



# U3a - PORT ALFRED

## **General Meeting: 27 January 2012**

What a wonderful turnout for the first meeting of 2012. Tricia Border welcomed everybody and assured members that there was an exciting year ahead.

Thank you once again all for your donations for Hamburg. Please keep the donations coming – they are so badly needed.

Tricia also announced the disappointing news that the U3A Indaba in George has been cancelled. We feel it is a very high handed and arrogant move and hugely disappointing that the Cape Town organizers have decided to move it to Cape Town in June. As far as I know none of our members will now be attending.

Formal notification was given that the AGM would be held on Thursday 23 February. Nomination forms for committee members are available today and should be completed and handed in to any current committee member or at the Settlers Park Library by Wednesday 15 February. Meryl and Lesley are not available for re-election. Tricia, Len, Madeline, Jenny and Sylvia are prepared to stand again.

## **What lies ahead?**

**2 February** at 2.30pm: Armchair Travel - Alice Weir on her cruise in the Baltic.

**9 February** at 9am: A visit to the Paleontology Lab at the Albany Museum in Grahamstown

**8 March:** An outing to the Wharf Street Brewery with an option of two different time slots if there are more than 20 interested members. After a tour of the brewery there is an opportunity to taste their three products. Then we are invited to refreshments, coffee or tea and a snack (scone, muffin, slice of cake) in the new open-air restaurant, The Piazza on the Wharf. Alternatively, if you wish to book for lunch at the Pub after the tour, you may choose a free local beer/non-alcoholic drink to have with your lunch. The first tour will be at 9, and the second at 11. Please sign the list as it is vital to know numbers.

**23 February** (after the AGM) our speaker will be Dr Glenn Lello, Craniofacial Surgeon from the UK. Some of his pictures will show patients from South African State hospitals, where he spent time earlier in his career.

**22 March** Kevin Cole, from the East London Museum, will address us on "Nahoon Human and Animal Trace Fossil Footprints".

**NB** For those of you who do not have email or don't live in Settlers Park please provide self-addressed stamped envelopes for delivery of your Newsletter – it helps to keep our costs down.

## **Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation**

Dr Neil Littleton spoke to us on this brain numbing topic – but one everybody wanted to know about judging by the just over 100 members and guests in attendance. This highly qualified young man who, as well as his medical degrees, was awarded the GM/Herald Citizen of the year award in 2010 and a Paul Harris Fellow Award from Rotary, moved to the Eastern Cape in 2006 when he noticed that a disproportionate number of patients with blood diseases were from the Eastern Cape. Despite

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Chairman: Tricia Border  
Secretary: Madeleine Petty  
Treasurer: Jenny Hoseck  
Tea Convenor & Armchair Travel: Sylvia Spenceley

Vice Chairman: Len Steinhardt  
Speaker Seeker: Meryl Howes  
Without Portfolio: Lesley Futter  
Newsletter: Trevor Langley

the daunting title Dr Littleton gave a wonderful talk, laced with humour that explained his topic well so that we could all understand it.

The first recorded Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) was way back in 1939 - it was a last resort for the patient who died 5 days later. Then in 1965 a BMT was carried out using 6 donors and this time the patient lived for 20 months. At one stage it was thought that stem cells originating in the totipotent cell could only be found in the red and white blood cells, but further research has revealed that they can be found in muscle, nerves, bone and other tissue.

Dr Littleton explained that having a BMT is not having an operation. The patient is awake throughout the rather long boring process (8 hours for men and rather longer for women) which entails being hooked up to a machine - which looks rather as though the patient is donating blood. [Incidentally blood donors are desperately needed, not only for victims of accidents, stabbings etc but even more so for patients requiring stem cell treatment and the like who require many blood transfusions.] There are various methods to carry out BMT but essentially the stem cells are harvested (from the patient or from a donor) and frozen; the cancerous cells in the body are destroyed and the stem cells returned. While undergoing treatment the patient has to be in strict isolation because the removal of stem cells means the body has no immunity. He likened the process to a veggie patch with a few tomato plants (good) and full of weeds (bad). To get tomatoes growing again it is necessary to remove everything and prepare the soil. Then the seeds are planted and they will grow, but it takes time. So does stem cell treatment.

Dr Littleton has, with many frustrations but great perseverance, managed to set up an excellent facility in the Provincial Hospital in PE. This means that patients from the Eastern Cape can receive the treatment they need here instead of going to other centres, only to be sent home because there are not enough beds. In his endeavour to provide better haematological services for all he has set up The Igazi Foundation – those of you have access to the internet look it up on [www.igazi.org.za](http://www.igazi.org.za) and learn more.

Thank you Dr Littleton – we all enjoyed your talk immensely.

The U3A Committee wish you all everything of the best for 2012.

*Tricia*

A short excerpt from the Web site

### **Demanding Better Haematological Services for All**

The Eastern Cape is considered by South African haematologists to have the highest incidence of blood cancers in the country. We are still **without** our own ward to manage these diseases, sending patients to other cities for treatment. These centres are no longer able to treat our patients. As a matter of urgency we must continue to lobby for our own facility, due to open April 2012, help set it up, and then maintain it for our people. The Igazi Foundation will, with the people of the Eastern Cape, and the Eastern Cape Health Department, endeavour to do this.