



University of the Third Age  
U3A Ararat & District Inc.  
PO Box 531 Ararat Vic 3377  
[u3aararat1@gmail.com](mailto:u3aararat1@gmail.com)

No A0053715K

## SEPTEMBER. 2020 NEWSLETTER, NO. 58

### President Lynne Wilson.

Hello everybody

Unfortunately, I think that this second round of isolation is hitting many of us harder than the first. Hopefully the weather keeps on improving giving us the opportunity to get outside more often and soak up that lovely sun, when it appears!!!

Many U3A members are still taking the opportunity to walk around the lake and do bush walking. I encourage people to make a phone call to someone who may need a little bit of cheering up. None of us know how other people are coping, so some contact I am sure would be appreciated.

Pilates and Book Club have still been continuing through Zoom sessions. Have a read of Kevin Free's suggestions below. Something there could be helpful.

Reading is a way of escaping and time seems to fly. Walking, computer games, Sudoku, Crosswords, etc. could also help towards keeping your mind active.

Until next time, keep well my friends. Lynne

*Have patience - everything is difficult before it becomes easy.*

### Member of the month, Leigh Coutts.



#### *An Easy Life?*

I was born in Boort in North Central Victoria in 1945, the first of two boys. My parents had an irrigation farm west of Boort. Life was great as a child in that area. Channels to swim in and float down on homemade rafts, the Lakes at Boort, the Loddon River close by for fishing and a close knit community. Hindsight, (a wonderful thing) told me later the difficulties my parents went through in those early years.

#### *Leigh, and Milly*

My father left his family home with a saddle and 100 pounds to his name. Depression, drought, and War made life very difficult for many during those troubled years. With the patient assistance of an elderly landowner and hard work he was able to purchase a block of land. He had married "the girl next door" and they were able to eventually expand their holding. I can just remember having to light the chip heater at the end of the bath in our little cottage to get hot water, and getting home late and finding the light was only a dull glow which meant starting the light plant. (Not an easy task.) Life became much better with the

rebuilding of the cottage, and the connection of power in 1956. (Power was connected provided a substantial “term loan” was given to the SEC.)

Schooling for us meant a 6 mile drive in to Boort for my parents....morning and night. The school only went to 4<sup>th</sup> form so the final 2 years meant boarding at Ballarat College, with very happy memories and new lifelong friends. One thing I have continued from school days is my enjoyment of books and reading. Having grown up with farming, the progression to becoming a farmer seemed to be the simplest thing – possibly to my parents disappointment. Schooling had lost some of its appeal when playing with machinery was available. I planted my first crop the year I finished school, shifting the bags of fertiliser and seed manually. Fiddling with things mechanical (and old) was fostered at an early age when we managed to resurrect a 1928 Oldsmobile and a very old Royal Enfield motor bike. (The lure of old cars seems to have persisted. I enjoy my 1969 Lancier.) Increasing problems with salinity because of the irrigation prompted the family to look further afield, and resulted in the move to Mininera on the volcanic plains in 1962. My farming activities continued, and on my marriage to Sue in 1969, (the girl next door again,) we spent the next 10 years on a farm at Jallukar. Life was still good. Sailing at Lake Fyans, completing my pilot licence, horse riding in the scrub, involvement with the Stawell Apex Club, and having life enriched by the birth of our three children. The proximity of the Grampians and areas of scrub littered with old mine shafts made for exciting places for children to grow up enjoying.



In 1979 the farm next door to the family property at Mininera came up for sale, and we returned to that area. After working as a family for many years, which made it possible to expand the business, we established our own family enterprise. My sons have now taken over the responsibilities of the farm, leaving us to slow down a little.

***Shearing shed built 1881.***

It may sound as though life has been an easy for me. Life always presents good and bad. The death of my similar aged cousin who drowned in the river aged 12, and the death of my loved uncle next door were early indelible life lessons. Farm work always came first, if there were things to do on the farm, they took precedence – seven long days a week. My early recollections of having to “make do with what we had” has also stood me in good stead over the years. Education does not finish when we leave school. It continues through life, with courses and upgrades to almost everything and the realization that to achieve you have to work at it. Life itself is a great educator. My young brother finally succumbing to Parkinsons Disease after its slow progression for over thirty years was very salutary, there are worse things than death. Farming and life doesn’t follow a set course with challenges, successes, and potential disasters around every corner.

When I say “I remember when....” it brings groans from younger generations. I do seem to have a greater interest in history the closer I get to becoming part of it, and they should remember the future is often history that hasn’t happened yet. It is comforting I and many current farmers show increasing interest in

the sustainability of agriculture, and the dangers of excessive and careless chemical use to the environment. The current prediction is for world food supply problems by 2050 because of population and climate. We perhaps need another agrarian revolution. I still have plenty to occupy my mind, and hope the body is able to keep going a bit longer as I still have goals to achieve.

## **Leigh Coutts**

***Dust storm, Boort 1940's.***

Leigh is a U3A bush walker and excursion organiser.





## **Hello to Sarah and Tom Guthrie of Grampians Estate Winery as this month's virtual guests for September U3A newsletter.**

Programmer Pam Brennan planned a visit to Grampians Estate Winery in Great Western pre stage 3 regulations, so I'll ask questions of Sarah and Tom, and we can read what we might have heard that day. Settle down, maybe pour a taste glass and enjoy their story.

***Tom and Sarah, many of us have driven past your property sign out Mafeking way 'Thermopylae' and seen sheep grazing at the foot of the Grampians. Was this a childhood home; how long have you worked this property?***

I grew up on the other family farm near Donald in the Wimmera, my parents had 2 sons who wanted to be farmers and luckily we had 2 farms and I ended up on the Mafeking one. I came down here to live and farm 40 years ago, it was the best thing that ever happened. It's a beautiful part of the world with the mountains, the red gums and the wildlife and we live and work amongst a great community. To top it off I found a wife right next door, Sarah and I have been married 25 years and together we have enjoyed the inevitable ups and downs of farming.

***How many sheep do you run; are they wool or fat lamb?***

We lamb down about 4000 Corriedale ewes, a breed which enjoys the slighter wetter climate we have here close to the mountains. We put a Dorset over some of them to produce Prime Lambs and a Corriedale over the rest to produce more ewes.

***Stock and Land April 2020 refers to your business as pairing wine with lamb. Was this a diversifying choice (not just one agribusiness in the one basket)?***

We endured the 11 years of the Wool Price Scheme disaster with wool prices at or below the cost of production. Many farmers swapped over to cropping. For us it was a small diversification strategy and something a bit different and interesting than talking sheep all of the time.

***When did you plant your first vines?***

I tell people that after Geelong kicked 22 goals in the 1989 Grand Final and lost I needed to get another interest so I went and planted the first vines in 1989. In 1995 planted more vines, Geelong got thumped by Carlton in the Grand Final that year!

***Was this intended as a commercial crop in the beginning, or for personal enjoyment?***

At the beginning the romance of the idea was appealing but it soon became apparent that it was hard work and challenging so we got serious about 1995 and decided it should be a serious business and we needed to run it professionally. As time has gone on and we have achieved so much, we have got an immense amount of satisfaction and pride from our efforts. Expanding our business to purchase the Garden Gully cellar door and vineyard has been more hard work but again it's given us so much - a shopfront for our business, jobs for locals and more excitement with the completion of our major extension to provide light meals and space. Well it was exciting when we opened for 6 weeks before the last shutdown!

***I read that you have 'an impressive list of awards, including 30 trophies since 2002. Notable awards include Best Shiraz at the 2002 Victorian Wine Show, Best Shiraz at the 2005 National Wine Show and Winestate Magazine 'Best Sparkling' for 2010'. Do these awards translate into wine lovers seeking out your vintages?***

Winning awards and getting great reviews from James Halliday helps brand your business and products as high quality. Our 2017 Rutherford Sparkling Shiraz got equal top score in Halliday's recent awards and this has led to sales, so yes it does certainly help. The fact we are a 5 red star rated winery puts us in the top 8% in Australia, which is quite amazing for a couple of sheep farmers!

***Do you sell only to the National market or do you export as well? And if so where to?***



We are mainly domestic and we tried Brisbane and Sydney but they are too hard. At the end of the day we realised our prime market is Western Vic, especially the south coast, Hamilton, Dunkeld, Halls Gap. We do a little bit to China but you certainly wouldn't want to rely on that trade.

**Back to the pairing of wine and lamb feature, the names of your cheekily labelled Covid-19 isolation dozen selection includes Woolclassers GST, 2019 Drovers Rose, 2019 Mafeking Gold Chardonnay. Where was the inspiration for these quirky names?**

Our daughter came up with a range of names to link our family's history to the sheep industry. In 2014 I published a book called 'The Longest Drive' which pulls together much of that from 1847 when my great grandfather arrived in Tasmania as a 14yo and started working on a sheep farm. Our Donald farm has been in our family since 1864 and Thermopylae 1927.



**Last question. Your new tasting room looks great, what are your long term plans for this addition?**

We'd like to entertain your group! Small functions but really light meals and coffee are what people are looking for during the day. It's a beautiful space, it's come up really well, we are so excited to offer this facility at a winery in this region. With the brief time it was open we are realising we are creating a few more jobs than we thought so it's all good! We are very lucky to have a great team who run the cellar door and they will look after you very well!

Anything any-one needs to know or how to buy wine, just go to [www.grampiansestate.com.au](http://www.grampiansestate.com.au)  
Opening hours after lockdown 10-4. Normally 10-5 daily.

Thanks Tom! Really great local story. Have a look at the colourful website that I've pinched these photos from [www.grampiansestate.com.au](http://www.grampiansestate.com.au) ..I most likely would have bought the Covid 19 special isolation (good value) offer on our visit , so I 'shopped local' online yesterday. It was delivered yesterday afternoon!! **MB.**

### **Leesa Waterman sharing - What Are We Reading in our house:**

Our house always has a basket of books awaiting to be read. These are a mixture of library and friend or family recommended tomes. We dip into the book basket and select according to mood, size of book or lure of book jacket. At the moment we are sharing and enjoying Xavier Herbert's Miles Franklin winning novel 'Poor Fellow, My Country'. We are taking it in turns as it is a book of 1464 densely written pages and it is heavy in both weight and content (apparently, it is the longest Australian piece of fiction ever written). Worth it though, as you find yourself succumbing to the language and characters of Northern Australia before and during WW2.

Also, like lots of people we have been mesmerised and obsessed with the world of Sour Dough Covid baking. Following the step by step instructions found in 'Sour Dough' by Caspar Andre Lugg and Martin Ivan Hveem Field we are tending to 2 Sour Dough starters in our fridge and have a dusting of flour over most of Rocky Point. Otherwise Japanese fiction is a new reading direction. Neatly written, neatly sized novels have drawn my attention at the library. They endorse the joy of travelling in Japan and Japanese culture with its focus on detail. 'The Travelling cat Chronicles' by Hiro Arikawa are beckoning from the basket. **LW**

### **U3A Meditation leader Kevin Free tells us how he is right now.**

EXPLORING THE JOY OF A STILL AND QUIET MIND.

There is no TV in our house, news once a day on the radio. No commercials wanting us to buy all those things we as a society seem to want. Definitely detrimental to developing a quiet mind.

I'm enjoying this opportunity to read more books and meditate more deeply.

What are the benefits I personally get out of these practices? From reading I learn about my fellow humans and



what it means to be human, plus I learn about the natural world, and how things work. From meditation I learn about these same things from within on a much deeper level. There are whole new universes within and much more understanding of how life force and the world works, to the betterment and growth and development of this being.

I left school at 14 and the main thing I took from those years of struggle was a love of reading. Reading filled a need to understanding of life and living and people. I always knew there was more to life than meets the eye. This search to fill the gap led me 45 Years ago, through religion and the natural world. Eventually for me, after many and varied paths that became dead ends, to Vipassana meditation and the teachings of the Buddha Gotama.

This system is in two parts, Anapanna, (mindfulness of breathing), and Vipassana, (insight meditation, sight in). Anapanna brings great calm, and high concentration which enables the meditator to go within the mind, exploring the process that is this is what is known as me. One gets to experience how this system works through conditioning and habitual reactions.

What do I get out of this? All of *Calm, Peace of mind, Patience, Understanding and Detachment in times of crisis. Coming Home, Contentment within, Compassion, Empathy, and Sympathetic Joy, for all Beings!* **KF**

This beginners meditation exercise is an excellent introduction to meditation.

- Sit or lie comfortably. You may even want to choose a special comfortable chair, or a cushion.
- Close your eyes.
- Make no effort to control the breath; simply breathe naturally.
- Focus your attention on your nose and the breath and on how the body moves with each inhalation and exhalation. Notice the movement of your body as you breathe. Observe your chest, shoulders, rib cage, and belly. Simply focus your attention on your breath without controlling its pace or intensity. If your mind wanders, return your focus back to your breath.
- Maintain this meditation practice for two to three minutes to start, and then try it for longer periods.

**“QUIET  
YOUR MIND  
AND LET  
YOUR BREATH  
DO THE  
TALKING.”**

## **Cathy Holland has been watching:**

### **DNA (SBS on Demand)**

8-part series from Denmark, starring Anders Berthelsen as Rolf and Zofia Wichlacz as Julita

This series follows the desperate search of Rolf to find his daughter, who disappeared from her pram while on a ferry crossing to Poland. It is only when DNA discrepancies emerge five years later that Rolf is able to progress in his search.

The series is beautifully edited as we move between Rolf's manic search and beautiful Julita, in Poland, who is also desperately searching for her stolen baby. The acting throughout is superb.

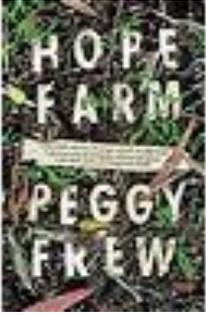
I certainly needed a box of tissues throughout this emotionally charged series.

### **Unorthodox (Netflix). 6-part Series**

Starring: Shira Haas (as Esther/ 'Estie'). Amit Rahov (as Yakov/ 'Yanky')

This series focuses on Estie, who was born and raised in a New York Hasidic community. At age 17, she is steered into a loveless marriage with the equally innocent Yakov. Family expectations demand a quick pregnancy, making Estie's life a nightmare. She plans an escape to Berlin, where her estranged mother lives. The remainder of the series is set in Berlin, where we observe Estie at her most resourceful— establishing a friendship with a group of young classical musicians, who challenge many of her old beliefs. She also re-establishes a connection to her mother. Meanwhile, Yakov and his cousin arrive in Berlin, determined to find Estie and take her home. This creates a thrilling climax to the series.

Shira Haas' portrayal of Estie is simply captivating. Her strength of character shines through as we watch her struggle to transition to a secular life in Berlin. **CH**



**Book group. Keith Little reviews our August book, Hope Farm. By Peggy Frew.**

Available through Ararat Library.

This is a fictional story of a mother (Ishtar) and her young daughter (Silver), set in Rural Gippsland in 1985. The title of the book is ironic, Hope Farm being a rundown and neglected piece of land with an old decaying weatherboard house and several outhouses. It had become the centre of a Hippie community, the members of which had hopes of self-sufficiency and a free tolerant and independent lifestyle. Drugs were part of it.

The story of the dramatic events which took place there is basically recounted by Silver as an adult when she looks back on her life and her complex relationship with Ishtar and others. Above all, Silver remembers her mother's frequent past moves and men, and her own dispassionate feelings and responses to all the changes she underwent, including a lack of consistent affection and without the friendships of peers.

As the supposed narrator and auto biographer of this story Silver, to me, is a rather puzzling figure – enigmatic both as a young teen and later an educated adult.

Hope Farm is an interesting read though I have mixed feelings about it and its characters. An unusual feature of this book is the periodical account of their lives by Ishtar, telling a parallel but shorter and less grammatically correct account of her life, and from her point of view. Among other things we learn that Silver was the result of a teenage pregnancy and Ishtar's refusal to give the baby up for adoption. Silver had no knowledge of Ishtar's early life. **KL**

\*A reminder, in case this one has gone off the radar: Put <https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au> into your bookmark. And then scroll down to *fun and games* for daily **CROSSWORD, SUKOKU, WORD SEARCH, CODE CRACKER AND TRIVIA.**

\*Recommendation in *the Age* magazine last month, change your wallpaper/screen photo. Changing to three granddaughters on each of iphone, ipad and Macbook, I find myself smiling each time I use them...



Look at the 'ear' of the goat.

This has been around for a while, but it's still good for a chuckle....

**KOOKA OR GOAT?**

Hint at the bottom of the page

**Thanks to members for great stories and commentary! MB.**