nutshell. All 41 years of it. Counting the original set we bought in 1983, we now have 4 Mah Jong sets.

But why?.. I hear you ask... The answer is...Because one is never enough.

May your Dragons always be plentiful... 

Shane Munro, U3A Mah Jong Tutor





Friends of Paynesville Library Inc.

Short Story Competition 2024

**Entries close – Friday 28th June,
Winners announced – Friday 26th
July, 2024**

**First Prize: \$400
Second Prize: \$200
Third Prize: \$100**

**Winners will be announced on
FRIDAY, 26TH July 2024**

Winners will be contacted by phone or email.

Prize money will be sent to winners, along with a copy of booklet containing winning stories.

Results will be published on our website:

www.friendsofpaynesvillelibrary.com

Friends of Paynesville Library Facebook and Paynesville Library.

More information can be obtained from

e: fopl2014@gmail.com

Entry form can be assessed and downloaded from –

www.friendsofpaynesvillelibrary.com

This is the thirteenth Short Story Competition for the Friends.

We hope writers and up and coming writers may take up the challenge and write a short story. So, maybe you might feel like heading to your computer, tablet, laptop or maybe pick up a pen and start writing.

Judges were very impressed with standard of writing last year, and FOPL were delighted with the number of entries from all over Australia.

The Friends of Paynesville Library would like to wish all writers the best of luck with their story/stories.

Here's a joke!

Esme was sipping her tea at her friend's house. They'd known each other for eighty years.

She took a deep breath and admitted something awful; "I can't remember your name!"

A long silence followed. Her friend looked very troubled.

She turned to Esme slowly and said "It has to be written down somewhere. I'll go and look."