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**APRIL NEWSLETTER NO 53.**

**Words from President Lynne Wilson.**



It is with pleasure that I submit my first report as President of Ararat U3A.

I would like to welcome Leonie Foster to our committee and hope she will enjoy her time with us.

It is with regret that we say goodbye to Lodi Leipoldt due to her health problems. I would like to thank Lodi for her contribution to the Committee over the last 2 years.

With the onset of COVID 19, the world-wide problem is going to prove to be a testing time for all now that we have to Stay At Home.

The trip to Gordon by 30 of our members was a delight. Very interesting visit to the truffle farm, Boot and Hat Shoppes and also enjoying a lovely meal at Gordon Bleu.

A visit to the Moyston Sheep Dog Trials was enjoyed by about 40 people.

We have had large numbers attending finska and samba and our singing numbers were up to 15 !!!

Up to this point we have 156 members which is a record for this time of the year.

Regretfully, our sessions will be on hold for quite some time.

I wish you all the very best.

Lynne Wilson

**MEMBER OF THE MONTH  
 MARY ALP**

*The early years: The wild north-west.*



I was 6 months old when our family left a comfortable city life and arrived at Wyndham in northern Western Australia. My mother was here to run the local hospital.

The community comprised local Indigenous Australians (some of whom played a major role in my upbringing), several white government workers, and plenty of

rugged pioneers running local businesses or raising cattle across the plains.

The ground was dust red scattered with giant anthills, huge gums, fat boabs, rocks and saltbush as far as the eye could see. The wet season rotted everything, and thunderstorms would roll through every afternoon. The nearby estuaries looked like the perfect swimming holes only to the unwary. Too close and the death roll of a 6-meter croc would be the last memory you would ever have.



It was in this world that I lived. My friends were Aboriginal and

cosmopolitan kids who lived in shacks & houses around the town. I was otherwise left by myself virtually all the time ... except when it was school term and my mother shipped me back to Perth on a DC-3. I hated boarding school and it was a tough life ruled by those nuns. I became amazingly independent and hardy.

I eventually met my husband in Derby where I was training as a nurse. It was not a courtship that most would recognize. We had been bombed by Japanese during the war. My husband manned the telegraph repeater station that connected the undersea cable to Britain.



We hunted for much of our food ... barramundi was my favourite. We would drive in the Wiley's WW2 army surplus jeep and camped out a lot ...

always watchful for wild boar, rampaging buffalo or old Mr. Croc. Our best friend back then was the 303.

#### ***The middle years: Suburban life turns upside down.***

A decade and a bit later, we had moved to Melbourne suburbia. My husband had been promoted to a senior position and my three children went to local schools. We lived by the beach and life was pretty good. A far cry from the rugged north west that had been my life for so long.

One day, at a Saturday school fair, I was approached by the police. I knew straight away what was wrong. They didn't have to tell me.

"Madam, I afraid there has been an accident". I had reluctantly and finally agreed to let my 12-year-old son join a family friend who was getting 'his hours up' for his commercial pilot's license. Apparently, there had been a mid-air collision. My son was in a critical condition. In fact, he became a paraplegic and would never walk again.

But that wasn't all. Unbeknown to me, my son also talked my husband into joining them on that ill-fated flight. He was also critically injured and died two weeks later.

It is hard to imagine that sense of loss and hopelessness. Two younger daughters, a paraplegic son and I have just lost my husband. I was 32.

You can't just say 'no thanks' and choose to go back to the life you had before. I had to come to terms with my new reality. And it was a tough reality. Back then there

was zero support services and disability was simply not understood.

I remember when my son was about to be finally discharged from hospital. The Head of the Spinal Unit said that he would now have to be institutionalized. It was the 'right thing to do for people like him'. I was horrified. I wanted to bring him home. I wanted him to have a normal life, have normal friends, play his guitar, be part of the family and go to a regular school (back then there was only one school in Melbourne that would accept a person in a wheelchair). I explained all this to the doctor.

The doctor went wild. He screamed at me and told me I didn't know what I was talking about. He said that he wanted to smash that guitar to bits. But I was resolved. I knew what my son needed.

So, my son came home, and our family lived very normal lives.



Interestingly, my son went on to have an extraordinary life. Paralympian, two uni degrees, father of two beautiful

children, businessman and an inspiration and mentor to many people. My daughters also went through uni and enjoy successful and amazing lives.

#### ***The fun years: Enjoying life***

No matter how hard life gets, for most people it eventually gets better. I have enjoyed a great life. I have a passion for painting and learning. I spent many years at uni too. My background drew me towards studying Australian Aboriginal history. I have had an active involvement working within their communities and still strive to help 'bridge building' between Indigenous & non-Indigenous Australians .

My 3 children, 6 grandchildren and 4 great grandchildren are a pivotal part of my life. Nothing better than taking them to the Grampians and showing them the secret places, & treasures, we as a family have been enjoying for over 60 years.

I came to Ararat ten years ago to be close to the Grampians that I love. I joined U3A along with other local interest groups. I believe that mental and physical activity and commitment is key to longevity. That's why I rarely have a spare minute to my day. **M.A.**

Ed. Thanks so much to Mary for offering her story. While I knew some of it, having lived next to Mary 30 years ago, I'm still very moved and yes, uplifted by how Mary's life has unfolded.

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## Be Connected



Little did Pam Brennan know when she applied for a grant to run Be Connected classes at U3A how timely they would be in this period of social

isolation. The 'Be Connected Program' is a federal government initiative to assist people have greater familiarity with their digital devices. The classes have been extremely well attended with forty people attending the first class. It was then decided to break into two classes which allowed for a better teacher student ratio and better wifi access. Topics covered so far have included; accessing the Be connected program, security online, using email, learning about apps and which ones are useful, and games that can get you addicted! The atmosphere in these sessions has been very enthusiastic and as I found when teaching teenagers there are always students who know more than you and are willing to help others in the class. I am working through the online topics myself and have found them interesting to do. One that could be useful at the moment is called Connecting to Others and this involves learning how to make video calls from your devices using FaceTime, Skype and WhatsApp. With more time at home in the next few weeks, it maybe a chance for others to register, and then explore the Topic Library. The federal government are continually updating the site, with new lessons and discussion topics. Go to [beconnected.esafety.gov.au](http://beconnected.esafety.gov.au) to either continue working your way through the lessons or register for an account. Please remember to log in as this helps show that we are using the program. Be Connected sessions will continue when U3A resumes. Stay safe and healthy. Cheers Janine Adams.



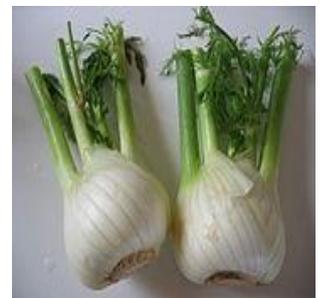
**GREAT DAY AT MOYSTON SHEEPDOG TRIALS** nice lunch, thank you committee. Editor's favourite dogs Finn and Molly. Such a nice leisurely way to spend an afternoon.



## Vegetable of the month.

### Fennel (Foeniculum

vulgare) is a flowering plant species in the carrot family. It is a hardy, perennial herb, it looks good in the garden with yellow flowers and feathery leaves. Indigenous to the shores of the Mediterranean but has become widely naturalized in many parts of the world, especially on dry soils near the sea-coast and on riverbanks. The swollen, bulb-like vegetable stem base is delicious in salads, thinly sliced and in any casserole or stir fry.



It is highly aromatic and a flavourful herb used in cookery and, along with the similar-tasting anise, is one of the primary ingredients of absinthe.



**Growth habits:** Fennel seed is sown in spring **or autumn** and plants will self-sow easily, but is best if seed is sown from August to

December in warm temperate regions, and September to February in cold temperate climates.

100-gram of fennel fruit provides 345 kilocalories of food energy, and is a rich source (20% or more of the daily value) of protein, dietary fiber, B vitamins and several dietary minerals, especially calcium, iron, magnesium and manganese, all of which exceed 100% DV (table). Fennel fruits are

52% carbohydrates(including 40% dietary fiber),  
15% fat, 16% protein and 9% water.

**Plant of the month** *The Lady Palm (Rhapis excelsa)*.



It is a great, hardy plant to have. It can be grown indoors or in the garden adapting easily to a wide range of soils, climates and environments. It has a varied growth pattern but if you grow it indoors, the growth rate is slow. You won't have to worry about your Rhapis outgrowing its

space - find an appropriate place for it in your home and leave it. Indoor plants like the Lady Palm plants are natural air cleaners for your home.

**GORDON BLEU**

*Our day in Gordon was such a treat! Ian and Marilyn Woodhouse from Oak Hill truffles introduced us to their business and truffle dog Sally. Sheila and Bob Petch have established both the unique Wild Trout's Hat Shoppe and Shambles Antiques Boot Shoppe, which made for intriguing perusal. Lastly the scrumptious Moroccan Feast prepared by Scott and Sav from Gordon Bleu, was a highlight!....Ahhhh....Group excursions!.....a thing of the past?!?! PamBrennan.*



I will still put together the U3A newsletter while we are in this unsettling period. We need to keep well, we need to eat well, we need to stay at home as firmly advised; keep exercising or even increase our (gentle or strenuous) exercise routine at home, and especially check out the avenues Janine talked about by *being connected*. Pick up the phone and talk to those who don't have internet, or even those who do, skype family more often, look up and study things you have put off, get the instructions out for working the tv smart box and record all the great movies and programs on SBS and more.

*I'd really love your stories, to share, about what you're doing to manage this time please. email me on [mcburbidge@bigpond.com](mailto:mcburbidge@bigpond.com)*

**Still connecting U3A Ararat by newsletter. Margaret.**

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