



connecting women

interested in everything, talking about anything



Laughter is ...

the fireworks of the soul ...
an instant VACATION ...

a day not wasted ...

MUSIC to the SOUL ...

laughter SPARKLES like a SPLASH of
SUNLIGHT on the WATER



**LAUGHTER IS THE BEST
MEDICINE !**

National Women's Register Australia Inc.
34th CONFERENCE @ KIAMA, NSW 2017
e-Newsletter - 1st edition - 49th NWR Newsletter

where did it all begin?

National Women's Register ...

... is an International Organisation of women's discussion groups with members in Great Britain, Europe, Africa and in Australia.

Each group provides its members with opportunities to participate in stimulating discussions on a wide range of topics from the serious to light-hearted and non-domestic points of view.

The aims are to focus on a nominated subject through personal research and communal activities so that a better understanding and intimate knowledge can be gained and shared. Speakers who are experts in their particular field of endeavour are also invited to attend and address the meetings. The regular meetings give members opportunities to share their ideas, concepts and opinions in an atmosphere of friendship in a non-threatening environment to stimulate self-image, self-esteem and confidence.

The Foundation Group was formed in Britain in 1960 under the name of "National Housewives Register" by a young housewife named Maureen Nicol in 1961. It readily flourished and was later renamed "National Women's Register". It was brought here in 1975 as National Housewives' Register and a number of informal groups were started in Australia. Prior to 1981 there were several groups in Australia without any formal ties. When Anne Burns emigrated from Scotland to Sydney she organised a group at Ryde during June 1982 which was called Women in Touch (WIT) based on the UK "National Housewives Register". The Ryde group quickly expanded into four separate groups in northern Sydney. An interview on ABC radio's 2BL (now 702) "City Extra" programme with Margaret Throsby swelled these groups to eight in eighteen months. At the same time groups started in other states and by the end of 1983 there were seventeen groups. Publicity on television and radio, together with an article in "Parent and Child" magazine in 1985, consolidated these groups to fourteen in Sydney with others springing up in many parts of NSW.

During the 1980's the NSW Board of Adult Education granted WIT funds which were used to establish a management committee, organise annual conferences and publish newsletters. The organisation no longer receives any grant. The annual newsletter, publicity and administration costs are entirely funded by member's subscriptions. The annual conference is self-funded.

The organisation continued to prosper until 1992 when it changed its name to "National Women's Register" (NWR). This brought the Australian membership in line with the international organisation of NWR. On 9 March 1993 National Women's Register became incorporated and registered as National Women's Register Australia Incorporated.

Today, members in many countries worldwide continue to foster "A Meeting Point for Lively Minded Women" of all nationalities in their search for knowledge and a better understanding of the joys and richness that can improve their lives.



Take a look ...

NWR Australia Website:

www.nwraustralia.org.au

The Sunshine Coast NWR Morning Group has 11 members, as per last year. We meet at 10am and start with morning tea before having our discussion. After the discussion we have lunch together (BYO) and enjoy each other's company.

JANUARY 2017

Our first topic was to discuss the acceptance speech given by Noni Hazlehurst when she was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the 2016 Logies. In this speech Noni touched on many topics such as television programming, the dominance of negative stories in the media, the disconnect between what we see on TV and what we experience in our own environment, mothering, trust, mental health issues, bigotry and racism! Noni's speech was delivered with humour so it was easy to listen to and it provided a much lively exchange of ideas.



FEBRUARY 2017

At 10am on a beautiful morning at Caloundra we gathered at the home of member Willi at King's Beach. Carole from the Brisbane West NWR Group was a welcome guest.

Our theme was about our like or dislike of plants and trees and the memories they can evoke. Two of those present had been involved in plant nurseries and their input was well received. We all realized that happy and sad memories could and did rise from our discussion. A wide variety of our garden specimens were exchanged to plant in our own spaces so that memories of each other could be recalled and enjoyed.



MARCH 2017

The March meeting was a very happy morning, focussing on what we enjoy doing! We all agreed time with family was on top of our list! Line dancing, tai chi, conducting choirs and photos taken on our many travels and of our families give us pleasure but then one member shared, just waking up each morning made her grateful! We ended up by all agreeing, we were all privileged to live on the Sunshine Coast.



APRIL 2017

Our topic was to discuss where democracy and capitalism join together for the better good of all. This led us to discuss how much capitalism is impacting on our way of life and in particular the kind of governments we are now getting. We looked at different democratic styles such as republican and monarchical and also to voting systems. Australia is one of a few countries that have compulsory voting. We discussed changes happening around the world and how we are all inter connected now as a global entity where what happens in one country impacts on every other country. We hypothesised on how we could come up with a better form of government by taking the best from good democracy and socialism.



MAY 2017

It was a bright happy group of NWR ladies that arrived at Irene's door on the 24th May, the actual birthday of Bob Dylan whose works we had chosen to discuss that day. Coincidence indeed! The Topic of the Day was to revisit his extensive legacy of songs that have reinforced his popularity throughout the 60's up until the present day, and ultimately leading to his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Also did his words have any relevance today? To quote Joan Baez: "You either get Bob Dylan or you don't." This statement was put to the test as each member read the lyrics of their chosen song. Their choices ranged from his classics to more reflective thoughts on love and relationships, criminal injustices, to contempt of the powerful. We discussed them all and yes, his words were relevant today. As hostess, Irene felt from only touching on his vast repertoire that regardless of personal feelings we had discovered a respect for his work and more understanding as to the reason he became the reluctant Spokesman for a Generation, a role that he had not signed up for.



At this point we retired to the pool area for a relaxing lunch in the sunshine and a piece of Bob Dylan birthday cake!

JUNE 2017

**Topic: Have we become an emotionally crippled society?
What happened to resilience and getting on with the job?**

Aspects of the impact of social media on bereavement were discussed particularly the apparent ease with which some people on the peripheral of others lives are able to make inappropriate and untimely comments relating to sickness and death.

The subject of memorial sites with floral tributes brought up the general feeling that this enabled people to be connected and empathize in a way they might not otherwise be able to do. Good example of this was Lady Diana's passing. Her untimely death was in fact when floral tributes were reinstated as the norm apparently having their origin in the 19th century when such public outpourings of sympathy and grief were common place.

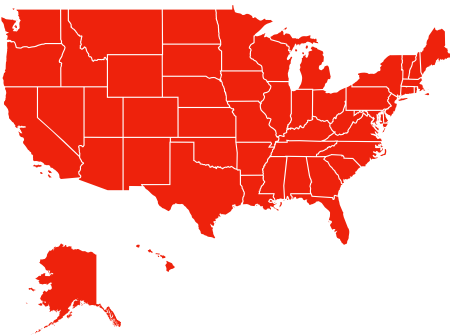
Much was discussed with many aspects involving resilience but the general consensus was that we are not less resilient perhaps we simply have a different way of going about our daily challenges.

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

Also at our June meeting we were able to help celebrate a special birthday for our member Dal. Of course Dal had several celebrations to celebrate this milestone because she has a large family and a wide circle of friends. Dal is an inspiration as she goes about life with such enthusiasm and has an interest in a wide range of issues. She contributes to our discussions and offers her perspective on our topics and she always has interesting things to talk about. Our recognition of this birthday was our way of thanking Dal for her ongoing participation in NWR.



JULY 2017



AMERICAN POLITICAL EVENTS AFTER

THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP

A lively discussion was held on the Trump election and subsequent months of office. None of us thought he would get in and are worried about his unpredictable, belligerent and unreliable style of leadership. Unanimously we feel Donald Trump has added more fear into the world especially with his handling of North Korea and Syria. We covered topics like his relationship with Putin, the G20 meeting, the Paris Climate Accord, sacking of the FBI Director James Comey, the Mexican wall and his family's involvement in the election. He has left all of us with a lack of trust. Trump stands out from other Presidents because he uses childish Tweets to vent his anger: "You are witnessing the greatest WITCH HUNT in American political history."

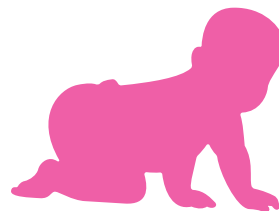
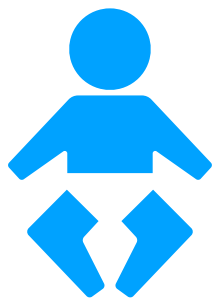
AUGUST 2017

Our NWR meeting in August was an interesting discussion on Child Protection in Queensland.

A very wide topic but mostly we discussed why there appeared trouble within the department such as staff shortages, burn out of investigators thus losing consistency with clients.

Some of the causes of child abuse suggested were poverty, mental health, unemployment and probably just as important parents that just couldn't cope (probably because of some of the above problems)!

We found it difficult to find a solution except for more funding. Even though there have been many investigations, results do seem (to the general public) not very satisfactory. Talking to people working in the department, success is often achieved but mistakes do happen (as staff are only human)! They feel good results are achieved in this difficult area at times.



LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE!

The Sunshine Coast Morning Group chose this topic for our September discussion not knowing it is the theme for this year's conference. We were asked to bring along anecdotes, stories of funny experiences, jokes or poems to share and have a good dose of medicine! Laughter was certainly forthcoming and one of our members took the time to write a *LIMERICK* about each of us. Thanks Barb!



There's our teacher called **Patricia**
Whose pupil fell down a large fissure
She called in a crane
And saved him again
That naughty lad caused her such pressure.

Then there's a girl called **Kerry**
Who made some wine from raspberry
When tasting she said
This is a fine red
And drank till she became very merry

Did you hear of a young girl called **Willi**
Who decided to ride a fine filly
The filly did bolt
When it saw a colt
And Willi hung on looking silly

Now what about our Irene
Who always looks so serene
But when filled with passion
About a good mission
She's imperious as a queen.

Our LO who is called Robyn
Decided to do some Clubbin'
She danced all night
To everyone's delight
Wouldn't come home 'cos she can be stubborn

Our social butterfly named Dal
Lives a life that's frenetic as hell
She's hard to pin down
So often out of town
She's a sassy intelligent gal

Our dear soft-spoken Helen
Communes in the bush and the glen
Where nature abounds
She hears all the sounds
Of the bees and the tiny scrub-wren

From South Africa comes our Desley
With tales from afar that are grizzly
About lions and zebra
Mambas and cheetah
Man and horse that appeared deadly

There once was a girl called Anna
Who had a fight with a goanna
It reared and it hissed
Thank God it missed
But fastened on to her bandana

The impeccable Robynanne
Is a whizz with a frying pan
But flipping a pancake
She made a mistake
And it landed right on her hand

Barb, who's the limerick poet
Says she hopes she don't blow it
If Bob Dylan can win
A Nobel prize in Sweden
She creates in Caloundra to show it

EASTERN SUBURBS REPORT

We held our planning meeting in February.

In March Heather Hawkins was our guest speaker. Heather gave a really inspiring talk about her marathon running. She started running after having been diagnosed with Stage 1 Ovarian Cancer in 2007. Her cancer journey was the catalyst for her to get stronger, fitter and re-connect with her sense of adventure. She has certainly achieved her aims having completed a number of marathons including the World Marathon Challenge which involved running 7 marathons, on 7 continents, in 7 days.



Our April meeting involved members talking about what they had done during the last month as well as reading a favourite poem and sharing that with the group.

In between meetings, one of our members organised a boat trip along the Hawkesbury River and a 1.8km walk called the Hermitage Foreshore Walk which runs between Vacluse and Nielson Park.

At our May meeting members brought along items of memorabilia and shared some interesting stories associated with those items. A very unusual item that one member showed was a sewing basket which had belonged to her grandmother and it was made from, of all things, the skin of an armadillo. No-one had seen anything like that before.

Our June meeting was held at a member's home which made a cosy setting in which to talk about books that we had enjoyed (or not enjoyed) reading. The book reviews covered a mix of fiction and non-fiction. The oldest book brought along by one member had been given to her grandmother in 1906 when she was 11 years old. The book was titled "The House We Live In" or "The Making of the Body". The aim of the book was to "Assist Mothers in Teaching their Children How to care for their Bodies, and the Evil Effects of Narcotics and Stimulants". It was quite fascinating.

In July we opted for an outing rather than an evening meeting. For a donation of \$5, Friends of the Town Hall provided a wonderful guided tour of the Sydney Town Hall. We were joined by Barbara Howse from the Guildford NWR group in the UK. Everyone enjoyed seeing behind the scenes of this magnificent building, and for several members who have performed in concerts and eisteddfods over the years it was even more significant. We were all impressed by some beautiful stained glass windows, intricate floor mosaics and inlaid timber flooring. The lady Mayoress' suite had a wonderful artwork depicting a portrait of



Clover Moore which from a distance looked like a painting. In fact it was a woven carpet. The tour concluded with a viewing of a street model of the Sydney City Council area.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service was the topic of our August Meeting. We were fortunate to have Catherine Smith, who is an ambassador for the service, as our guest speaker. She made her presentation really interesting, adding to the basic knowledge which most of us had. Many of us were surprised to learn the extent of the service which covers a diverse range of health services including dental, skin care, men's health, mental health and well-being, just to name a few. A close study of the \$20 note was brought to life as its artwork represents the milestones of the Service. Catherine had some interesting photos to show us and concluded with 2 short video clips which reinforced the amazing, life-saving work of the royal Flying Doctor Service, the first air ambulance service in the world!

We had a great meeting in September, with good laughter as usual. Members were asked to talk about their passion, interest or hobby. Jenny talked about an idea that she had about hosting hospital visitors, Hedda spoke about her love of cooking magazines, Sue Lane talked about her favourite author Margaret Attwood, Jane about her sketching, Jenni about her painting, Gunni about shopping with her daughter, Inga about the dream of cooking her grandmother's recipes with her mum, Lynn about her volunteer work with a charity, Marie about her bridge. A very diverse range of interests.

In October Lisa very kindly opened her home for a Heritage Party. It was a lively evening with 20 members contributing food and anecdotes relating to their culture. Some managed to dress in costume or clothing traditionally worn in their country of origin. Many of us have Anglo Saxon backgrounds but Swedish, Dutch, Danish, Lebanese, Yugoslavian, Indonesian and New Zealand were all represented or spoken about on the night.



A talk about stem cell research by guest speaker Kudilp Sidhu will be the topic for our November meeting and our Christmas dinner will finish the year.

Colleen McGuigan and Kate Strachan Joint LO's

ILLAWARRA EVENING GROUP

What have these ladies of the night been up to this year?

For the ladies of our group, *Anne Innes, Betty Kitchener, Christine Marks, Robyn Foster, Suzanne Perram, Lucy Kennedy and Bev Shaw*, the year began with a planning day lunch at The Passionate Palate at Forest Grove Estate, Kanahooka, a popular place for us to meet as it is quiet, bright and serves quality, tasty food. We had a lovely time putting together our plans for 2017.

TOPICS:

Looking Outside the Square: Easy or difficult?

February

The one thing we realised is, that to even begin searching for another way around a situation, we have to “unpick” some of what we have been taught as the ‘normal’ or ‘correct’ way to analyse, perform or carry out the happenings that make up our lives, to set realistic outcomes. Which duties are more important and should demand our focus... **TIMEKEEPING, HOUSE KEEPING** (Oh goodness... is that dust on the cabinet), **COOKING HEALTHY MEALS**, meaningful **FAMILY TIME**, creating and nurturing **FRIENDSHIPS**. The one area that deserves a lot of *thinking outside of the square* to be worthwhile and creative... is attention to our **PERSONAL SELF... our wellbeing, health, what I would like to achieve and my talents!!!** Yes, even acknowledging that I have talents worth nurturing is something I was always taught should be ‘last on my list’. **ONE OF OUR BEST ASSETS AS FAR AS FINDING WAYS TO THINK OUTSIDE OF THE SQUARE... or SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE... is the INTERNET and not forgetting THE PRINTED PAGES, BOOKS!** How many hours do we sit searching, reading and learning from this great “tool” or reading the books available to give insight into **WHAT ELSE IS “OUT THERE”?** Some of us spend a lot of time doing this but don’t often act on what we would truly love to do... because of a lifetime of being told that “near enough is good enough”. **NO, IT ISN’T!** The older we get the more we realise there is so much more out there and so much more to achieve, in little ‘bites’ is good. **USE OUR MAGINATION... LET IT GO CRAZY... NOTE THE FEASIBLE & POSSIBLE... SLOWLY COME BACK TO ACHIEVABLE!**

My Treasured Possessions: Show and Tell

March

What a lovely, diverse mix of treasures were displayed for us to see!



Suzanne – Two beautifully knitted jumpers from her youth, and a jade and gold brooch. One jumper was handmade by her Grandmother when Suzanne was quite young and the other was knitted by her mother being the last one her Mum made before she passed away. Both jumpers are made from quality wool that has stood the test of time and look as though they were made yesterday. **The third item was the exquisite jade brooch set in a swirl of gold.** Suzanne was given this when just a

little girl so it had never been worn, put away safely for another time. That time came when preparing to go to a family wedding in more recent times and a green coloured brooch would just set the outfit off nicely... wait a moment... there was one! It fitted the picture perfectly and is now in sight and in mind.

Betty – A shaving mug belonging to her father (that’s treasure enough) but the mug was a ceramic with a floral embellishment, made back over a century ago! What a great treasure to have. No cracks, no marks, in perfect condition! Betty holds the treasure in her mind’s eye of standing watching her Dad shave in the mornings when she was a little girl. **The mug now sits on Betty’s bed side table. What an affectionate, loving story.**

Christine - A golden flower on an intricate gold chain, embedded with what appeared to be a tiny pink garnet. This belonged to Christine’s mother and the actual type of jewel in the middle of the moulded gold

flower was not definitely known. It was very old and proudly worn by Christine whenever possible to remind her of treasured days.

Anne – Necklace and bracelet, double rows of black diamonds!

We were all intrigued by this beautiful, sparkling necklace and bracelet as we hadn't ever seen black diamonds "in the flesh" so to speak. Anne's best friend in Norway, (they started high school together) died from an aggressive cancer. She never had any children, but has two brothers and two nephews. She very graciously decided that all her close friends would get a piece of jewellery and Anne received this beautiful jewellery that she believes came from her grandmother. Unfortunately, they hadn't been worn out to "show off" to the world but valued with much sentimentality by Anne. Such a unique treasure!



Robyn - Two rings and one very tiny, very old, cellulose doll were shown. The two rings had been designed and reset using a mix of diamonds and gold from her mother's and grandmother's rings, uniquely designed by Robyn with love. The settings are quite different and they sparkled with some very valuable diamonds, one being a blue diamond. **The tiny little doll, wearing a tiny dress, which was intricately crocheted or tatted, was sitting in a tiny high chair.** Her hair was intact as was everything else. What joy all these treasures continue to bring to Robyn and on to her family in the future.

Beverly – A "high tea" tea set, a yellow glass vase and a handmade wooden recipe book cover were brought out of my cupboards. The small flute-edged cup, scalloped-edged saucer and plate, were a sample of the unique design of this tea set and were hand painted with raised up floral painting on egg shell ceramic. This belonged to my Grandmother and was given to her from an aunt, so the (set of 6, now only 4) would be well over 100 years old. The story was told to me by Grandma (would have now been 127) of how, early in her marriage, she would have lady



friends over for high tea and these were the size of cups used for tea. With no markings on the bottom it is hard to know exactly when they were made in England. The bright yellow, opaque glass vase was part of a pair but one day when dusting them, one hit the tiled hearth of the fireplace at Grandma's... then there was only one. I used to sit and look at them many years ago, when having dinner there. One had the black shape of a lady dancing (as shown) and the broken one had the shape of a man in a dancing position. I was given this most treasured vase before Grandma died, along with the



teaset. As for the wooden recipe book cover... my wonderful Dad had it made for Mum with a carving of a fat chef (in no way indicative of my mother's shape) and Mum's name *Elvy* on the front. Of course the biggest treasure is my Mum's handwritten recipes contained within the book. I can still see her with the book on the table making her wonderful apple pies!

DEFINITIONS OF "TREASURE" - ... wealth such as money, jewels, precious metals stored up or hidden... OR something of great worth or value... OR a person esteemed as rare or precious.

**Illawarra Performing Arts Centre - Night Out:
VELVET – Spiegeltent production - April**

What a great night we had! Met for dinner first at Jasmine Rice, then on to the show.

This is what the promotional material said and we couldn't say it better. A divine discotheque circus! Star of the show... Marcia Hines.

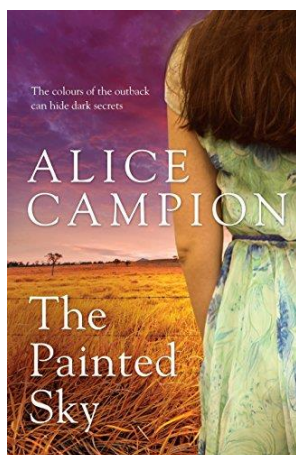


“Welcome to Wonderland...Boogie Wonderland! Slip behind the red velvet rope to visit a glitter ball world of fantastic sensory overload! Having dazzled audiences around the globe, VELVET arrives in Wollongong to headline the greatly anticipated inaugural Spiegeltent Wollongong season in the stunning 1920s Aurora Spiegeltent. Travelling from its home in Belgium to adorn the Arts Precinct, the ‘mirror tent’ will house not only VELVET but dozens of other events. VELVET is a seductive fusion of disco, dance and circus that will take you on an electrifying journey to a world of glamour and abandon. Loosely inspired by Studio 54, and starring an international ensemble including legendary diva Marcia Hines, this is a raucous party with an exhilarating disco soundtrack that never lets up. This review sums it up: “A show that’s big, brash, noisy and buckets of fun. The audience is whipped into a frenzy of disco glitterball nostalgia.” - The Guardian (UK)

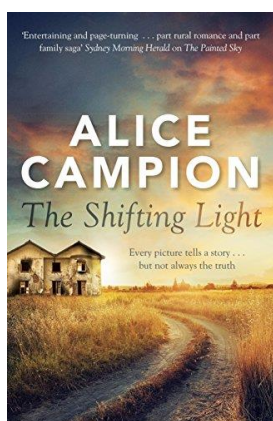
Favourite Book Review

May

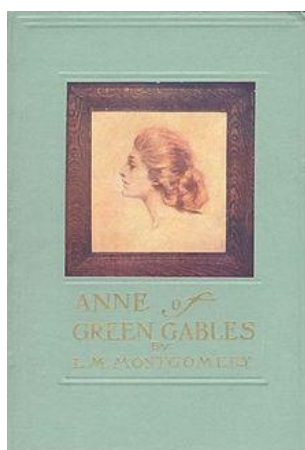
A book review evening is always a very interesting one. We each review different books that we have enjoyed at some stage during the year and as we hear about the stories portrayed in these wonderful books, we then have the enthusiasm to seek out the next great ‘read’ particularly from the ones reviewed.



Two books brought to our attention were written by Alice Campion, the pseudonym for five friends from a Sydney book club who challenged themselves to write a '21st Century captivating rural novel, presenting the reader finally with 2 unique and intriguing stories in **PAINTED SKY** (5 friends) and **THE SHIFTING LIGHT** (4 friends). The finale was a painting of what the friends thought Alice Campion might look like and entered into



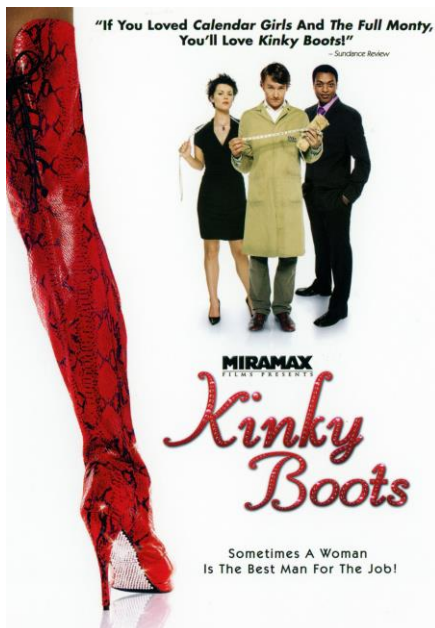
the Archibald portraits exhibition.



The oldest story to be reviewed was **ANNE OF GREEN GABLES** written in 1908, by Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery. Written for all ages, it has been considered a children's novel since the mid-twentieth century. It recounts the adventures of Anne Shirley, an 11-year-old orphan girl who is mistakenly sent to Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, a middle-aged brother and sister who had intended to adopt a boy to help them on their farm in the fictional town of Avonlea on Prince Edward Island. The novel recounts how Anne makes her way with the Cuthberts, in school, and within the town. I'm sure this novel would have to be a favourite of many women of our era.

Movie night at Robyn's...

June



We gathered in the warmth of Robyn's lounge room on a cold night to watch the movie *"Kinky Boots"*. What a great mix of telling a story which was true in its background and the saving of a family's boot making business and the troubling way in which people treat those that they don't feel "fit" the normal picture. Shameful what some people do to the human spirit! Along with the seriousness there were wonderful moments of fun and light-heartedness and of course the happy ending with everyone a "winner". We nibbled away at our movie-style goodies and enjoyed it immensely.

You have to love a night at the movies!

TRUMP + PUTIN... how's it shaping up?

July

Well, I guess you could say ... all gloves are off! Or maybe... on! Who really knows what is secretly going on behind closed doors with President Trump (who appears to think he always holds the trump card) you can imagine what lively discussion there has been along the way at their meetings!! There was plenty of lively discussion at our meeting too and a lot of concern expressed about the new man in the White House, running the USA like a business and firing and hiring weekly. Putin on the other hand, has President Trump right where he wants him, keeping him on his toes with his KGB men right at Trump's back! What a tangled web Trump is weaving... while Putin sits back and watches the games play on! *The Trapped Trump versus the Pitiless Putin*. Booking a ticket for space flights soon?



Nothing like a night at the theatre...

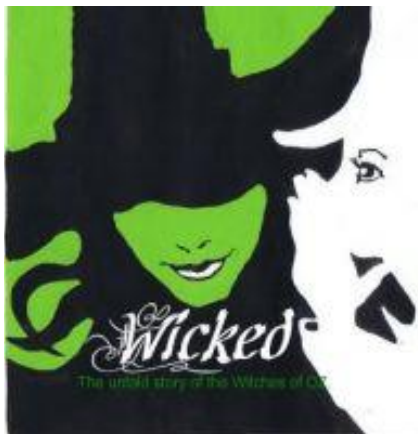
And being "Wicked" !!

Off to IPAC for a night at the theatre again...

August

WICKED - performed by our Illawarra theatre group of many years standing, The Arcadians.

We just had to meet first at the IPAC café to try their goodies with green fillings, green icing, green drink, well maybe not the green drink.



What a great show! The performance, the singing, the stage props and the atmosphere highlighted a wonderful night at the theatre for just a few of our ladies. All the cast of the show were “home grown” from very young to much more experienced as they took us on the journey of how the Wicked Witch of the West, a misunderstood girl with emerald skin named Elphabab, met blonde and popular, Glinda, at Shiz University to study sorcery and an unlikely friendship grew between them but was manipulated by the Wizard of Oz and his female assistant teacher in Sorcery, with shocking consequences for the two girls along the way as their lives go in very different ways.

We watched as the boys of their dreams and a rescued pet lion cub were turned into The Tin Man, The Straw Man and the Cowardly Lion. This was prior to when Dorothy and her dog Toto “dropped in” one day on the Land of Oz via a house with the help of a very strong wind. But, as all good stories go... it all ended on a positive note after Elphaba and Glinda fulfilled their destinies as the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good, rekindling the friendship. They also got their “man” even if one needed oiling and the other had hair like straw! We didn’t quite see who took the Lion home as their pet.

What Grinds Your Gears...

Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn’t open your mouth when something was making your hair stand on end or your temperature gauge go up to dangerous annoyance levels very quickly? Yes, we all have. This is what our ladies had stuck in their “gears”.

We all had some gripes from one of our older members asking a person with a full trolley of groceries if she could go before him with her two items, and him telling her to walk to the other end of the store. Our Marriage Celebrant member having her “gears” grrrr... with brides being late for their wedding and then puffing on a cigarette before the ceremony. Priorities please! One of our Grandmas told us how an Anglican priest was not willing to baptise her grandson because the parents were not married. Lost the whole meaning of baptism, for the baby? **Cannot think of what Susan or I mentioned but we all had some gripes.**

As for me... it is a gear-grinding, tongue-biting hate of mine when I am called “deary” or “darl” by someone who doesn’t know me from Eve and also too often being asked if I would like to sit down when at an event where most others are standing to see better or *just watch what’s happening. Most times the seat is right at the back where you couldn’t see anything but everyone else’s back sides!* It’s the white hair I suppose or do I look a bit more like a zombie than I realise? I know... it all comes from a good heart... trying to change gears now. Nah... can’t get it into neutral!



September



Topics coming up to finish off our NWR year.

October:

What Makes a Wonder Woman? Following the theme for the UK Conference 2017.

November:

All About Greece! An evening of light tapas refreshments with travel stories, photos, Greek menus... anything we can bring to the table! Don't you love puns!

December:

Everything Christmas !! Will be here before we can say "Cheers".

All the very best to our NWR friends across the miles, from the ladies of Illawarra Evening group.

Bev Shaw – LO

WHAT CAPTIONS WOULD YOU PUT ON THESE AUSTRALIAN BEAUTIES?



I can see right through you... don't!



C'mon over to my house...
It's discotheque night...
BYO... camouflage

Haven't you heard of the Queen's Guard...
Just practising...
...I can dream



Lucky I posted on Instagram first...
Spent all morning on my hair and make-up only to be stuck out here... being stared at!



Don't you just love them... wonder what captions they would put on us?

Illawarra Day Group Report May 2017

January began with a discussion on which ancestor you'd like to have a conversation with and why. Most of us chose grandparents whom we regretted not questioning when we were young. It was also the meeting where we chose the topic for discussion for the coming year (always a hard choice).

We reported on great walks or rail journeys we'd done both in Australia and overseas in our February meeting, and for March (while it was still relatively fresh in our minds!) we talked about the things we'll remember about 2016: Overseas trips, big O birthdays, family reunions, 2 hip replacements and a puppy training that will continue on for quite a while yet.

April's topic was the colour Orange and everyone remembered the 1970's orange kitchen, cushions and bedspreads that abounded in our houses – the height of fashion. We had two visitors this month, so I hope we set a good example to them and they join up as members.

Our topic for May, "Domestic Violence", provoked strong feelings and emotions, as you can well imagine.

We researched the origins of our maiden/married names, and who were our namesakes; chose a little-known country out of a hat (very interesting and very educational) and had our Librarian address us on what was available electronically and how we could access it on our various devices. We all have a few more apps now that will be extremely useful.

Future topic for the year will be:

A Wonder Woman of the Last 50 Years,

An Impromptu talk to be decided at the meeting,

Poetry Day

And of course, our ever popular, Christmas Lunch at Lynne Savage's, complete with Christmas crackers, Christmas trivia and Secret Santa.

We hope our Conference, "Laughter in the Best Medicine" proves a success. And also, that all the members of NWR Australia have had a good year.

Trish Copeland
National Organizer
Illawarra Day Group

THE HILLS REPORT FOR THE NEWSLETTER 2017

BEP KLEIBERG AND MICHELE MIDDENDORP co-LOS

Our first meeting (always in January) was to plan the year's program, which was then followed by a brief game of celebrity heads before supper.

February saw 19 of our 21 members gather for an evening of commenting on a wide variety of newspaper headings and articles. At times the conversation became quite animated and required the chairwoman to intervene with her bell. Surprisingly 'Trump' was mentioned only once and almost just in passing (thank goodness, as it would be easy to spend an entire evening on that subject!).

Have you noticed how quiet it is on public transport these days? On buses & trains you'll see most commuters are on either their phones, computers or tablets or dozing off. No verbal conversations—no friendly 'in person' connections, however fleeting. In March we had interesting discussions about body language, communication and the effects of social media. We all agreed that texting and using social media have their uses, but take up too much of our children's time and that the art of oral communication is getting lost in the process. An example was brought up of two people having dinner at a restaurant while both were texting on their phones. Maybe to each other? We learned that various body poses mean different things, but that there is always a combination of at least 3 of these poses necessary to determine what is actually being said through body language. All in all a very informative night which was expertly led by Thomasina.

April's Trivia night, thoughtfully put together by Sue, saw great rivalry between the 2 teams of 5. Questions such as name 3 states in the USA with either an x or a z in them, and, where is the world's most ancient forest, had us scratching our heads. The final result was just a half mark separating the teams. (ANSWERS: Texas, Arizona, New Mexico; The Daintree).

For our May meeting we were lucky enough to have a lady called Thelma Scanes. She is part of the soft furnishing group of Old Government House in Parramatta, set up in 2004. The group is responsible for making curtains, bedding and other soft furnishings as near to the original as possible, as the various Governors took those with them when they moved out, because materials were scarce in those days. The volunteers worked on designs sourced by Elizabeth Wright from old sketches & descriptions, and later, photographs. Tassels and fringes would have cost lots of money if the group had had to buy them overseas so they were hand made. Only natural materials were used; wool, cotton, linen and silk—all hand stitched. The volunteers had to learn painting on velvet, spinning cords and binding tassels. Thelma showed us many examples and we had a real insight into what was involved in replicating the beautiful soft furnishings of the era.

The June meeting saw 15 of us sharing our research on topics beginning with individually and randomly selected alphabet letters. We covered many diverse topics. Imagine using soap, chalk, crushed oyster shells or ground charcoal as Toothpaste (T). In 1890 Colgate introduced toothpaste in tubes. Paper (P) was invented during the Han Dynasty in 105 AD. The Chinese also invented envelopes and toilet paper. Zip-a-dee-doo-dah (Z) is a song everyone is familiar with, but where did it originate? It is from the 1946 Disney film 'Song of the South' featuring 2 white children

befriending a Negro boy (or African-American in today's politically correct language). As social segregation was then in force the adult lead actor (African-American) was barred from attending the film's premiere! We also learnt about Coco Chanel, Molluscs, Hippocampus and others with many more amazing facts.

July came with our much anticipated Crazy Whist evening with 3 tables of 4 battling it out. After every 2 rounds (10 rounds in total), the 2 losing players at each table swap with other tables so that everyone has different partners all the way through. Being a card game where you play with a partner, table talk (ie hinting to the partner) is frowned upon, but it's amazing how people get around this rule. It was a great evening and supper thanks to Janice's efforts.

Our August meeting was at Lorraine Budai's house. Lorraine read to us a selection of talks she had given in the past to other groups.

At first she read a piece that Christine Hardy had written after she had been to Okinawa Island in the South China Sea, with her husband, who is involved in karate. Okinawa is the largest island of the Okinawa Islands and was annexed by Japan in 1879. It is closer to mainland China than it is to Japan. The people from Okinawa are the healthiest and live the longest of all the people in the world. They have the most centenarians per head in the world due to a combination of diet and lifestyle. We learned about the history and the vital role it played during the Second World War.

Another piece was called "Sandy's story" and was about the amazing journey of Lorraine's husband from Budapest in Hungary to eventually arriving in Australia. It was 1948 and Hungary was under communist rule and Sandor (Sandy) supported an illegal movement against the communist regime. One afternoon when he came home from work, a neighbour told him not to go in, as the secret police were waiting for him. He decided to flee the country with his friend Bela and after 3 long weeks of walking by night and hiding during the day, they reached Vienna. On arriving in the American zone they were arrested and thrown in jail. They were interrogated to see if they were true refugees. They found work on a farm in Linz. After some time Sandy joined the French Foreign Legion and within weeks he found himself in Algeria and after that in Indo China and after suffering a gunshot wound and severe malaria, he was transported to a Paris hospital. From there he went to a refugee camp in Hamburg and eventually ended up in Australia in 1951. He started working at the steel works in Port Kembla and after a while ended up in Sydney where he met and married Lorraine in 1957. It was 1980 before he could go back to Hungary for the first time. What a story!!!!



Most of The Hills group at our Crazy Whist night

At our last 4 meetings we'll have a book/movie review, attend a play, have a guest speaker, and our final meeting will be of course our Christmas party.

BRISBANE WEST UPDATE

We have had a lot of really good discussions this year. Our group now has ten members, and what a dynamic bunch we are. We meet monthly in our own homes, where the hostess of the day serves up coffee, tea and biccies. We deal with any business there may be, before launching into our discussion topic for the month. We choose our topics in advance, generally at the start of the year, with everyone having input.

We started the year getting to know each other a little better with the topic "Who are you?" We described ourselves outside our domestic relationships. We found we have in our group:

A Spanish speaking mechanical engineer, who has worked as a chemist, astronomer and educator, who has dug for fossils all over the world, does research for Earthwatch, and enjoys geology, environmental matters, and maths for engineers;

A singing, dancing, reciting piano player who loves sport and recently turned 84;

A gardener and bookkeeper who loves books and animals, theatre and painting, has worked in the hotel industry and as a landscaper and gardener, and enjoys being alone, but teaches yoga in her spare time, and finds life is full of exciting opportunities;

A history buff who is mad about the arts, loves reading, fishing, public speaking and family history, a former library technician who is a greenie, socialist, optimist and feminist but who has no sense of direction – a late bloomer;

A former nurse who loves choral singing (in French!), reading, painting, pottery, playing the piano, speaking French, Spanish and Italian, an optimist who enjoys gardening and entertaining family, writing stories and poetry, and going to movies and concerts;

A former stripper (in an oven factory!) and a 'Handmaiden to God' (who received special permission to clean the area behind the altar of her church, an area normally restricted to males);

and A former Chartered Accountant, then theology graduate who lost all faith in a loving, caring God, but who loves to sing grand Latin masses in a choir, is polite, compassionate, loving and a good friend, but who can be two-faced (horrors!)

Now, having given an overview of most of our members, what else is there to say?

Our other topics this year have included:

A significant woman of the 20th century

An outstanding character from the entire history of the world

A famous person I have met, almost met, or would like to meet

The new test for Australian Citizenship

How important is people power?

Are we losing the art of listening?

Topics for the rest of the year are:

Cartoon strips and comic books

A valuable inheritance

One of today's important issues

We always enjoy our annual get-together with the Sunshine Coast members, which was held recently in Roma Street Parkland after a visit to Brisbane city Hall.

We are a friendly group, and would love to welcome members from other groups who may be passing through Brisbane or Ipswich, just for a cuppa or to attend one of our meetings, which are held on the fourth Saturday of each month.

Rose Ellwood, LO

I SANG WITH JOHN FARNHAM!

My five minutes of glory occurred on Saturday 29 July 2017, at Southbank Piazza, Brisbane, at an awareness-raiser for Domestic Violence. It was one of the last events of this year's Qld Music Festival, and the highlight was a performance of "You're the Voice". Two thousand, five hundred choristers from all over converged in the Piazza (a relic of the 1988 World Expo). In the morning, we rehearsed for a couple of hours, and at the end of that time, a secret was shared in whispers amongst the choir. At 5pm, we all gathered in our places, and after a bit of razza-matazz, HE appeared. I was sitting quite close to where he was to go on stage, and as soon as we saw him the lady next to me leapt to her feet, and started screaming. I thought to myself "That's a good idea!", and did the same. Next thing I knew, all 2500 choristers were on their feet screaming! We sang "You're the Voice" in 10-part harmony with The Voice, then he quickly left the stage, and the show was at an end. I was on a high for days after.

Rose Ellwood

Brisbane West

REUNION OF BRISBANE WEST GROUP and SUNSHINE COAST MORNING GROUP



On Saturday 5 August, which turned out to be a gloriously warm sunny day, our two groups met for what is now an annual get-together. Seven members from the Sunshine Coast and six from Brisbane West were to rendezvous at 10.15 am at the historic Shingle Inn Café, located inside Brisbane's City Hall. As it happened, we all arrived a little before time. The Brisbane West members were particularly happy to have finally made it, after much to-ing and fro-ing of texts and emails when we discovered, quite by accident, that Queensland Rail was planning to close the Ipswich-Roma Street line, on that day, for track maintenance. Luckily, one of our prospective new members stepped in and offered to drive us to Yeerongpilly, from where we caught the train to Central Station.

After morning tea, which was a delicious and leisurely affair, we gathered in the foyer of the magnificent stately building for a guided tour. We were joined by several members of the public and our guide admitted to being a little overawed because she had never had such a large group before. Our tour included the basement area, which was added when the building was renovated in 2010-13, and was full of historical interest, including the Signature Wall, which contains graffiti left on the walls by servicemen during the Second World War. After our tour, two smaller groups of NWR members took tours of the impressive clock tower, which included a look at the bells and clock faces. The antiquated lift was another talking point! Several ladies also took a turn through the Museum of Brisbane, which is also housed in City Hall.



Having by now worked up quite an appetite, we took a ten-minute walk to Mélange Café in the Roma Street Parklands for lunch, and lots of lively discussion on a multitude of topics. After lunch, we all had time for a stroll through the Parklands, most of us gravitating to the Spectacle Garden, which was a riot of colourful and heady-scented flowers. By now, our day was drawing to an end. Our two groups bid farewell, parted company, and headed for the station to catch our trains home.

We had all had a wonderful day out and will all be looking forward to our next "reunion."

Yvonne Fraser
BRISBANE WEST GROUP

FA.....

FABulous, FAntastic, FAtal (possibly), FAScinating Fungi!



1976 was when my love affair with fungi began in a Dutch forest. My husband and I came across 2 perfect red and white toadstools, the classic fairy tale ones—white stalk and red cap dotted with white spots—fly agaric mushrooms or *Amanita muscaria* to be exact!

I am not an expert photographer by any means, but I do have boundless patience when taking shots of toadstools from all angles—above, below, and sideways, at times spending 5-10 minutes getting just the right aspect.

At first Rob was impatient, urging me to ‘get a move on’ while on our lengthy holiday walks, but as time went on he realised that my fascination with fungi was not going to fade.

The saying “if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em” began to make sense to him and now he is my chief scout, so whenever I hear a groan or an “oh no” on the path up ahead I know he’s found something worth photographing and he’s likely to be held up for some time. However, he’s admitted that he’s learnt to enjoy finding and studying them too and the groan is just to ‘stir’ me up.



A year ago we explored Tassie and I have never seen so many amazing fungi. The time was right (March) and they seemed to be everywhere—a huge variety of shapes, sizes and colours—it was heaven and I came home with more than 800 photos.

However, I paid the price. Many toadstools were in confined or awkward positions and I’d had to use just my right hand to hold, focus and shoot with my compact digital camera. After returning to Sydney I experienced great pain and reduced movement in my right thumb and wrist, needing quite a few physio sessions and a wrist brace for 3 months. It was, however, definitely worth it!

A word of warning!! Some years ago I discovered a little patch of mushrooms growing in our garden and decided to make bacon and mushrooms on toast for Rob’s lunch. It only took an hour for the vomiting to start and I thought “my God, what have I done!” A frantic call to Poisons Information followed and to my huge relief I was told that as long as he was vomiting and getting rid of the poison he should be fine in a few hours. And indeed he was, but I felt dreadful, (so did he!!)



The reason I had unwittingly poisoned him was that although they were definitely mushrooms, there was a virus in the soil that turned them toxic. When cut, mushrooms normally bruise pink but the toxin makes them bruise yellow. I’ve learnt my lesson and its store bought mushies now.

Michele Middendorp The Hills

TELEPHONE RESEARCH

August 10, 2017

I have just hung up the phone after a seemingly endless lot of questions regarding the recent unrequested switch of my Mastercard to Visa with the National Australia Bank. Unless it sounds like an overseas scam call I am hesitant to fob them off as I briefly had an evening job once a week doing research so am usually an agreeable if not terribly enthusiastic respondent.

We would go to the Esso Oil offices in downtown Toronto and use their office phones. We were given a page of the local telephone book with a line marked under a name and told to phone everyone from there down until end of shift. Being the sexist 60's we had to speak to the male motorist of the house and ask if he would answer a few questions about his petrol usage. Sound simple?

Well, firstly the questions filled two pages, and second it was Hockey Night in Canada which 90% of the male population watched, plus we started at 7.00 p.m. when everyone had eaten and settled down to watch television. It was hard work to get enthusiastic recipients to give their time.

I tried to speak clearly in spite of my accent and turned on the charm. The most responsive were elderly men, many of whom had possibly not had a phone call for months and after answering the questions usually asked "Where are you from girly?", and when told "Australia", settled in for a nice chat about the Aussies they fought with in the war, what great blokes they were, etc. etc.

One night I had a young sounding woman answer the phone and when I told why I was calling, she handed the phone to her resident 'male motorist'. It sounded as though another couple was there as well, having a few drinks and they were very interested in hearing the questions I was asking, as the host relayed them to his audience causing a few laughs. He sounded very amused by it all and as the questions progressed, the reaction from him and the listening group became longer and louder laughter.

I was starting to get a bit giggly myself just listening to them having such a good time with such a mundane topic. I figured they must be smoking something.

I was more than half way through the questions when the reaction from all four of them was mass hysteria. Through

his laughter, the man asked “What did you say this survey was about?”

I replied “Gasoline!” He then shrieked to his audience “It’s for *gasoline!*” which seemed to tip them all into total insanity. When he regained his composure, he gasped “I thought you said it was for *Vaseline*”. When I re-read some of the questions I had asked it appeared I was making an obscene phone call and they were having great fun going along with it.

The supervisor sitting at the front of the room was glaring at me wondering why I found the survey so amusing. Trying to control myself, I said “Well, I’ve nearly finished so would you mind finishing the survey”. It got worse, as every question I asked sounded quite rude, and the five of us were totally losing control. I gasped the last questions, thanked them for their time, and as I hung up could hear them still shrieking.

They are probably still telling this story as am I, so many years later. Needless to say that was the last night I went to that job as I could never have asked the questions again without getting hysterical. Please be patient with the poor worker if you get a survey call, and make sure you clarify immediately what the topic is!

Trish Copeland

CHANGED MY MIND... don't want to be a SENIOR any more !!

Or do I?



I've just realised that I don't think of myself as a run-of-the-mill senior person at all. I certainly know that my body is giving me all the indications possible that I am in that age bracket and when I look in the mirror... well... what can I say! My mind though is of this time, still very active and happy to embrace this time, where technology is of prime importance to our everyday existence.

Everything we deal with these days is digital, in the cloud, on Instagram, texted via mobile or viewed by "friends" on Facebook. Every tiny bit of our lives is "out there", even when we try to put the brakes on that factor. This modern, social lifestyle takes my mind back to another place and days gone by when we physically saw each smile, heard each cry and felt a caring arm around us throughout life's spectrum of good, bad and otherwise.

My mind goes back to when my family interacted, not only with our chosen friends but with those with whom we shared our homes and street... we truly lived in a multi-cultural society and the cul-de-sac where we still live is a small "European" dwelling place, which hasn't changed much in over 40 years. It's a lovely place most of the time with only a few incidents years ago between the Serbian family and the Croatian family, temporarily falling back into the old mindset of their homelands, nothing serious! It used to be quite vibrant with interaction between parents and our



kids in the street while going through those "growing" years. There was no difference in us at the Christmas parties held a number of times, at the end of the street, where everyone helped set up tables, chairs and brought along wonderful food from their ethnic background. The Aussies contributed meat and seafood kebabs on sticks! Don't really have a "native" dish, except BBQ favourites! We all played a bit of cricket after lunch with only a few grandparents feeling that their age was against them participating in the fun. The conversations between the women were informative and friendly and it was at these times we realised that our background, level of education etc. would not detract from our support and nurturing of friendships.



It's all changed now, where the most interaction we have is a quick wave as we drive in or out of the cul-de-sac. The reason I have told this story is to demonstrate that everyone seems to be "on hold" in their homes and to show how the arrival of the digital age quickly watered

down face-to-face communication which has unwittingly fallen into an unnecessary social option. We now have the ability to "talk" to family and friends of our choosing both locally (sometimes just next door) and all over the world via social media. I have to admit that this new way of communication certainly keeps us much closer to our loved ones and those who are far away and our text is more

precise and warrants much quicker responses. I do miss the face-to-face experience of the expression on someone's face as they relate a tale, woeful or wonderful, followed by laughter or a tear. I sure miss the touch of a caring hand if feelings are low... not to mention the affection that can be felt simply by the look in a friend's eye, without even touching at all.

What a double-edged sword technology is... crippling but enlightening... this wonderful technology's effect has had on our daily lives. We won't win this one! Babies are already sitting in their strollers with tiny fingers sliding across the screen, playing with their i-pods, watching Peppa Pig or playing simple games. Yes, that can be educational and I'm not saying it shouldn't happen because this is their world. No, technology shouldn't be used as a baby sitter, story teller, or teacher as it so often is.



So here I've stood on my "soap box" trying to demonstrate that I'm not an oldie but in doing so I've shown clearly that some of the tried and true values with all the variations, through which an oldie has lived, are embedded and upheld with respect, as only a Senior who has the experience of years of living in a hands-on, face-to-face world can compare with today's social withdrawal.

So... happily now, I will claim my "run-of-the-mill" senior status... with a twist of 21st century infusion! Shaken... not stirred. Love it!

This is what it's all about – Facebook's collation of my own most-used words over the last twelve months, as sent to me on my FB just this morning. Someone is earning a living because of social media!



Lapland Adventure by Lyn Hazell

We began our journey flying to Tokyo, Japan for an overnight stop before flying onto Helsinki, Norway. Another overnight stop then on to Oslo then further on to, in a much smaller plane to Kirkenes in Northern Norway, a lovely hotel by the fjord which was still frozen. We were surrounded by snow white hills and wooden houses. It is a remote village which was severely bombed during WW2, hence there were no old buildings. But we did discover a derelict bomb shelter on the edge of the water. We wandered around the village. It was Easter so many people had gone away for the holidays. The lovely new school was brightly painted with lots of playground equipment scattered throughout the playground. The only shop was closed and the churches also. There were some monuments to the local heroes in the centre of crossroads. Further down the shoreline was a dock for the tourist and supply ships to dock.

A beautiful sunrise began the next morning with snow white hills turning a soft delicate pink and the glassy lake turned a soft silvery blue with plates of fine ice floating, motionless. A light dusting of snow overnight and boat lights winked and disappeared as the sun began to rise.

As we wandered the town we saw a sled with a chair perched on the skis. As we were puzzling about how to use this contraption a man popped his head out of a window and cried out "Have a go". He then appeared and demonstrated just how to go shopping with your hands on the handles a child or shopping on the seat and pushing the sled along. Going downhill was more interesting as you put your feet on the rungs you slid quite fast but then how to stop!! Skid your feet along!



returned to the water and the legs are cut off the remaining male crabs ready to be cooked and the scraps are thrown back into the hole for the cod fish to eat. On returning to the 'camp' the legs were placed in huge pots with salt and boiled until cooked. While we waited we wandered around an old Sami village, they were the original people of the area who usually herd the reindeer.



Then we dressed for a crab fishing expedition. We rode a snowmobile out along the frozen fjord to where a hole had been cut in the ice and a net was lifted out full of huge king crabs that grow to two metres!! They have blue blood due to the copper in their diet. The females are

Then it was time to eat. King Crab is the most delicious crab I have ever eaten. What a great way to finish off our day.

Next day it was off to drive our own snowmobile. After dressing in a huge one piece padded suit complete with helmet, gloves and boots it was time for our five minute lesson before taking off on our own. It was quite difficult to control the accelerator with your thumb, forward and you go too fast and release, the snowmobile stops. But after all the hesitations it didn't take too long before we were zooming along the frozen fjord. What a wonderful feeling that was as the freezing air reddened our cheeks and our grins of success beamed all over our faces. Faster and faster we went, racing each other along the smooth surface. Then it was time for the next test, up through the forest carefully steering and accelerating until we arrived at our afternoon tea stop. Then it was time to return to base. Exhilarated and happy we returned to our hotel for 'wine o'clock'.

The next day it was cloudy and the fjord had thawed and became a deep dark grey with ripples gliding across the surface it was +4-+5 degrees and snow was melting everywhere. In the afternoon the sun glinted as we were picked up to drive to tour the Snow Hotel, where gorgeous dog sled puppies were just so happy to be held and cuddled and Gabba the white reindeer ate reindeer lichen. The Snow Hotel is built from ice cut from the local lake in mid-December then the indoor walls are decorated with ice carvings of Nordic scenes and a Viking Ship forms an ice bar – quite spectacular. Every room has different carvings, Marilyn Munroe, penguins, polar bears, dolphins and mermaids to name a few. For those planning to stay the night they supply sleeping bag, woollen socks, balaclava and a sleeping bag liner, - not enough to keep me warm at night, and what if you needed to pop out during the night?

The next day it was a long drive to Saariselka, Finland with the border just a little green hut and no one to check our entry. The countryside was flatter with more pine trees lovely lakes all covered in glistening white snow. As we drove along people were snowmobiling and a couple of reindeer were sighted in the woods. After checking into our hotel we wandered the village and had a drink in the pub with the locals and met a young man with his huskies and his 5 year old daughter, they were delightful.

After dinner we walked to the outskirts of the town to view the northern lights, it was a lovely clear night but only stars winked at us.

There was further exploration of the village the next day led us to the national park where a variety of activities were enjoyed. Snow shoeing, X-country skiing was most popular with many different trails to traverse. Then it was off to the Sami Museum where there were interesting displays of tools and all sorts of implements and traditional beautifully embroidered clothing.



After experimenting with knobs and dials we successfully enjoyed a sauna which was attached to our private bathroom. Bliss! Then it was off again into the night sky to search for the northern lights, without success, again.

The next day we enjoyed another snowmobile safari through the forest across lakes and rivers to the Russian border to a lovely snowbound village where we enjoyed steaming hot vegetable soup and chocolate crepes for lunch, taking a different trail back to our hotel. Another inspiring day in the arctic-circle! Then it was off to our next hotel, where we stayed in a glass igloo complete with a bed which could be adjusted to view the northern lights through the glass ceiling. But again it was all cloudy!!

Rovaniemi, our next town to explore had many modern buildings. Then onto Santa's village where we had a nice chat with Santa after negotiating long corridors with all sorts of imaginative time pieces which explained just how Santa delivers the gifts overnight. Next we drove to Kimi on the coast where we boarded an old ice breaker ship to further explore the coastline. The massive plates of ice are between 50-70cm thick and we just seemed to glide through as the ice cracked and slid aside – amazing! We saw a seal relaxing on an ice flow and then it was time to dress in an enormous red wet suit and stumble down the gangplank before sliding into the icy arctic ocean. Surprisingly, it wasn't cold, as we floated and paddled around before trying to get out. We had to roll like a fat walrus back onto the ice flow and then try and stand up. All very challenging! The whole experience was great fun.

From Rovaniemi it was on to Munio with locals before arriving at Harriniva for the next stage of our adventure. We explored the surrounding cabins, the tiny village and the frozen river all white with deep snow and icy paths and watched snowmobiles zoom by and then the silent dog sledgers swish past across the river into Sweden and watched as the centre of the river's currents begin the swirl as the ice and snow began to melt. A wonderful, magical land!

Next day our guide, Dirk, took us snowshoeing through a winter wonderland of trees bowing down with snow and dripping icicles festooning every branch. We plodded behind Dirk over very deep sticky snow, which was quite difficult but beautiful as huge snowflakes drifted all around us. We clambered over tree trunks buried in the snow over little bridges piled high with snow, and happily trudged after Dirk overawed by the experience, until I fell into a huge hole, up to my waist. A huge snowdrift had just given way underneath me. It was extremely difficult to extricate myself amid all the laughter and help offered by Dirk and Joan. Finally we resumed our trekking over more snow covered logs under drooping branches before heading back to the hotel for a hot bowl of delicious soup, cold but elated.

Again we searched the cloudy night sky for the northern lights – to no avail.

Next day we dressed in our one piece padded suit complete with balaclava, helmet, woollen socks and huge boots to hop on a snowmobile and follow our guide, Dirk, this time over hills through forests along frozen rivers and across frozen lakes. It was challenging to hang on, control the speed and direction as we bounced, bucked glided zoomed and zigzagged all over the country side. It was just exciting and exhilarating all at once. We watched a pair of beautiful white singing swans beside a hole in the ice and then frightened by our noise, they gracefully flew away together. We visited a local riverside cottage for a delicious lunch before repeating the process again heading back to our hotel. As we arrived back to our

delight, it began snowing again. Another wonderful day full of challenges and adventure was discussed as we enjoyed a cold glass of wine.

A reindeer farm experience began the next day where we rode in a sled pulled by a reindeer and explored an old house which once belonged to the early Finn immigrants who learned their survival skills from the original Sami people of the area. Then it was off to visit a local artist's home and gallery



which he had built himself out of logs from the forest. It was an amazing mix of adjoining rooms with a huge open fireplace where he entertained us by singing accompanied by his zither, he was a very accomplished performer. Located on one level of the house was a heated swimming pool, another a fabulous dining room/gallery and up in the attic his art studio. His oil paintings of the surrounding countryside in all seasons and the self-portraits were just wonderful

With nervous excitement we began the next day with a 5 minute video of instructions on dog sledding followed by a basic hands on instruction from our guide Katerina. I wondered if I would remember everything!! When we stood on the rungs of the sled and held on grimly to the handles, our guide and dogs were ready to RUN!! We took off with Katerina in the lead then Joan and I each with our own dog team. Gradually we got the idea as we glided over swamps through forests and along snow covered roads, we began to relax and enjoy the experience. The dogs just love to run pulling effortlessly as we traversed the beautiful white countryside. Travelling uphill the dogs pulled at the same rate and to slow them down we had to use the brake to slow them down to negotiate through the forest. I felt very mean, trying to slow them down as I balanced with one leg on a rung of the sled and the other on the brake trying to negotiate a curve in the path through the forest. Quite challenging at first but we soon got the hang of it.

When we stopped for lunch we realised the tension we had had while holding on. Beside a tepee in the forest we lit a fire and cooked our lunch and we also fed the dogs their snack, soup and dog pellets, they had worked so hard.

Then we were off again and were much more relaxed this time remembering to lean and bend the knees and use the brake. The snow was deep and soft and sticky due to the late time in the season. It was really lovely gliding silently through the white wilderness, just magical.

Arriving at the wilderness hut the first chore was to unload the sleds then unharness the dogs and tether them for the night. They are lean dogs, just like a greyhound with fur, very

unlike the huskies we know here in Australia. They are just gorgeous to work with, they look at you with their beautiful soft eyes and help by lifting their foot when required and I'm sure they are thinking just another idiot to put up with. After they are fed it is time for us to enter the log cabin, light the fire, and set up our sleeping bags for the night. While waiting for our dinner to cook we plodded over a huge snow-bank to another little log cabin for a steamy sauna. Just the thing to fully relax and giggle over our near misses, balancing, braking and gliding seamlessly, silently over the wonderful white wilderness. Glowing with happiness we clambered back to the main cabin where a delicious meal of reindeer stew and cake for desert, awaited us before settling down in front of the fire to discuss the day's activities. Then it was time to snuggle into our sleeping bags.

The first thing next morning was to feed our dogs that were curled up in the snow, remove their droppings into a special bin and then feed ourselves. Cello, my favourite dog loved to be patted and carefully touched my hand to encourage me to continue. We then loaded up the sleds ready for the return journey. I had harnessed all my dogs and was waiting while Joan harnessed her dogs. At the time she had a go-pro camera on her head so that she could record the activity, all the while talking to her dogs. One of her dogs just wasn't ready to get up so she chatted and patted him to try and energise him. When she had finished she realised something was wrong! She had put all the harnesses on upside down, and had to begin all over again. We really enjoyed watching that video later.

Finally we set off homeward bound feeling very experienced this time, really enjoying every moment and we thought fully in control of the situation. Then, while traversing a lake, which had some puddles of water on the top, despite the 2 metres of ice beneath, one of Joan's dogs just sat down. That was it, it wasn't moving! When Katerina returned she just picked up the dog and said "She just doesn't like getting her feet wet!" Katerina was a wonderful guide who looked after all her dogs and knew all their names and all their idiosyncrasies, all 400 of them. We continued our journey wending our way all over the countryside blissfully enjoying every moment, not wanting it to end. Again we stopped by a log shelter where we lit a fire and cooked our lunch and met some X-country skiers who also stopped for lunch in the frosty air. Then it was time for our final journey back to the hotel, unharness and feed the dogs before playing with all the new puppies that jumped and wriggled trying to get our attention and more petting than the others. They are just so cute, soft, fluffy and cuddly. They are Arctic Siberian Husky x-breed that are only bred as needed, they do not sell their dogs. Next we enjoyed a wine in our hotel as we talked about what a fabulous time we had.

Snowmobiling the next day the snow was very deep soft and sticky which made it quite difficult to steer, but as we sped along conditions improved. Again we explored different terrane through the forest, over lakes and along the river before stopping at a log cabin for a bbq lunch. We were joined by a Siberian Jay commonly known as a Kuukkeli who enjoyed wedges of butter, while we ate a pork burger with reindeer cheese, mayo and chilli between slabs of potato bread – delicious! As the Kuukkeli flew away under his tail of dark brown feathers appeared a bright orange/tan.

Off we went again zooming faster and faster along the frozen river then up through the forest where I failed to turn sharply enough and bogged my snowmobile in the deep virgin snow. Joan went on ahead and returned with Dirk who said it was easy to extricate, but

then bogged it even further. He then had to dig my snowmobile out and form a ramp to tow it out. I drove his snowmobile towing my snowmobile with Dirk directing from behind. This was another interesting experience that we all laughed about. The remainder of the return was fun without any mishaps.

The next day we were dog sledding again, this time Katerina knew we were" experienced "and so had faster dogs and we went on more difficult terrain. It was very challenging but enormous fun.

Our last day was snowmobiling again with Dirk who also took us on much more difficult tracks. We bobbed, bounced, jerked and jarred over hard snow up to the top of mountains, where the view was spectacular. What great fun we had as we finished with a flourish by speeding along a river with our cheeks red with the wind and excitement.

This was a really memorable holiday, exhausting, exhilarating, and absolutely fabulous.

Lyn Hazell with travelling friend, Joan

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**PLEASE...
CHECK US OUT !!!**

*To succeed in
life, you need
three things:*

*a wishbone,
a backbone and
a funny bone.*

Reba McEntire

*Laughter is the closest distance between
two people... Victor Borge*

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