



July-August 2025



RAIN: It's a constant in our lives through these colder months. Yet there's comfort to be found in rainfall. The refreshing of the land and the air, the promise of better weather to come, the pleasurable anticipation of a journey's end.

This illustration always seems to me to encapsulate these thoughts – although anyone foolhardy enough to walk down the middle of a dimly-lit street in the middle of a solid British downpour may not elicit confidence in this individual's common sense.

# Rainy Day Quizzical!

- 1: In the reign of which English monarch did the Spanish Armada threaten invasion, only to be defeated by naval action... and great storms of heavy wind and rain?
- 2: Udometer, ombrometer, pluviometer, hyetometer are all devices that measure what?
- 3: According to Karen Carpenter "Rainy Days and ----" always got her down?
- 4: The heaviest rainfall in one hour ever recorded was 12 inches, on June 22, 1947. On which continent was this rainfall recorded?
- 5: According to the movie, who sang in the rain?
- 6: The continent with the lowest rainfall is Antarctica. Which continent has the second-lowest rainfall?
- 7: In what month does the monsoon normally hit India?
- 8: Which ocean experiences the most storms and rainfall?
- 9: To the nearest **one centimetre** (hint, hint), how big were the largest raindrops ever recorded?
- 10: Another movie song claims that the rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain. But where, in the same song, do hurricanes hardly ever happen?

## Newsletter Team

**Editor and design:** Al Mathews

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**Correspondents: Tauranga:**

Margaret Marsh, Graham Dainty, Gail Moore. **Katikati:** Francis Young, Al Mathews, Stewart Cairns, Majorie Squires.

**GM photographs:** Colin Basire, Glenne Findon, Al Mathews.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings everyone,  
Well winter officially found us. I wonder if you like me, find yourselves putting on then taking off layers of warm clothing. However U3A Tauranga and our Katikati sub-group never let weather conditions get in the way of a good, no great opportunity to meet others and enjoy our interest group.



It was wonderful to see so many members along with visitors come through the entrance of the Tauranga Yacht and Power Boat Club at Sulphur Point for our last 3 Monthly Meetings. There were shouts across the venue from the staff more chairs needed along with 'will we have enough biscuits for morning-tea.' A special thank you to the Book Lovers 1 group, this month's Meet and Greet Team. Especially those who stood at the entrance where it was so windy that we almost lost our U3A banner to the wind, rain and cold.

Thank you to those who filled in the forms for suggestions for new groups and, or an existing group you would like to join. This information will be followed up with the appropriate coordinators. The forms will be available at future monthly meetings.

The last 2 months have been busy and productive. Invitations were received and accepted to speak at two retirement villages or groups about U3A Tauranga. Both had audiences of around 35-40 present. Each presentation generated very good questions each showing full interest in the U3A organisation. It was most rewarding to meet a number of those present at the presentations at our monthly meeting. A number of members personally or via email have complimented the choice of informative and entertaining speakers, along with how welcomed they feel at the monthly meetings.

Just a friendly reminder to all conveners about the need to get attendance sheets or at best a written list of group members with both personal and surnames included, to your group coordinator. These lists are due in April and September as they play a very important role in terms of membership numbers and where groups may have vacancies. The second reminder is that if a convener, for a variety of reasons wishes or needs to, relinquish their role this is to be discussed initially with the appropriate coordinator to proceed to appointing a replacement prior to announcing to the group affected. Thirdly conveners cannot close a group, this is a decision made at Executive level via coordinators where all options are considered. At times groups may go into recess but not close.

The effort by our coordinators, conveners and co-conveners is much appreciated by all members for the splendid contribution you bring to the success of our 70+ interest groups. Warm regards,

*Gail Moore*

President  
U3A Tauranga Inc.

# OBITUARY. JIM PRYOR.

Executive Member, Data Manager, Web Master, Group Member,

It is with great sadness that we share the news of Jim's recent death on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2025. With his passing the Organisation has lost a dedicated, able administrator for whom no task was too big to undertake and bring to completion.

Jim joined U3A in 2016 bringing with him his workplace skills in Technology and IT. Within 12 months he was voted onto the Executive as Data Manager and the following year the role of Web Master was added to his responsibilities.

In 2017 his role as Data Manager was crucial. With membership of U3A growing rapidly Jim was instrumental in transitioning the organization to a new Database and has continued to maintain a good relationship with the Providers ensuring that systems offered, or developed, within the database meet our specific needs. This task performed at the same time as his oversight of all data systems within the organization.

Under his guidance the Web Group also developed the website into the excellent user-friendly resource it is today.

Over time Jim has been a member of Garden Ramblers, Hiking and Mini Hikes, getting to know our Bay of Plenty region and making many friends.

Jim's life demonstrated traits of generosity, commitment, efficiency, thoroughness and kindness, to name but a few. He can readily be described as a "good" and "able" man.

Jim's service to U3A Tauranga through his time on the Executive and the positions he held spanned over 8 years – a huge contribution—the value of which cannot be underestimated. It will always be a privilege to have worked with him.

To Jenny, daughter Katie, and son Alastair, on behalf of U3A Tauranga, we extend our sincere condolences for your loss. Jim will be greatly missed.



# Your U3A Needs You!

Every time you attend a Group Meeting or come along to one of our hugely informative monthly meetings you are enjoying the end result of someone else's efforts. This is as it should be: we are a sharing organisation, basing our entire raison d'être on the fact that we all have something to share, something to contribute. Our individual skills, knowledge, and experiences makes each one of us unique, and U3A gives us the opportunity to share that uniqueness. All organisations like ours depends on the input of people's time and skills. Occasionally, due to any one of a wide range of factors, a need you may be able to meet comes up. Chair stacking. Helping in the kitchen. Writing for the Newsletter. Assisting with your data-management skills, accounting, administrative, or creative abilities.

Even if there's no need right now, your Committee would love to know if they can call on you some time in the future should a particular need arise: if a need arises, we want to be able to meet that need straight away, with having to advertise.

If you have skills that you know we can use in the future, please let us know that we can call on you. Sharing is what we do, and it's really fulfilling. Contact our Secretary or President and tell them that you want to help out.

**As ours is an entirely voluntary society, we rely on willing members to step forward to take on executive roles. If you can help with anything please contact either our President, Gail Moore, at [president@u3atauranga.kiwi.nz](mailto:president@u3atauranga.kiwi.nz) or Kay Ebden, Secretary, at [secretary@u3atauranga.kiwi.nz](mailto:secretary@u3atauranga.kiwi.nz)**



On 6 March our Tauranga Cycle group hosted a group of riders from the Napier U3A Cycle group. We had a guest leader, Cliff Simmons, who is a local historian specialising in the NZ wars. We did a ride visiting sites pertinent to the battles in the 1860s. In fact we did 4 rides with them during that week. The Napier group are keen to host us later in the year.

Bruce Kitchingman, Convener.

## Rainy Day Answers!

- 1: Queen Elizabeth. (She didn't become Queen Elizabeth 1 until 1953, when Queen Elizabeth 2 was crowned).
- 2: Rainfall.
- 3: Mondays.
- 4: North America.
- 5: Gene Kelly.
- 6: Africa.
- 7: June.
- 8: Pacific. NB: "Pacific" means peaceful.
- 9: One Centimetre: 88mm, to be pedantic.
- 10: Hertford, Hereford, and Hampshire.

## LIBRARY BOOK REVIEW

### The Voyage Home by Pat Barker

This is the last book of a trilogy which reinterprets Homer's 'Iliad'. The Greek victors return home from ten years of brutal war with hundreds of Trojan women slaves as part of their spoils. The main characters, Agamemnon, Cassandra and Clytemnestra use modern day language which helps to demystify this legend. They are shown wisdom and compassion by the author and are easy to relate to.

I was fascinated by the way Barker provides her psychological insights to cleverly demonstrate the effects and suffering associated with trauma and its lasting impact. The women respond to trauma by internalising their suffering as they face the limitations within their families and society. Their pain is not addressed. I found it easy to draw parallels with women's experiences of trauma today.

This quote, gets to the heart of this matter:

*As the Trojan slave women raised their voices in lament, Ritsa, Cassandra's slave, commented:*

*"You don't always need hope. Sometimes it helps just to have your despair recognised and shared".*

Pat Barker is one of my favourite authors. I gave this book five out of five stars.

**GLORIA SELKIRK**

# TAURANGA'S MONTHLY MEETINGS

## Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines!

In the beginning there was Icarus. He had the ideas but lacked the technology and training: the two concepts that have driven Graham Dainty for most of his life.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> Graham provided us with an animated, humorous, and illuminating autobiographical talk about the life and times of a helicopter pilot and trainer.

Born and raised in Wilshire, the English County that gave us Wiltshire knives, the Salisbury Cathedral, and Stonehenge, Graham's fascination with flying urged him towards an 18-year long RAF career, becoming one of the world's finest helicopter



pilots along the way: he did, after all, win the British helicopter Championship in 1974 while wearing the RAF blue uniform.

Graham told us about his RAF career – the 18 years that gave him a wealth of fascinating, funny, and enthralling yarns that kept his audience laughing and in awe of the adventures a young man can have in the right hand seat of a rescue helicopter.

He has promised to return to the Speaker's podium to regale us with the stories that followed his RAF service: a career that saw him travel the world.

Graham's talk was vibrant, funny, filled with character and substance, and everyone who experienced it will be anxiously waiting for Part Two. Watch this space!

Stay up to date with the latest information at [www.u3atauranga.kiwi.nz](http://www.u3atauranga.kiwi.nz)

## WORRIED ABOUT YOUR PHONE'S SECURITY? Phone Security, Scam Spotting, Safe Banking, Online Shopping.



Not surprisingly, June's main presentation attracted a large audience. **Skye Colonna** and Jacob from Tauranga City Library were with us to talk about cellphone security.

Skye explained that the meeting would take the form of a workshop, with everyone's 'phones out and switched on, so as to be hands-on with the elements of her instructions on their own devices. She and Jacob had distributed a comprehensive copy of their schedule to all. For those members absent it would be a good idea to get hold of a copy of the 3-page handout from a fellow member. It is easy to follow, gives clear instructions and covers the following subtitles:

What we are learning today / Security check-up (Apple, Samsung, or Android) / Smartphone tips and tricks / Scams vs Fraud / Phishing scams /How to keep safe online / What to do if scammed.

The final page lists the Digital Learning and Help Services provided by the Library, which are comprehensive and often held in the various libraries in the area.

Some don't require a booking but contact could be useful on: **(07) 5777177** for further information.

## ParktoPark Trust

The monthly short talk in June was introduced by Bev Edlin who invited Bruce Farthing to explain the details and latest situation, under the plan for art and history to come together and bring stories of the past to come alive.

The land between Kulim Park and Fergusson Park is ideal to chart the history of settlement in New Zealand. The largest Iwi battle took place in the harbour in 1832, lasting 6 weeks, the missionary Henry Williams sailed through and attempted to stop tribal war and Bishop Pompalier set up the second Maori church

on the shore. The albatross once lived here, probably its original home in New Zealand and events such as canoe races were held regularly.

Bruce showed a pictorial variety of views and artefacts of the time and site. He went on to explain that, following advertisements for local artists, the Trust has received 16 submissions of works for outdoor public display, to be part of a route between the two parks. They are intended to encourage people, especially the young, to question things, to excite and appeal and savour their history as they walk through this interesting place.

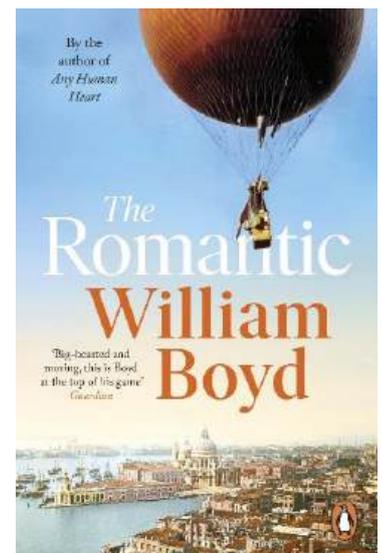
The first four art works are soon to be selected for display and the Tauranga Council are entirely in support of the project, which will undoubtedly give the City a new place for visitors and locals to view.

### **BOOK REVIEW:**

The Romantic: The Real Life of Cashel Granville Ross.  
William Boyd.

REVIEWED BY GLORIA SELKIRK,  
Convenor of Café Book Lovers 3

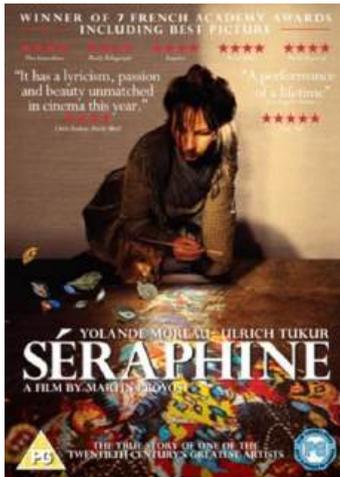
A 'whole of life' novel set in the nineteenth century, 'The romantic' reads like a biography, told through the outer and inner lives of Cashel Ross. Boyd uses diaries and letters of the time, along with footnotes, sketches and actual historical events to tell the story. The novel has ambitious scope covering Cashel in his many careers such as: farmer, novelist, brewer, winemaker, soldier and through many countries. Like many of Boyd's very successful novels, the reader is carried along with an adventurous plot laced with intimate insights into the character's motivations and life choices. It's the tale of a man who is flawed. A true romantic. One who doesn't often listen to his head but his heart. I rated this novel four out of five stars in enjoyment.



# From the Festival and Foreign Movie Group

**S raphine. Starring Yolande Moreau. Directed by Martin Provost. 2008.**

**Art, Religion, and Mental Illness.**

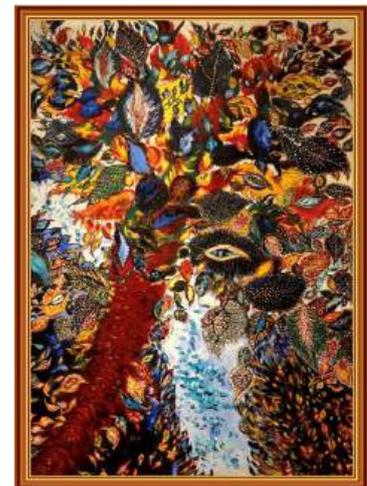


The film follows the life of S raphine de Senlis Louis, a simple and profoundly devout housekeeper whose brilliantly colourful canvases adorn some of the most famous galleries in the world. German art critic and collector Wilhelm Uhde (Ulrich Tukur) - the first Picasso buyer and champion of na ve primitive painter Le Douanier Rousseau - discovers her paintings while she is working for him as a maid in the beautiful countryside of Senlis near Paris. A moving and unexpected relationship develops between the avant-garde art dealer and the visionary outsider artist.

S raphine Louis was born in Arsy, a small town in the Oise department, near Compi gne, France, on September 3, 1864. Her father was a labourer, and her mother came from a farming family. Her mother died when she was a year old, and her father, who had remarried, died when she was not quite seven years old. She was then taken in by her older sister.

At a very young age, S raphine worked as a shepherdess, then, from 1881, as a domestic for the Sisters of Providence in Clermont (Oise). In 1901, she began working as a housekeeper for wealthy bourgeois families in Senlis. She also began painting by candlelight in great isolation and relative poverty, gradually building up a considerable body of work.

Wilhelm Uhde, a German art collector who had settled in the town in 1912, discovered her paintings and offered her his support. However, he was forced to leave France in August 1914 at the start of WW1, only reconnecting with S raphine in 1927 during a local exhibition, and his assistance enabled S raphine to paint large canvases measuring two meters high. In 1929, Uhde organised an exhibition "Painters of the Sacred Heart" which allowed her to achieve a measure of financial prosperity, which, unfortunately, she gradually squandered.



From 1930 onward, Wilhelm Uhde stopped purchasing her paintings due to the Great Depression, which drove away art buyers, a situation that seriously disturbed her. She then descended into madness and was committed to the Clermont Psychiatric Hospital on January 31, 1932 for "chronic psychosis". She refused to practice her art there.

Her works were nevertheless exhibited by Wilhelm Uhde:  
in 1932, at the "Modern Primitives" exhibition in Paris;  
in 1937-1938, at the "Popular Masters of Reality" exhibition in Paris, Zurich, and New York

(MoMA);  
in 1942, at the "20th-Century Primitives" exhibition in Paris;  
and in 1945, at the solo exhibition of Séraphine de Senlis in Paris.



Suffering from breast cancer and living in abject poverty, she died of starvation on 11 December, 1942, in the hospital annex in Villers-sous-Érquy, amidst the harsh conditions and general indifference of asylums during the German occupation. Her medical records, preserved at the Senlis Hospital, contain the note "picks grass to eat at night; eats rubbish."

Séraphine de Senlis Louis is buried in the pauper's section of the Clermont cemetery. However, in her last wishes, she had requested to be buried in a private grave with the inscription: "Here lies Séraphine Louis, without rival, and awaiting the blessed resurrection."

### **Margaret Marsh.**

Gossip, by Norman Rockwell



# Movie Review from the Katikati Movie Group.

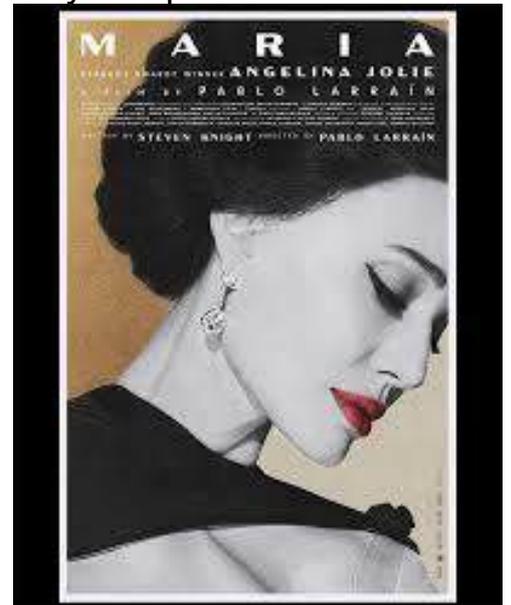


## **MARIA. Starring Angelina Jolie, Directed by Pablo Larrain.**

Despite the fact that Angelina Jolie has previously won an Oscar for her acting, it's still a surprise to see her in such a deep and thoughtful role.

In "Maria" she gives us a superb portrayal of the very last week of Maria Callas' life. Callas was an American-born soprano of

Greek heritage whose magnificent interpretations of many of Opera's most demanding roles gave her a reputation as being certainly the greatest soprano of her generation, if not ever. In the movie, Callas' voice has deteriorated to a point where public performances are out of the question. There is a great deal of controversy regarding the degradation of her voice – ranging from over-straining her voice when younger, not straining her voice enough when younger, from a sudden weight-loss in mid-career, to one of a number of varying medical conditions. The movie doesn't address the cause, merely the effects, which are, naturally, devastating.



Angelina Jolie apparently studied Callas for over 28 months before shooting started, and it shows: her performance is immaculate, beautifully controlled, and faultless. She has the brio to sing many of the pieces in the film and does so brilliantly. The movie tells the story of the last week of Maria Callas' life. She is struggling with an addiction to Mandrax, her prescribed medication, which is causing her to hallucinate the presence of a young journalist to whom she is telling her story. She is also working with an opera conductor, investigating whether her voice is recovering any of its lost beauty. Superbly photographed, and making the most of its Parisienne setting, this is a powerful story of the life of a woman who faced innumerable challenges and met them with courage and a singular style and passion.

# Putting History Into Our Hands

**It was the day the Museum came to us. With Butterflies.**



The Main Speaker at U3A Katikati's Monthly Meeting for May was Donna Ford, from the Katikati Museum – and, if the laughter, cries of delight, participation, and excitement of her presentation are anything to go by, she'll be welcomed back with open arms.

Museums are fun. You go to Museums to learn, to reminisce, to share your life and experiences with your grandchildren, your mokopuna. The Katikati Museum's no different. Their remit is to Research, Protect, and to Care for the many, many taonga that come to them, and the Museum staff also understand that education and revitalisation is also a vital part of what they do.

A lot of the items the Museum cares for are too delicate to go a-travelling, but there's a special collection that *can* be taken out and handled.



There are three types of treasures: the Mothership Collection, which is the core collection: vital, precious, and jealously curated against damage. The Provenanced Collection, where the items have a provable back-story, and the Museum knows exactly how and when they have been owned and used, and by whom.

Then there's the Handleable Collection: the interesting stuff of everyday life from days gone by that may not be valuable, or unique, or even thought of in these days of Temu, Amazon, and Uber. And

Donna Ford, along with a couple of her hugely knowledgeable henchwomen, brought a superb selection of these items for us to see, identify, touch, and to help us realise that yes, we're now old enough to remember owning something that now has a place at the Museum!

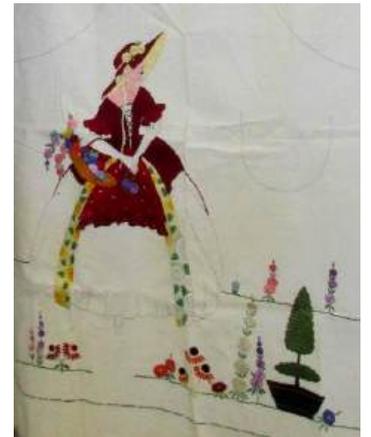


This was a less formal presentation than the one Donna takes around the region's Nursing Homes – one of the many off-stage outreach activities the Museum undertakes for those amongst us who have reached that stage in our lives where we're no longer able to get to them.

Donna started with what would, in any other presentation, been a show-stopper: a presentation case of South American butterflies. Startlingly beautiful, this brought a chorus of "Ooohs!" and "Aaaahs!" from the audience. But what followed was an extraordinary and eclectic mix of artifacts that had the audience buzzing

with excitement.

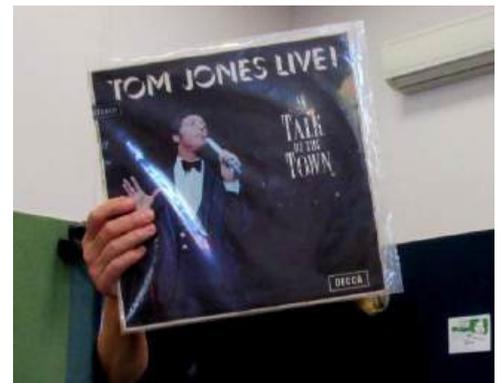
We had set up the auditorium so Donna could get right amongst the 60-strong audience, so we could hold, fondle, and exclaim at the hand-made double-ended spanner, the golden-girl's bathing suit, the 1960s wearable hair-drier (obviously designed by a man, so the woman could get a flash hair-do while also doing the vacuuming!).



There were things we couldn't identify, mysterious tools for shaping saw blades, a wool-pack hook (different from a hay-bale hook, a wharf worker's hook, or a grass-seed bag hook...). There were horseshoes, a Box Brownie camera with landscape and portrait style versatility, Kauri bark scales, a half-finished embroidered apron, and even a Tom Jones 33 1/3<sup>rd</sup> rpm vinyl LP.

No-one volunteered to sing "The Green, Green Grass of Home"!

This was a splendid and exciting presentation: the big question now is when can we get Donna and her team back?



**‘Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority it is time to pause and reflect.’**

## Kan You Katch Katikati? Jacqui Kan!



At May 14's Monthly Meeting in Katikati, Jacqui Knight from Katch Katikati gave a ten-minute presentation that impressed the 60-strong audience as she demonstrated that at any given moment there's something going on in and around our vibrant township.

Katch Katikati not only manages the Arts Centre and the Visitor Information Centre, they're actively involved in promoting, collaborating with, and assisting in running (take a deep breath!): Business After 5, the Business Breakfast, the Avocado Wine and Food festival, Christmas In the Park, the Katikati Jazz Festival, Frocks on Bikes, Adopt A Street, Upcycle Christmas Tree, the Sheds and Studios Ramble, the Street Party, the Festival of Cultures, the Echo Walking Festival, and pretty well anything else

that you might see that involves fun, culture, exercise, and simply havin' a good time. Visit the Katch Katikati website and go on their emailing-list - because while you're in Katikati, there's always something happening.

## EVERYONE NEEDS THE FOODBANK!

We're all familiar with the idea of Foodbanks: organisations run by other people to help our neighbours cope when life deals them a bad hand.

The Katikati group met on June 11<sup>th</sup>, and were enthralled to hear from Sue Spriggins, who manages our local Foodbank. Sue has a team of 80 volunteers who run the Foodbank, which operates from a local Church. The Foodbank is run entirely on contributions from our Community – both financial and with gifts of foodstuffs. Our local Four Square store is particularly generous with contributions, while Sue is constantly humbled and delighted by koha that is being given by ordinary folk who simply stop by with practical food and money.

The requirement for what the Foodbank supplies varies widely from week to week: Sue brought along a "customer" who described her family's harrowing ride from well-being to sudden (and very temporary) impecuniousness. Illness and sudden unemployment can take their toll on any family, regardless of current circumstances.

A large minority of New Zealand families live on the edge of disaster: it's organisations like Katikati's Food Bank that are ready to lend an open and helping hand to those among us may stumble and fall.

## SPORT BAY OF PLENTY It's For Everyone!



U3A's June get-together in Katikati gave every one of the fifty-strong audience a bit of a mark-up, as Sport Bay of Plenty's Shannon Pawhau took us on a journey through what the community-funded organisation does to keep our region on our feet and actively participating in sports of all kinds.

Much of Sport Bay of Plenty's funding comes from gaming trusts, lottery boards, philanthropic trusts, and some local government contracts.

Shannon – an accomplished sportswoman and former New Zealand representative – works closely with many sports groups, schools, councils, and interest groups advising on current and future sporting trends: did you know that the five most popular sport for our teens are – in order – badminton, volleyballs, electronic gaming, football, and basketball? I certainly didn't! And for adults? Walking, attending a sporting event, gardening, running, swimming, and group fitness – aerobics, aquarobics, cross-fit, tai chi, yoga.

Where, when, how, and why a community should build a skatepark? Sport Bay of Plenty can help assure the planning is done better. Refurbishing a school gym? Sport Bay of Plenty have the research and know-how that will ensure the new gym will be fit for purpose for longer.

Sport involves everyone from the participants, organisers, volunteers, parents, partners, councils, schools, and watchers. Thousands of schoolkids are out every weekend on the basketball, tennis, netball, squash, and badminton courts, the rugby and football fields, the skateboard parks, trampers' huts: if it involves physical activity then Shannon and the Sport Bay of Plenty team are eager to get involved.

And they got their audience involved, too: falls make up for 40% of all ACC claims – and doing regular exercises can reduce our likelihood of falling by 30%. Shannon's sidekick Becky got us all on our feet, showing us all a series of easy exercises to help keep us upright with improved balance, strength, and overall well-being.



# Remember, Remember, The Fifth of November....

This is the first in a series written by **Murray Armstrong** about the Plot to Blow Up the English Parliament.

## **GUY FAWKES MEETS RICHARD HAMMOND**



I'll start with a childhood memory. It is 5 November, c1960, at a farm paddock in Springdale, a rural district on the edge of the Waikato region near Te Puninga and Tātuanui.



30 or more cars have arrived with around 120 people, and parked in an adjacent paddock. The cows have all been shifted to the back end of the farm and the dogs kennelled well away. Excited children and their parents get out of the cars with their Guys. There's a Guy competition for who has made the most impressive one. In the paddock is a big bonfire that has been prepared, a couple of stories high. After the judging, all the guys are thrown on to the heap. And at 9pm some of the men let off a cacophony of fireworks and the bonfire is lit.

***Remember, remember the Fifth of November!***

***The gunpowder treason and plot!***

***I see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot.***

***Guy Fawkes, 'twas his intent***

***To blow up king and parliament!***

***Three score barrels were laid out below***

***To prove old England's overthrow.***

***By God's mercy he was caught***

***With a dark lantern and lighted match***

***Holler boys, holler boys, let the bells ring.***

***Holler boys, holler boys, God save the King!***



We don't have a Guy Fawkes celebration like that any more. Even before I left the district at the end of the 1960's, big community celebrations had fallen victim to the coming of television for people's entertainment. How television changed peoples' lives would be an interesting topic. I remember as



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a youngster thinking what did Mum and Dad do for entertainment in the evenings before TV? My 10 siblings they didn't know either.

A lot has been written about Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot. However, what caught my eye 18 years ago was a television programme which recreated the scenario and demonstrated what would have happened if the plot hadn't been

thwarted. I still have a recording on video which was later put onto DVD. I used it every year thereafter when teaching about the Gunpowder Plot in Form 7 (Year 13) History.

I assume most of you know the TV programme, 'Top Gear' - some of you may have watched it. Each week, my then teenage son, Sean, would join me to watch it: it was our father-son ritual for some years. One of my best birthday presents ever was years later when Sean got tickets for us to go to 'Top Gear Live' at the ASB Showgrounds in Auckland.

But what has Top Gear got to do with the Gunpowder Plot? Well, 2 of the presenters, Richard Hammond and James May are keen historians, and it was Richard Hammond who researched and produced the television programme on the topic in 2006.

What he did was construct a replica building of the House of Lords and blow it up using the same amount of 17<sup>th</sup> Century-style gunpowder Guy Fawkes had amassed, He had to use a government-sanctioned secret location with a military no-fly exclusion zone.



Hammond undertook an impressive amount of research. 650 tonnes of concrete was used to replicate the dimensions and strength of the parliamentary building. 1 metric tonne of specially produced gunpowder had to be made in Europe and brought in under military supervision. The travel arrangements were so top-secret that even Hammond couldn't know them, other than the expected time of arrival at the blast site. Health and Safety regulations mandated computer simulations need to be done to determine probable blast damage: as a result of these nobody was allowed to be stationed within 500 metres of the blast site when detonation occurred. Hammond demonstrated a large skyrocket which back in 2006 was the biggest allowed; Guy Fawkes amassed 20,000 times the explosive power of that rocket.

When the gunpowder arrived, it then needed to be put into 36 barrels, a precarious part of the project, as any spark could have been fatal. Research uncovered reference to Guy Fawkes'

gunpowder, at the time of his arrest, being reported as in 'a decayed' condition due to it having got damp at some stage. A specialist consultant explained that 'decayed' was a term used back in the 17th century for powder becoming too lumpy to fire from a musket barrel, it didn't necessarily mean it wouldn't explode. So the project team needed to decay the gunpowder that had been transported in That would be put to the test.



Human dummies were constructed for the experiment, representing each of the 200 persons present on the day of the opening of parliament. They were coloured coded: purple for the king, black for the nobles, red for the bishops, and green for the commoners from the House of Commons. 15 cameras were set up, including high-speed cameras in blast-proof cases. And so to blast day. 650 tonnes of concrete, 1 tonne of gunpowder, 1 building, 1 very big experiment.

The result? All planks and walls of the building blown sky-high, completely levelled. Fragments took 1/10th of a second to reach 160 miles per hour. Suffice to say the dummies were splattered to hundreds of metres away. Would everyone at the Parliamentary opening be killed? A resounding yes! But it would have been more than that. England was unique in Europe for its centralisation of its governmental institutions in a tiny area of Westminster. Just up the street was Whitehall Palace where the King lived, just down the street was the Abbey and the old royal palace of Westminster with its operating governmental offices. So not only did Parliament meet there, but so too the whole



complex of government. The Law Courts met there, likewise the Exchequer. The Treasury was there.

In other words, all its political life was concentrated in this tiny area. Everyone and everything would have been blasted to kingdom come (presumably a protestant one). It would have been devastating, not just with the removal of the political personnel, but the whole symbolic heart of the government. This was not the brainchild of feather-brained adventurers, but a calculated, spectacular plot of awesome dimensions.

Interestingly, Hammond also recreated Fawkes escape route if all had gone to plan. He would have used a 15-minute fuse. That gave him time to briskly but calmly walk along the streets to the Thames River, get on to a boat ready to take him to the other side, to catch a waiting horse. Then gallop to London bridge, where an awaiting ship would whisk him off to Flanders. The time taken was 27

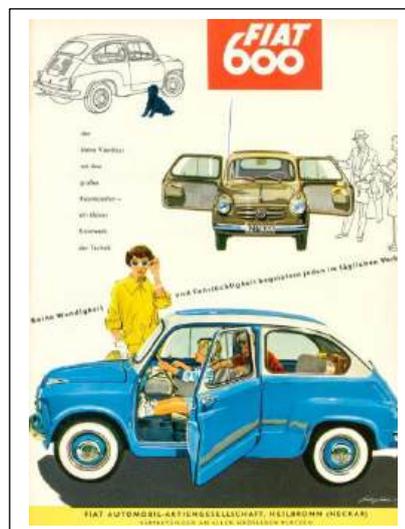
minutes. He would have been almost halfway to his escape when the explosion went off: possibly he might have stopped briefly to look back to admire his handiwork.

The story of the Gunpowder Plot is an intriguing one, which we will take a closer look at in the next Newsletter. It was set in the arena of a much earlier European 'Cold War' scenario, rather like post-WW2 Europe. Post- WW2 Europe saw an ideological power struggle between communism v the free enterprise Western world, a simmering, always tense situation, which on occasions flared up into actual war. Likewise, the early 1600s was within a period of an ideological and religious struggle between Catholic v Protestant. It was essentially a Cold War of plots, counter-plots and persecution, which from time to time erupted into a hot war.

Certainly, the Gunpowder Plot was designed to heat things up in 1605.

IN OUR NEXT ENTHRALLING INSTALMENT:  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE GUNPOWDER PLOT!**

You might remember this...



# New Group Suggestions

If you have an idea for a group you'd be interested in joining, but don't have the time or knowledge to get it up and running yourself – let your Newsletter Editor know (contact details below) and I'll put the idea into the next edition. Let's kick it off with a group idea that I'd love to join – but don't have the time to organise and convene.

**THE NATIONAL THEATRE GROUP.** London's National Theatre is world-renowned, producing and presenting plays and dramas of the highest quality, from Shakespeare to contemporary works.

Importantly: they film their productions, and make them available by subscription. <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/national-theatre-online/> This costs £99.99 per annum (around NZ\$225) Split that amount through, say, 20 people, and you're set. Venue? I live in Katikati where we have a delightful 30-odd seat cinema for hire for a small amount. I believe a number of retirement villages also have small video screening theatres.

## Selected Haiku

### Haiku #739910

A & E quick, please.  
Irritable vowel syndrome,  
Thanks. IOU one.

### Not Quite Yet a Love Sonnet

We've only just met  
so instead, here's a haiku:  
*I really* laik u.

### Haiku #564127

how dare you suggest  
I have a short attention  
spanish omelette

### Haiku for Doomed Youth

Cutting out pop stars  
from last week's NME with  
rock paper scissors.

### Haiku #1

i don't really  
know what a haiku  
is

### The Constraints of Haiku

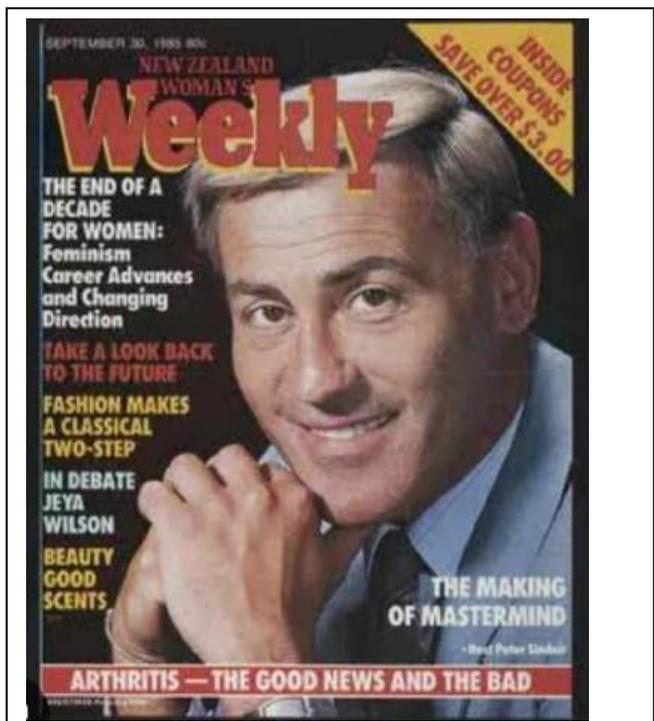
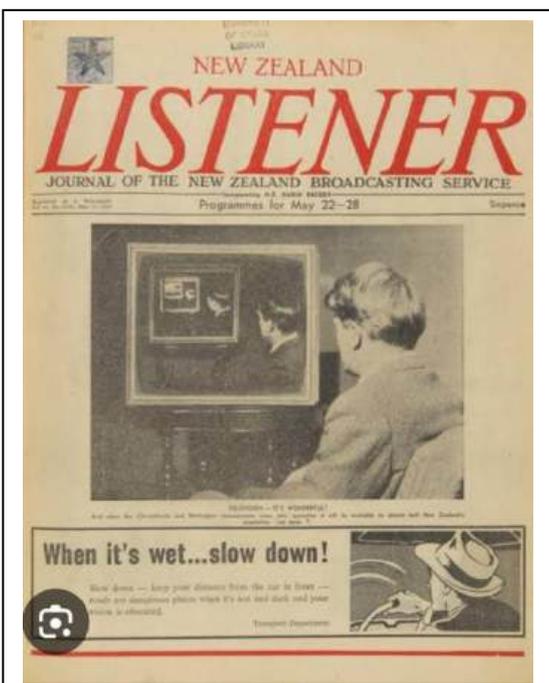
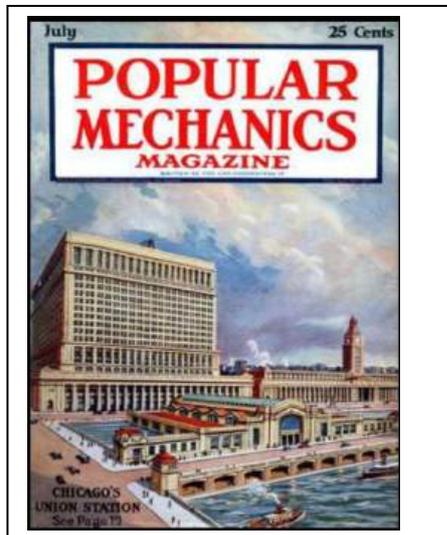
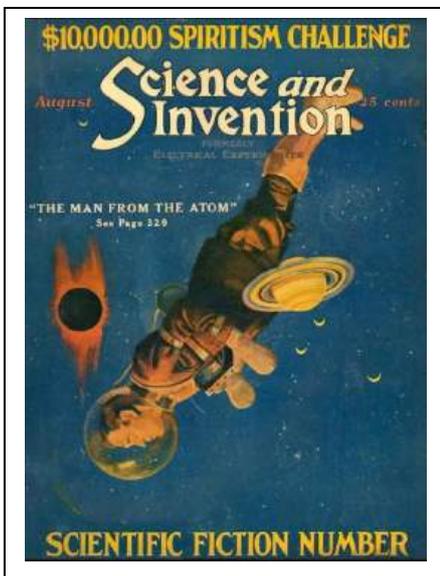
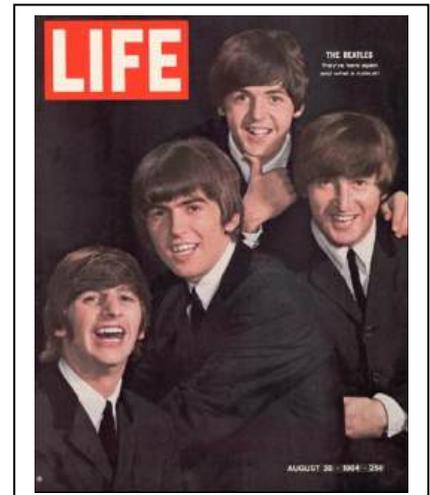
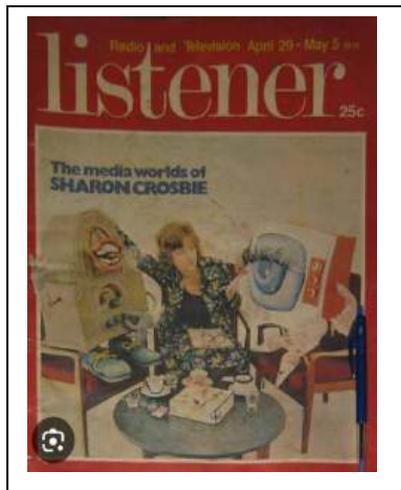
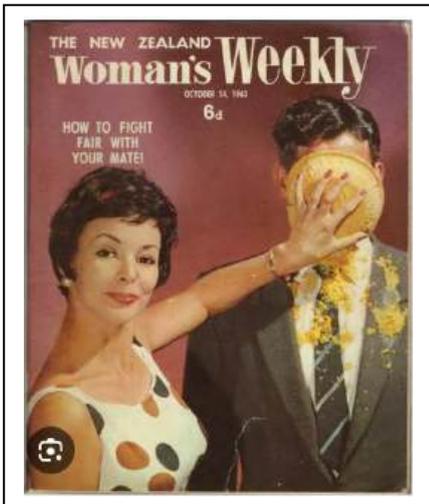
Tied up all night with  
a haiku dominatrix  
and her three-line whip.

### Haiku Written at 3 a.m. while Lying in Bed and Listening to the Sound of a Bathroom Tap

Drip drip drip drip drip  
Drip drip drip drip drip drip  
Drip drip drip drip drip

*Brian Bilston*

# Magazine Covers



## Comments made in the year 1957

- "I'll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it's going to be impossible to buy a week's groceries for \$20."
- "I'm afraid to send my kids to the movies any more. Ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying 'damn' in 'Gone With The Wind,' it seems every new movie has either "hell" or "damn" in it.
- "Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won't be long before \$5000 will only buy a used one."
- "If cigarettes keep going up in price, I'm going to quit. A quarter a pack is ridiculous."
- "Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging a dime just to mail a letter?"
- "If they raise the minimum wage to \$1, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store."
- "When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage."
- "Kids today are impossible. Those ducktail haircuts make it impossible to stay groomed. Next thing you know, boys will be wearing their hair as long as the girls."
- "If they think I'll pay 50 cents for a hair cut, forget it."
- "I read the other day where some scientist thinks it's possible to put a man on the moon by the end of the of the century. They even have some fellows they call astronauts preparing for it down in Texas."
- "Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$75,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn't surprise me if someday they'll be making more than the president."
- "I never thought I'd see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They are even making electric typewriters now."
- "It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet."
- "It won't be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work."
- "Marriage doesn't mean a thing any more; those Hollywood stars seem to be getting divorced at the drop of a hat."
- "I'm just afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business."
- "Thank goodness I won't live to see the day when the Government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to congress."
- "The drive-in restaurant is convenient in nice weather, but I seriously doubt they will ever catch on."
- "There is no sense going to Lincoln or Omaha anymore for a weekend. It costs nearly \$15 a night to stay in a hotel."
- "No one can afford to be sick any more; \$35 a day in the hospital is too rich for my blood."

## CLUB NEWS

THE GARDEN RAMBLERS 2 Group had a fabulous day out recently at the Shalendy gardens in Te Puke.



Al Mathews, your Newsletter Editor, is always looking for new content he can put into this publication. If your group has done anything interesting over the past month (and that means all groups..) please write the story in say a hundred words or so, add a couple of picture, and send it to [newsletter@U3Atauranga.kiwi.nz](mailto:newsletter@U3Atauranga.kiwi.nz) or [swethamnalla@gmail.com](mailto:swethamnalla@gmail.com) Put U3A (Group Name) in the subject line, and I'll find the space to let your fellow U3A members know what they're missing out on!

## After Seven Year's U3A Tauranga's Fabulous Music Group's Leader Moves On.

After seven years of convening, and being the front man for the U3A Music group for a fun - and music! - filled seven years, Alan Read is moving on.

Alan established the group in 2019, through U3A Tauranga, and has been convenor until last month when he decided to hand over the reins to a new leader, Mike Maassen. Alan had been offered a position with the local RSA Board, which means he will become part of a team that will guide the merger of the Tauranga and Mount RSA branches.

Alan has been a charismatic 'front-man' of the Music Group, and has put his heart



and soul into keeping the group interesting. He selflessly gave his time and expertise to group members, providing lessons on playing a variety of instruments.. including that most difficult instrument of all, the human voice. The group is saddened to see him go, and wish him well

in his exciting new challenges..

The OMG's new Musical Director is Mike Maassen, who brings his own remarkable skill-set as well as new idea, songbooks, and style. The group will now mostly be ukulele players but everyone is welcome to come along and have a go – and have fun – which is the main objective at the Group's bi-monthly sessions at the Mount RSA from 10am to noon on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays. The New Convenor is Linda Tocker.



# SMILE AWHILE



These young women could be our Grandmothers...



**MY NEIGHBOR JUST YELLED  
AT HER KIDS SO LOUD THAT  
EVEN I BRUSHED MY TEETH  
AND WENT TO BED.**



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## THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT U3A

**U3A Tauranga** offers a wide range of interest groups, some of which are based in Katikati. Members are welcome to apply to join any of our groups, full details of which are regularly updated in the online Handbook. For more information, just click on the link on our website [www.u3atauranga.kiwi.nz](http://www.u3atauranga.kiwi.nz) For information regarding the Katikati groups, contact Jenny or Allan Mathews at [amjam09@gmail.com](mailto:amjam09@gmail.com)

If you wish to become a member of **U3A Tauranga**, you can complete the online application at [Application Form | U3A Tauranga \(infoodle.com\)](#). [Return to Page 2 index](#)

**Newsletter**

Next issue: September - October 2025 Deadline for material is 26 August.