

CHATSHEET

The newsletter of the U3A Baw Baw

October 2024

The Literary Lunch

Booking is now open and is essential for the Literary Lunch on **Friday 11th October** commencing at 12:30pm. Bookings are essential for catering purposes. You are able to book online by logging into u3abawbaw.org.au as you would for a course. If you prefer, you can email courses@u3abawbaw.org.au or phone Lesley Anstee on mob 0408 226 254.

Bookings close on **Wednesday 9th October**.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

David Ingham

Welcome to our wonderful Literary Lunch. This is a really exciting event and promises to be great fun. Welcome to Off The Leash Theatre Company who will perform the works of Andrew Barton Paterson.

This event has been most generously sponsored by the Drouin Branch of the Bendigo Community Bank. Without the generosity of such sponsors, it would be difficult to stage such lavish Literary Lunches. On behalf of U3A Baw Baw, I would like to express our appreciation to the Drouin Branch of the Bendigo Community Bank for making this event possible.



We have placed a pamphlet at every place which highlights what the Bendigo Community Bank does. It also highlights the operation of U3A Baw Baw.

A considerable amount of work has led to this event. Thanks to Mary Howlett and her committee for the work in organising this Literary Lunch. Planning has been underway for an extended period and much thought and work has been undertaken to enable this event to take place.

Thanks also to John Parker whose work has been instrumental in gaining the sponsorship of the Bendigo Community Bank Drouin & District. John spent a great deal of time in preparing the submission. Special thanks to Nigel Beresford for his production of the poster advertising the Literary Lunch. We are fortunate to have such talented members!

Please make sure you register for term 4 courses as soon as possible. There are many interesting programs for your enjoyment. If you know of, or meet people who might be interested in joining U3A Baw Baw, please let us know. We are happy to assist anyone who enquires.

COURSES REPORT *Ruth Renouf*

Our term 3 course, *The History of Germany*, was presented by Vera Hartelt. We have been delighted and entertained by Vera’s wonderful tales of Germany; it’s history and present, rivers and buildings and landscapes.

A huge thank you to Vera, who prepared this course, and to all the members, who, eagerly each week, attended the classes. We sampled some tasty German food for morning tea.



Time to Visit a Beautiful Garden

Mary Howlett

Members who accepted the invitation to view Bill and Caroline's beautiful garden on Tuesday the 17th of September, were grateful for the opportunity of enjoying a feast of beauty. The garden is a Springtime delight with a combination of native flora alongside both ornamental and fruit trees and cottage garden annuals. Congratulations Bill and Caroline on creating such a beautiful place and thank you for sharing it.

Pictured from left: Helen Cook, Caroline Fuller, Bill DeVink and Mary Howlett



The Friends of Drouin's Trees

Henry Corcoran

The Friends of Drouin's Trees would like to invite the members of U3A Baw Baw to the launch of the fifth book in a series of booklets on the environment in Baw Baw. In the past the focus has been very Drouin centric but has also applied to the wider Baw Baw community. Our new booklet titled 'Nature on your doorstep' encourages you to see our local environment by undertaking some very accessible walks.

A copy of the flyer outlining the details of the launch is attached at the end of the Chatsheet.

Vale Graeme Fredrickson

It is with great sadness to learn that U3A Baw Baw has lost a well-respected member who has contributed so much.

Graeme Fredrickson joined U3A Baw Baw in February 2012 and very quickly become actively involved. He was a member of the Committee from 2013 to 2019 being responsible for our Information Technology (IT).

Graeme setup our first website by designing it from scratch and ran it until we moved over to our current website, which was based on a template provided by Network Victoria. At the same time Graeme moved our paper based administrative system onto Networks UMAS. He was responsible for the initial populating of both the website and UMAS with data and for managing it.

In the setting up of our current audio and TV system in the RSL Hall, Graeme played a large part, as well as helping to maintain it. He was always happy to readily provide advice on any IT matters to members of our U3A and to others outside U3A, such as the Drouin Men's Shed.

Recent years has regularly seen Graeme at our Gatherings where he was always happy to talk about electric vehicles.

Our U3A was extremely fortunate to have had such an accomplished IT expert as a member to lead us into the technological era.

U3A Baw Baw offers its deepest sympathy and condolences to Ellen and family.

John Parker

Mystery History

Virginia Rowley

Continuing in the tradition of Monasteries!

Skellig Michael

If you are a Star Wars fan, and even if you are not, you have probably seen scenes of Luke Skywalker in the *Force Awakens* and in promotions where he is standing on an island with ancient looking structures on it. That is a real island and that is not a set built for the film; they are part of a real thing that is ancient. Skellig Michael is an historic site with a fascinating history all of its own.

Skellig Michael is one of two islands that make up the Skellig Islands. Skellig comes from the Irish word for 'steep rock'. The islands are 11.6km west of the edge of Ireland. At its highest it is 218m. It is tiny – less than a square mile in area.

Skellig Michael is also home to a monastery built hundreds of years ago. The monastery is on the eastern side of the island, high up on sloping areas of rock. It has three access points all of which involve climbing lots of steps. They actually say in the visitor information '*please don't come if you are not ready to take on 600 steps. It is vigorous work and not for the faint hearted.*' And they really mean it.

The monastery includes a church, two small chapels and seven beehive cells, water cisterns, a cemetery and a *larct* (sounds as it is spelled.) It is a small square structure built of layers of stone but no mortar. These have been found at a number of early Irish Christian monastic sites but their function isn't entirely clear. There were also two large garden beds and retaining walls, which were the foundation of the entire site. The second area of building is separate from the monastery itself. It is on the ledges of the south peak. There are several structures, including a chapel and altar, a *larct* and separate water cisterns, steps cut out of the rock for access to these structures which are described as 'daringly constructed'. I feel that everything on Skellig Michael has been 'daringly constructed'. It is so beautiful and although my husband and I felt we were target visitors (indeed we waited three days to be able to get out there) we now know that the voyage would have been wasted because the height and sheer drops from the steps, would have meant neither of us was able to complete the climb. Of course, neither of us wanted to spend the whole time screaming in fear of falling. It is all very steep!

The first known mention to Skellig Michael is all the way back to 1,700 BCE. There is another unverified story of Skellig Michael set in the 5th century. We know for certain, based on the structures, that monks moved onto the island at some stage but exactly when, isn't clear. The earliest estimates place the start of the monastery somewhere in the 6th century although it could have been built as late as the 8th century. The earliest known reference to the monastery is in the year 824 (or thereabouts). This describes a Norse raid on Skellig Michael.

The position of this monastery is quite well chosen. It is 183 metres above sea level. It has plenty of stone to use in building, so the monks could build without having to carry it too far. Water collection was easy and channels were cut into sloping stone to direct rain water right into cisterns.

One of the unique aspects of the monastery are the cell structures. They are sometimes described as beehives. The hives are upside down - not like the flat boxes we have today but the domed ones that bees would build on their own or baskets woven by people in hopes that bees would like them, move in and then give them honey in return for a nice cosy place to live. The beehive cells have a doorway built into the front of each of them and steps that lead in and out (this helps to keep rain etc out.)

The beehive cells are all arranged along the monastery's large oratory. A couple are quite large and the walls quite thick, suggesting a communal space. At the base of the structure its walls are 1.8m thick almost 6 feet. The interior space is 4.6 x 3.8m and 5m high inside. Some cells are smaller. They are about 2/3 the size of the first cell.

Sometime before the early 11th century, the monastery was dedicated to St Michael. Records of the late 12th century show that the settlement was occupied and having regular mass at that point, but soon after, in the 13th century, shifting church politics in Ireland and increased bad weather, on and around the islands, led to the monastery being abandoned.

The monks moved to the mainland village of Ballan Skellig. Skellig Michael wasn't really occupied after that point, but there had been a shift in climate and it was not easy or safe to occupy those rocks.

From the 14th to the 16th centuries, the island appears on navigational charts used by the Italian seafarers. The monastery was officially closed in the 16th century with Henry VIII's official dissolution of monasteries and it passed into the private ownership of the Butler family, who sold the island to the government in 1821.

In 1978, a conservation project began. A retaining wall near the church was failing and the steps leading up to the main entrance of the monastery needed work. Water erosion had claimed some of the lower sections and heavy use of these stairs during lighthouse construction, had also really damaged some of the masonry. In 1980, archeological work began at the site and that work goes on today but not in winter. In winter you can't go there because of the waves, the furious winds, frost and sleet on the rocks, sleet as you climb up...

In 1910, writer George Bernard Shaw, visited Skellig Michael and it made a very strong impression. He later wrote the following:

*but for magic that takes you out,
far out of this time and this world,
there is Skellig Michael,
ten miles off Kerry coast,
shooting straight up
700ft sheer out of the Atlantic.*

*Whoever has not stood in the graveyard and the beehive oratory,
does not know Ireland through and through.*



'NATURE ON YOUR DOORSTEP'

5th BOOK LAUNCH



You are invited to the launch of the brand new book showing some of the incredible natural environment at our doorstep.

The book features 30 local and nearby reserves, walks and trails where you can enjoy nature.

Written & produced by Friends of Drouin's Trees

We acknowledge the Community Grant from the Baw Baw Shire which has partly sponsored the costs.



More information: Judy: 0438251972

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Time: 5.00 pm

Date: Wednesday 23rd October

At: The HUB, Oak Street, Drouin.

Enter through the Senior Citizens