



U3A - Port Alfred

July 2010

Another busy month

From Frontier to the Trenches

How sad is war.

There were few dry eyes when Judge Kathy Satchwell treated us to a wonderful talk on the young men from this area that went to the First World War and never came back. Kathy's interest, kindled by reading war poetry while a student at Rhodes, led to researching archives and making contact with families all around the world. Because bodies were not repatriated, as they are these days, her passion has also taken her to the battle fields and the cemeteries associated with them to glean any information available. Highlighted by slides we were introduced to the many young men - brothers, cousins and more – from our area who died, most not even out of their teens. Then we followed more intimately the stories of the Pattison and Dugmore brothers, reading their letters to their mothers, seeing the appalling conditions they fought under and mourning their deaths. We also heard how Ann Timm made a most beautiful wreath for Kathy to take to Ypres when she recited Lawrence Binyon's

*" They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them"*

at a ceremony to honour the fallen. A most moving tribute to the brave young men from our Frontier Country to the Trenches.

News and Views

Teatime was busy, more chairs were needed and the word has got around. Don't miss Doug and Geoff presenting News and Views!

We were given an update on the miserable oil spill defiling the Gulf of Mexico while viewing the huge ships (Whales) which could be used to suck up oil; shown a Wind Farm in Scotland and told about its problems; looked at the ash in Iceland; and were delighted at the flowering of the blue lilies from seeds found on Everest. This led us to organic farms producing delicious healthy vegetables; to vuvuzelas being banned at Wimbledon while the ladies increase their sizable earnings (even more than golf); read a delightful entry by a 20 year old to the Association of Retired Persons; marvelled at the longest bridge in the world in China – 36km long; were intrigued by Tata developing new car technology, saddened by the death of John Shephard-Barron who gave us ATMs; looked at a most innovative lock (river-type not key!); learnt about the importance of eye contact in education and ended with a video showcasing a most talented 13year old trumpet player.

What a feast! Thank you to Doug and Geoff who provided us with a most entertaining, and informative, morning – it was a winner!

A Pre-Colonial History of Southern Africa as reflected in Accounts of Portuguese Shipwreck Survivors 1552 - 1647

Rather than focusing on the drama of the actual shipwreck Gill Vernon, now a Doctor of Philosophy and Literature, told us how, by looking into the records of the Portuguese survivors, she was able to extract information about our indigenous inhabitants.

Until recently South African history started with van Riebeeck as it was thought that other than travellers' tales of exploration there were no written historical records but, in fact there are. The problem has been that, until recently, the exact wreck sites were unknown so the accounts were little known and utilised.

On their way from Lisbon to India, loaded with trade goods and slaves, there were some 13 Portuguese ships wrecked on our shores between 1552 and 1647. For 8 of these the survivors walked or sailed to Mozambique and left records of their experiences.

Can we even conceive the epic journeys undertaken, the furthest being from Cannon Rocks to Vilanculus, nearly 2,000kms, another inland from Sunrise-on-Sea to Inhaca Island, 1,123km. This group left a detailed and accurate account of their journey. Gill traced their journeys – an epic task in itself – and was able to discover the good and the bad. It was clear that the actions and attitudes of the groups led to their downfall or success. The groups walking along the coast behaved extremely badly, were arrogant and demanding, ready to set fire to huts and shoot at the slightest provocation and some even resorted to cannibalism when they couldn't obtain food, horrifying the local people. In contrast the group that walked inland had a leader of astonishing calibre who sought out the indigenous leaders and treated them with respect so was able to obtain guides and provisions.

A salutary lesson in human management and skills became clear from this fascinating story. A lesson as true today as it was then. In dealing with so-called 'others', prejudices need to be put aside and people treated with respect and dignity.

U3A Visitors to Kowie

We thought you might be interested to know that a few weeks ago we hosted five members of a Cape Town U3A and are delighted to report that they thought Port Alfred was enchanting! Doug Bailes and Geoff Howes took them on a trip to Bathurst which they found fascinating. Lunch was held in Sylvia Spenceley's home with its lovely view of the river from where they were also able to enjoy a walk along the river identifying birds with the help of one of the group (a keen birder) as they went. A glorious sunset completed the day. They enjoyed the day to the full and sent grateful thanks to all who helped to make their visit so pleasant.

Housekeeping!

- Please keep Hamburg in your mind and remember to bring donations of non perishable food or warm clothing all of which makes such a difference to the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves.
- At the moment we normally only serve tea at our regular monthly meeting. It seems, however, that tea would be welcome at all our meetings. This would place too much of a burden on our 'tea lady' so we wondered if there was a willing volunteer to share tea duties with Sylvia? Please contact Doug (046 – 604 0439), Lesley (046 624 4058) or Sylvia (046 – 624 4339) to offer your services.

What's Next?

The Climate Change course is in recess at the moment.
German Chat and Quantum Physics continue.

- 5 August 09:30 for 10:00am in Don Powis Hall The past Director of Music for the SABC Fanie Smit (who still presents a Sunday morning programme of Sacred Music on RSG) will take us on a Musical Journey to Europe. What a special treat.
- 5 August 2:30pm at Sylvia Spenceley's home Jo Rice will transport us to intriguing Vietnam.
- 11 August 3:30pm in Don Powis Hall Ivan Schafer will talk about 'The Psychopath and Criminal Law'. Ivan is such a good speaker with such worthwhile information that this is a talk we should all attend.
- 12 August 09:30 for 10:00am News and Views with Doug Bailes and Geoff Tucker who will again take us on a not to be missed presentation of 'news of the moment'. Be there!
- 26 August 09:30 for 10:00am Engineer Ricky Luttig will bring us up to speed on the Gautrain.
- 8 September Liz Eshmade will talk/help those interested in developing a family tree. The venue will be determined once numbers of those interested in attending are to hand. Please contact Margaret Snodgrass on 046 648 3022.

We hope you are able to take advantage of all that is on offer.

Regards

Tricia

PS: Doug and Geoff plan to show some interesting video clips - too long to be included in News and Views - in September. Details of date and time will be available later.