

U3A Upper Yarra Newsletter



Learn Share Enjoy

April 2020

From our President

It has been a very difficult year for both our Country and our U3A. We were very lucky not to have been impacted by the bushfires, but the impact of the worldwide Covid-19 virus has had a huge impact on, not only our U3A, but also our lifestyles, our activities and family life.

At the moment, it is very difficult to know when the lockdown imposed on our lifestyle is going to be lifted. In the meantime, we all must adjust to a very different way of living. We all need to be mindful of those who live on their own and are finding it difficult to cope with isolation. Consider calling a classmate on the phone and having a chat or exchange messages or emails.

I know that some classes are trying to use the internet and emails to run some sort of remote activities, but that is not possible for all classes.

In the meantime, stay safe and strong and keep in touch with us, using the office email or your class friends and leaders.

Bob Lillie

President, U3A Upper Yarra.

Important Information

Following U3A Network Victoria guidelines, **our regular classes will not be running in Term 2.**

However, there are other ways to keep things going. Some arrangements and ideas are detailed in this newsletter but we would like to hear from you if you have any suggestions about how we can keep in touch and also keep our brains working whilst being unable to meet together.

Keep up with physical activities such as walking within the constraints of the current restrictions.

From Raewyn

I trust that you are keeping well and looking after yourselves and loved ones.

I am sure you are aware that the Covid situation is changing rapidly and isolation orders may not be lifted for quite a while. So, it's more important than ever that we look out for one another. If you know of someone who is vulnerable or isolated a quick phone call could make a big difference. If you are feeling alone and would like to talk to someone please email or call, the contact details are shown below. If you need something, please also call as we may be able to put you in touch with someone who can help.

If you are a Leader and the nature of your class is such that you can conduct your course remotely utilising email, social media or by any other communication applications, please do so. All Leaders can access their class members information on the membership database, and you can click on "email members" on the left-hand side of your screen and email all your class members at one time. If you wish to do this but are having problems, please email me and I will call you and go through the process with you. If you are also willing to share your class information with all our members, please forward it to the office email address and it can be sent out for you.

Any members who have done something constructive at home or who have a funny story to tell, feel free to email it to the office, and add photos if you can.

Our u3a will not be commencing term 2 classes next week.

We will abide by government health directives and will recommence classes when it is deemed safe to do so. We are also dependent on decisions made by the CFAs and the Council and therefore can't use their rooms until advised by them.

We will stay in touch with you and give you information as it comes to us.

Raewyn

Email: office@upperyarrau3a.com.au

Phone: Raewyn: 5967 1485 or 0487 311 302 Barb: 5967 2518 or 0409 647 744

Some useful COVID-19 information

General information and great tips for Looking after your mental wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic and Ways to help families stay happy and hopeful during self-isolation:

<https://www.redcross.org.au/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-18/coronavirus-community-response-to-covid19/12063224>

The hotline for information if you think you have Corona Virus symptoms is

1800 675 398

Also refer to the article about how to avoid scams relating to Corona Virus in this newsletter.

Some ways to keep our classes going: - You don't need to enroll in these classes, just go online to the links if given or let us know by email that you would like to be included in any electronic mailouts as they become available.

History and Coffee and Conversation

I have been sending links to a series of videos on "The History of Islam" to both the Coffee and Conversation and Adventures in History Groups. I am planning to carry on with "The reconquest of Spain" in the 15th Century". However, the Coffee and conversation group might want to go in a different direction. I would be grateful if members of that group could advise if they want to continue in this direction or if they have any ideas of something that might be of more interest to them. I don't want to bore anyone, and any feedback would be welcomed and treasured.

I have put the last episode of our journey through the history of Islam up on my blog <http://boblswalks.blogspot.com/>. This video is fairly short and ends a little abruptly. I watched all three episodes the other day and found them interesting but a little wordy. If you have a TV with an HDMI port and if your computer or laptop has a similar port, you can connect it directly to the TV which makes viewing easier. That's what I have been doing.

If you would like to join this group just email me on boblillie3799@warburtons.own.net.au I hope that you find it interesting.

Bob

Philosophy In the time of Covid 19

Despite our enforced isolation from each other, the Philosophy group hopes to continue on-line. If you are not yet a member of the class, you may consider joining us when the world returns to "normal".

The idea is to present an article of a philosophical persuasion, not very long, for students to consider. As the purpose of the group is to discuss ideas, we have grown accustomed to disagreeing, back up our arguments with facts, and be open to others of divergent views. We do not always come to an agreement. Difficult as it is, we hope to continue this attitude by commenting online. Members are asked to give an opinion; then to argue with other remarks or, if they prefer, to consider the article in private.

In the interval, here are some websites you may like to access, to keep those brain-cells active. Most of these are current and refer to covid19 and its stresses.

Philosophy forums: there are many sites with this general heading, nearly all worthy of exploration thephilosophyforum.com, for example has a major article, followed by comments of various readers, almost as interesting and controversial as the original article.

[philosophy bites.com](http://philosophybites.com) This is the blog of Nigel Warburton. It gives an exhaustive list of topics, under headings, of articles written by various thinkers. Some are podcasts, some are in readable form.

Pharyngula blog of P Z Myers, quite controversial, and chatty by turns. For example, in the latest article he writes mystifyingly of several named females, and their intimate habits, which, it is later revealed, are ducks!

As a scientist of biological persuasion, in addition to his philosophical bent, he has an article about Australian insects caught in amber – fascinating.

Philosophy Matters This is a face-book-style series, composed mainly of witty and extremely funny comment on philosophy, the present dilemma, and life generally. Look for an update on the famous "The Last Supper"

Keep on smiling and keep the mental gremlins at bay!

Helen Clancy – See the interview with Helen on page 6

Astronomy

The following article was recently sent out to the members of our Astronomy class together with interesting information about the night sky in April and a lot more which was not practical to include in this newsletter. But just let us know if you would like to receive Alfred and Ursula's articles and we will add you to the mailing list.

Curiosity discovers organic molecules on Mars

The Curiosity rover has found organic molecules called thiophenes, which, on Earth, are associated with biological systems. Are they evidence for once-living microbes on Mars?

The search for evidence of life on Mars, past or present, just took an interesting new twist. Researchers studying the data sent back by NASA's Curiosity rover have found evidence for organic molecules called thiophenes, which, on Earth at least, are primarily a result of biological processes. The researchers are not claiming proof of life, but the discovery is certainly intriguing. The finding is being called "consistent with the presence of early life on Mars."

The findings were announced by researchers from Washington State University, and the peer-reviewed paper was published in the journal *Astrobiology* on February 24, 2020.

On Earth, thiophenes are often found in coal, crude oil, kerogen and even a species of mushrooms called white truffles. They can also be found in stromatolites and microfossils. On Mars, they were found by Curiosity, along with other organics, in an ancient mudstone formation called the Murray Formation.

The new paper explores some of the ways that thiophenes could be created on Mars, either biologically or abiotically (without life). As astrobiologist Dirk Schulze-Makuch, one of the two authors, explained in a statement: We identified several biological pathways for thiophenes that seem more likely than chemical ones, but we still need proof. If you find thiophenes on Earth, then you would think they are biological, but on Mars, of course, the bar to prove that has to be quite a bit higher.

Thiophenes are essential to biology, containing four carbon atoms and one sulphur atom in a ring. They can, however, occur without any connection to life. On Mars, this could be from meteor impacts or perhaps thermochemical sulphate reduction, where a set of compounds is heated to 120 degrees Celsius or more. This could conceivably have happened during volcanic activity on early Mars.

There are several ways that thiophenes can be formed biologically, however, which is what makes them of such interest to scientists looking for evidence of Martian life. Bacteria can create a sulphate reduction process – biological sulphate reduction – that results in thiophenes. The thiophenes themselves can also be broken down by bacteria in several ways. One interesting aspect of the Martian thiophenes is that the geological processes that can create them require the sulphur to be nucleophilic, where sulphur atoms donate electrons to form a bond with their reaction partner. But most of the sulphur known to exist on Mars is non-nucleophilic. TSR could reduce them to nucleophilic sulphides, but so could BSR. One problem is that while Curiosity can detect molecules such as thiophenes, it is limited in how much detailed analysis it can do. The onboard lab it uses – the Sample Analysis at Mars (SAM) instrument – primarily breaks down large molecules into smaller pieces using heat, although some additional testing can be done using wet chemistry.



A slab of mudstone called Old Soaker in the Murray Formation. Curiosity took these images on December 31 2016. The Mudstone shows what are thought to be mud cracks from when the region was once wet and then dried up a few billion years ago

So how can scientists tell if these thiophenes are biological or non-biological in origin? An answer will probably have to wait for follow-up missions such as NASA's Perseverance rover, set to launch this

Alfred and Ursula

Occasional Bird Walks

The occasional bird walk group is currently operating, reinventing itself as a group of bird talkers, so that members observe what is in their own backyard and share observations. Activities include sitting quietly outside for 20 minutes or more and making notes or sketching to document the changes that occur over the seasons, watching the behaviour of a bird for 5 minutes and asking me curly questions. A fortnightly summary is planned. If you are interested, you can join us now.

Heather

A Poem to lighten the day

I'm normally a social girl
I love to meet my mates
But lately with the virus here
We can't go out the gates.

You see, we are the 'oldies' now
We need to stay inside
If they haven't seen us for a while
They'll think we've upped and died.

They'll never know the things we did
Before we got this old
There wasn't any Facebook
So not everything was told.

We may seem sweet old ladies
Who would never be uncouth
But we grew up in the 60s -
If you only knew the truth!

There was sex and drugs and rock 'n roll
The pill and miniskirts
We smoked, we drank, we partied
And were quite outrageous flirts.

Then we settled down, got married
And turned into someone's mum,
Somebody's wife, then Nana,
Who on earth did we become?

We didn't mind the change of pace
Because our lives were full
But to bury us before we're dead
Is like red rag to a bull!

So here you find me stuck inside
For 4 weeks, maybe more
I finally found myself again
Then I had to close the door!

It didn't really bother me
I'd while away the hour
I'd bake for all the family
But I've got no bloody flour!

Now Netflix is just wonderful
I like a gutsy thriller
I'm swooning over Idris
Or some random sexy killer.

At least I've got a stash of booze
For when I'm being idle
There's wine and whiskey, even gin
If I'm feeling suicidal!

So let's all drink to lock down
To recovery and health
And hope this bloody virus
Doesn't decimate our wealth.

We'll all get through the crisis
And be back to join our mates
Just hoping I'm not far too wide
To fit through the flaming gates!

An Interview with Helen Clancy

This is the first of a series of interviews with people within U3A Upper Yarra. Sitting down with Helen Clancy quickly revealed a sharp and witty mind; a woman who clearly loves learning and continues to learn every day. Sadly, this is only a portion of the actual interview, but space dictated how much we use.

U3A Helen, where did you grow up?

HC Mostly Victoria. Primary school Werribee; High School Warragul. Warburton East – the longest time ever in one place.

U3A What was your profession?

HC Primary art teacher, potter (with pottery supplies business), lecturer Teachers' College, teacher Fairlea Women's Prison, sculptor, artist always.

U3A You taught at Fairlea Women's Prison, tell us about it.

HC Fairlea Women's Prison: I was not sure I could handle this experience; however, the security of the staff was of paramount importance. Most of the women were totally inexperienced in working with clay. Nearly always they were eager to learn, and happy to be together in a small group where they were not judged personally, just encouraged. One rather rough young woman commented "This is great. I spend most of my life outside destroyin' things, but here I am makin' somethin' worth lookin' at." I think all of them appreciated the opportunity to be creative, and to tap into reserves of which they were previously unaware. There were issues of vindictiveness and theft, but on the whole, it was a really rewarding experience. One woman even began to make tall cylindrical vases in her own time, which she sold to the staff!

U3A You teach philosophy, what is philosophy and how does the subject generate discussion in your class?

HC In Philosophy we are attempting to consider ways in which we can live better lives, by learning from Philosophers past and present. I settle on a topic, often via input from the students, then research the opinions and theories of as many divergent relevant views as I can. I endeavour to present the ideas in a questioning, often humorous, way, so that once the basics are explained, the students can give their opinions and hopefully understand and accept new insights into the topic. Plenty of jokes and witticisms while we learn from each other.

U3A You also teach art, what do you do in class and what is your favourite medium?

HC The class has evolved into two streams. One group has been present since inception; they need encouragement and incentive to further their techniques. The remainder are new to the course, so it is back to basics, learning the Principle and Elements of Art and Design, in a very practical and sequential way. There is always an element of Art Appreciation, and of Art History to further knowledge and enhance their results. I have always drawn and painted; settled on pottery for 40 years, which included sculpture most recently. Health issues now make those activities impossible, so pastels are the present pre-occupation. You can do anything with pastels – realism, impressionism, cubism, abstraction. A wonderful medium.

U3A What do you value most and why?

HC As to WHO - Probably my immediate family and friends. WHAT? Personally, my intellectual and creative abilities. To be able to use personal attributes to bring out the best in others is very satisfying. WHY? - gifts are meant to be used and appreciated by others, which brings the 'psychic wage' we all deserve.

U3A Helen, what do you mean by 'psychic wage'?

HC 'Psychic wage' derived from an interview I heard between Geraldine Doogue and a young man in charge of an aid organisation. In Philosophy we had been discussing morals and ethics; the topic was broached: is it somewhat demeaning, or wrong, to be pleased, or proud of ourselves when we act morally, as in giving to worthy causes, or helping someone less fortunate? In other words, is it wrong to be proud of acting morally?

The young man called this a natural reaction, a psychic wage: the pleasure we gain is due to us. Sometimes people act for base motives, (a tax deduction) or for selfish pleasurable reasons (if I do such and such she will love me) but if we are aware of our motivation, to help others, to do the right thing– it is not wrong to feel the glow, it is our psychic wage- our mental reward for acting morally, or being good.

U3A Who has been the biggest influence on your life? Why?

HC Probably every writer, musician, artist, broadcaster, filmmaker, friend, and teacher I have ever known, or whose work I have appreciated. Several of these are here no longer, but their influence never leaves.

U3A For your great, great, grandchildren, is there any wisdom you would want to pass on to them?

HC Not wisdom, but aspiration, ideas. To discover your inner being, to value your abilities and do the best you can with these. To learn and continue learning all your lives. To listen and be aware of everything and every person around you. We are so incredibly fortunate to be alive on this small blue dot which needs to be treasured.

Alex Tapp

Quiz Time

If you would like to join in a weekly ten question quiz run by the Millgrove Resident's Action Group, please email me so I can add you to the emailing list. There are no prizes, but it helps to while away some of our isolation time. Some of our U3A members are already participating.

Bob boblillie3799@warburtons.own.net.au

CYBER ALERT: Malicious emails, messages and phone calls relating to COVID-19 in circulation

U3A Network received this important update from the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Information Security Section on 31 March:

BE WARY OF SUSPICIOUS OR COVID-19 RELATED EMAILS, MESSAGES AND PHONE CALLS PURPORTING TO BE REPRESENTING DHHS.

The Victorian Government Cyber Incident Response Service Unit (CIRS) and DHHS warns that COVID-19 related cyber threats are increasing. Cyber criminals are creating phishing, spear phishing and thousands of fake webpages, including references to COVID-19, to trick us into providing sensitive information.

How do I know if the email, phone call or SMS is legitimate?

- Hover over the sender's email address and right click on your mouse to reveal the sender's details
- If possible, call the sender on a trusted phone number to verify they sent it
- Use links that you have used in the past.

What do I do if I suspect that the email, phone call or SMS is NOT legitimate?

If you receive an email from a source purporting to represent DHHS or another institution:

- Do not open or respond to the email
- Do not download any attachments or click on any links
- Provide a screenshot to IT service provider
- Do not delete the email, until instructed otherwise by your IT service provider.

If you receive a phone call or SMS with threats of cancellation of services:

- Do not respond to the request and hang up
- Contact your IT service provider
- Contact the relevant institution, if appropriate.

If you receive a phone call requesting information or payment from a person representing themselves in an official capacity:

- Do not respond to the request and hang up
- Contact your IT service provider
- Contact the relevant institution, if appropriate.

By following this framework, we can help protect our clients through the COVID-19 period.

Additional Information:

Check the authenticity of COVID-19 messages by visiting the official website for updates such as

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au>

Keep well-informed of scams reported by Australian community by visiting:

- <https://www.staysmartonline.gov.au/>
- <https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/>

And Finally

***Quarantine one liners that will crack you up! ***

1. My body has absorbed so much soap and disinfectant lately that when I pee, it cleans the toilet.
2. Half of us are going to come out of this quarantine as amazing cooks. The other half will come out with a drinking problem.
3. I need to practice social distancing from the refrigerator.
4. Every few days try your jeans on just to make sure they fit. Pyjamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.
5. This morning I saw a neighbour talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came into my house, told my dog- we laughed a lot.
6. Quarantine Day 4-Went to this restaurant called THE KITCHEN. You have to gather all the ingredients and make your own meal. I have no clue how this place is still in business.
7. I'm so excited --- it's time to take out the garbage. What should I wear?

***Find some brain teasers at:** <https://braincurls.com/mq/memCues.html>