

The Southern Yarn

August/September 2019

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

AUGUST

Golf Tournament Saturday 24th August

at The Players, 2695 Inkster Blvd.

Attention all DUCW members who have ever played golf. On Saturday August 24, we are having a different golf day than usual. Our small, friendly tournament will be based on "Texas Scramble" rules, where every group is a team, and everyone in the group plays every shot, but from the position where the best ball of the group has landed. Please call early, to let me know your intentions. – Peter Munn 204 237-1805.

SEPTEMBER

Retro Night Friday 20th September, 7pm

At the Debenhams, 584 Wallace Ave,
East St Paul, Winnipeg

This is a Club night like in "the old days" – at the dawn of the DUCW – when members/mates gathered in a home for a social evening of chin-wagging, yarn-spinning, reminiscing and the odd drop of something liquid. So, thanks to Peter and Joanne, we're doing it again, particularly to remember our dear friend **Gordon Keatch**.

Chips and liquid will be provided – just bring your memories and a coin for the hat. Phone Peter at 204 955 0393 with questions.

OCTOBER

Annual Not-so-Formal Dinner Saturday, 26th October

Time and place, to be announced, but we're working on it. Save the date and join fellow members for a delicious dinner and social time.

NOVEMBER

Downunder Club AGM Friday, 29th November, 7pm

Scandinavian Cultural Centre, 764 Erin Street

DECEMBER

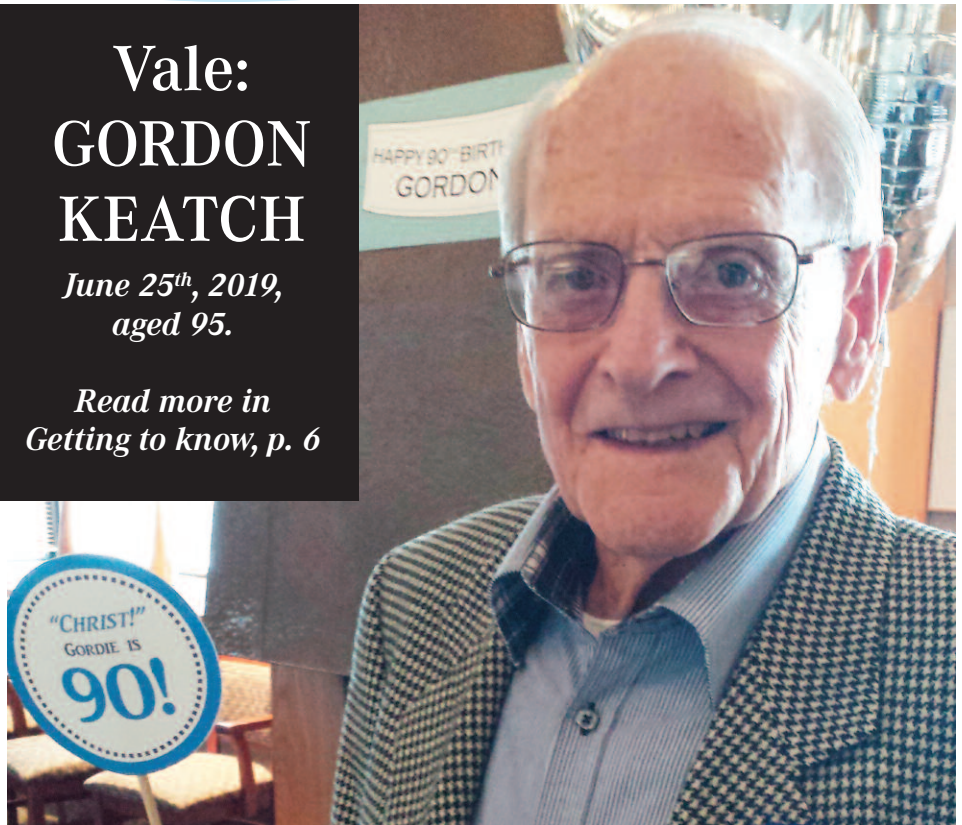
Family Christmas Party Sunday, Dec. 8th details follow...

And if you'd like to suggest a new social event, we're happy to help you plan it for the Club!

Vale: GORDON KEATCH

*June 25th, 2019,
aged 95.*

*Read more in
Getting to know, p. 6*



Gordon's 90th birthday celebration with his family and friends. Photo by Jenny Gates



Pool party!

Splish, splash...having a blast!

Splish was the sound of the very young or the young at heart tentatively entering the warm, yet refreshing waters of the pool at the Davidson home; splash was the rest of the participants jumping in or barrelling down the slide. Everyone was having a blast, sometimes unexpectedly from the water gun.

A beautiful, sunny July 21 saw DUCW members and families enjoy the fun of jumping in, diving to the bottom to retrieve weighted toys, floating on the inflatables or trying to figure out how to get on and stay on the frog or penguin. Nearly everyone got wet while a few preferred the opportunity to enjoy a conversation in the gorgeous garden.

All that activity stimulated appetites for the snacks, burgers and wieners (barbecued to perfection by Les and Charlie; thanks, guys!), yummy salads and desserts. Kids and several adults enjoyed a second dip in the pool. Soon it was time for us to pitch in for a tidy-up. There were heartfelt thanks to Lynley and family for their generous hospitality and fond farewells to each other until the next DUCW gathering.

– Catherine Bowering

online



find us on facebook or the web
www.downunderclub.mb.ca
email: info@downunderclub.mb.ca

editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Most members will know by now of the passing, on June 25th, of one of the Club's founding members, Gordon Keatch. It was sad news, though not totally surprising after his fall and with an "odometer" that had already clicked past 95. Our events will not be the same without his presence, especially our ANZAC Day commemoration, at which Gordon performed Parade Marshall duties for as long as I have known him. I was honored when he approached me to take that role on after last year. And he was there this year to coach and guide me, and to read the Requiem. Future events will now have special and more personal significance for all of us - we will remember.

Thanks to Jenny Gates for her contribution and tribute to GK on page 6.

Margaret and Peter Munn spent some time recently in Ontario and Margaret kindly sent in a great story of her surprise find - New Zealand themed quilts - you can read that on p. 5

Birds I view, p.8, is a personal account of a close encounter of the bird kind

Thank you to all our other contributors, Peter, Judy, Catherine, Murray, Malcolm, and sponsors.

Charlie Powell



Gordon as a Winnipeg businessman.

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



Loss of a good friend.

We all lost a good friend in June when one of the original founders of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg, Gordon Keatch, passed away suddenly. As happens at these times, your memory flashes back to the times you have spent together, and some of the remembrances you have. Gordon had a sharp, quick wit, and we dueled a few times, with Gordon being well ahead on points. Not to say that we didn't have differences of opinion, and Gordon never found it difficult to explain to me exactly why I was wrong on a certain matter. We both came

from Melbourne, and we often swapped tales of growing up in that city. Gordon was an old-fashioned gentleman, and he will be missed by us all.

There will be further information elsewhere in *The Yarn*, but we are holding a "Retro" Club night on September 20th, likened after the club meetings Gordon attended back in the early days of the club, where a case of beer was put on the floor, you put in your coins and opened your beer, with a few chips to munch on. These were meetings where the kids came along as well, and Don, one of Gordon's sons, told me this was a fond memory of his, being in a basement with his dad and other members of the club. And a day or so later, I was talking with Ralph Thomas, who had the same pleasant recollections of going with his dad to basement meetings of the Down Under Club.

So come along on the 20th September for this opportunity to honour Gordon, and swap yarns and recollections of a good man.

Peter

Many memories of Gordon were shared at the event



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GORDON KEATCH
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Past President, Silver Heights Community Club,
Secretary-Treasurer, Kipp Kelly Limited,
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KEATCH, Gordon C.

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100 years ago

The "Spanish Flu" epidemic killed around 15,000 Australians in 1918-19, having been brought to the country by returning WW1 troop ships. It might have been worse except that it hit South Africa and New Zealand first – so lessons were learned before it arrived. The toll worldwide was more than 50 million.

Cinemas, churches, racecourses, etc, were closed down to limit the spread. Quarantine camps were set up. Read more: <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/influenza-pandemic>

Influenza
quarantine
camp setup
at Wallan-
garra,
Queensland,
1919.
John Oxley
Library,
State Library
of Queens-
land, nega-
tive number
67478.



80 years ago

Alice Springs, NT, Australia

In 1939, Alice Springs was a small, tight knit community of less than a thousand people whose livelihoods depended upon supplying the outlying pastoral industry.

As part of the Army's requirement for an overland supply route to Darwin, the Australian Government allocated funds in 1939 for upgrading the Overland Telegraph track into a gravel, all-weather road from Tennant Creek all the way to Larrimah. Work was begun in September 1940 and undertaken by construction teams from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. The first troop carrying convoy was dispatched from Alice Springs in early 1941.

Although a state of war existed from 3 September 1939, it was not until a year later that an advanced party of military personnel arrived to prepare a camp for the Darwin Overland Maintenance Force (DOMF) in Alice Springs. The camp was set up at the foot of Anzac Hill in a tent city. Within a week the unit's 14 officers and 600 other ranks had arrived with 150, 3-tonne trucks. The East Side area around Spencer Hill became the location of the Spencer Hill Military Camps, including the 121 and 119 Australian General Transport Company.

Seven-Mile Aerodrome became a staging post for flights heading northward.

More permanent buildings soon appeared, including Sidney Williams huts, two of which were used as Regimental Aid Post and Dental Clinic. At its peak the DOMF comprised some 8,000, mostly Australian, troops and 3,000 trucks. Edgar Lather was an American journalist who travelled with the Maintenance Force in 1941.

Alice Springs became the administrative centre of the Territory and its de facto capital in March 1942 when the Territory's administrator Charles Abbott and his administration

were moved from Darwin. The same year, Alan Smith found himself in Alice Springs as one of the convoy officers responsible for getting supplies through to Darwin.

The Army railhead, central troop reserve and arsenal for the North were all centered at Alice Springs. Thousands of men, staged through the town and onto Darwin to stiffen the northern defences, and later taking the fight to the enemy in occupied territory. Charles Rye was a civilian in Alice Springs in 1942 and remembers life alongside the service personnel in the town.

[Read more online]

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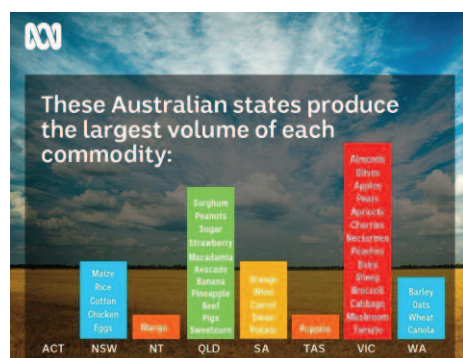
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Remembering Joyce and Annabell ...

They're the names given to the two enormous tunnel diggers that excavated the 4.6 km Legacy Way tunnel to join Brisbane's Western Freeway and Inner-City Bypass roads west of the city center. The official opening was 25th June 2015. [Read more online.]



State bragging rights ...

[Source: ABC Rural, 26 July, 2019] If you're undecided as to which Australian state you would like to settle in, this graphic might help. It shows the states that produce the largest volume of each of those commodities.



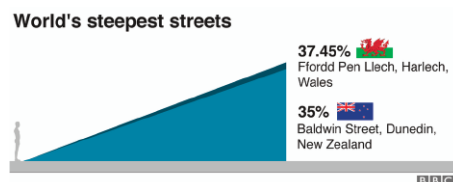
Or is it "fush"? ...

[Source: Wikipedia] In New Zealand, the chocolate fish is a popular confectionery item, and in Kiwi culture a common reward for a job done well ("Give that kid a chocolate fish").

Chocolate fish have a conventional fish-shape and a length of 5 to 8 centimetres. They are made of pink or white marshmallow covered in a thin layer of milk chocolate with the ripples or (scales) on the fish created simply by the fish moving under a blower; this slides the unset chocolate back, creating

the illusion of scales on the fish. Several manufacturers make the fish, but the most well-recognised is Cadbury. Smaller, or "fun-sized" variants of the chocolate fish are colloquially referred to as "sprats". For a short period, in the late 1990s - early 2000, there was a Tip Top brand chocolate fish ice-cream.

The chocolate fish is based on New Zealand's largest freshwater fish, the giant kokopu, which is an endangered species. A portion of each chocolate fish's profit will go towards protecting the giant kokopu.



Taking to the slopes ...

[Source: BBC News, 16 July 2019] A street in north Wales has been declared the steepest in the world.

Residents in Harlech, Gwynedd, are celebrating after Guinness World Records verified the gradient of Ffordd Pen Llech at 37.45%.

The title had been held by Baldwin Street in Dunedin, New Zealand, with a gradient of 35% at its steepest.

Campaigner Gwyn Headley said: "I feel utter relief - and jubilation. I feel sorry for the New Zealanders - but steeper is steeper." [Read more online.]

Tied and tied again ...

[NZ Herald, 15 July 2019] England won the Cricket World Cup but the Black Caps didn't lose. Yes it's all very confusing following the most dramatic World Cup final played at Lord's this morning (15 July, 2019).

Chasing New Zealand's 241 for eight, England got 12 off the final over to see the game end in a tie with the hosts bowled out for 241 going for the winning run off the last ball.

That sent the match to a Super Over. One over for each team with just two wickets and three batsmen allowed.

England got 15 off their six balls and so did New Zealand. Martin Guptill was run out a metre short on the final ball going for a second to secure the final for the Black Caps. Once again the scores finished tied.

However England were crowned the winners of the match due to a countback on boundaries in the initial 50-over contest.

England had 24 boundaries, New Zealand had 16. For that reason England lift the World Cup for the first time.

Previously matches at the World Cup have been decided by least wickets lost. Under the old rules New Zealand would have won. [Read more online.]



Hercules the Unexpected stalked New Zealand

[Source: NZHerald: 7th August, 2019] Scientists have stumbled across the remains of a super-sized giant parrot that stalked New Zealand 20 million years ago - and was half the height of a human.

Analysis of leg bones believed to be 20 million years old have led to the identification of what is believed to be the biggest parrot species - which has been suitably dubbed "Hercules".

Scientists who found large strange bones near an old gold mining town in Otago first thought it could be a duck.

"When you look at giant birds, you think it could be a duck, or a pigeon, or a ratite [flightless birds such as kiwi]," said Dr Trevor Worthy, who has led the analysis of fossil bones at St Bathans for 20 years.

But analysis of the two leg bones, which are about 20 million years old, has found that they came from a giant kākāpō that probably weighed about 7kg - more than twice as heavy as the largest known recent kākāpō. [Read more online.]

The thing about links

If you're reading this online, you might have already noticed that the link text at the end of many of the articles can be clicked on, and you should be taken to read more online. If you're reading the print version, you'll have to go to our online version to do this next step. These links are usually long and hard for our readers to retype from print, let alone fit into our print edition.

Quilting: Pleasantly surprised in Ontario

On my recent trip with Peter to Toronto, one of the items on my list of “things to do and see” was a trip to the country, just a little beyond London, Ontario, to locate the cemetery where my paternal great grandparents are buried. I remember, as a kid, driving to a family reunion in that area with my parents and an aunt and uncle, so I knew roughly where to look.

Anyone who knows me, knows of my love of all things sewing, so it should come as no surprise that I had to visit at least one quilt shop along the way. One thing lead to another and I heard of a quilt show in one of the small towns where I knew some of my relatives had lived. Since we were going to go there anyhow, why not visit the quilt show? And what a quilt show it was. 100 quilts from New Zealand! Peter said he was happy to nap or read so off I went. I have been to a fair number of quilt shows but nothing compared to what I saw there. It was mind boggling. The work that the women had put into their quilts is beyond description. I was overwhelmed to say the least. I started taking photos but could not do the quilts justice so I bought the booklet that tells the story behind each and every quilt. After just an hour of looking, I had to leave, I was in awe! The countless hours of hand stitching, use of colours and fabrics, artistry, and depth of emotion in each quilt was quite amazing.

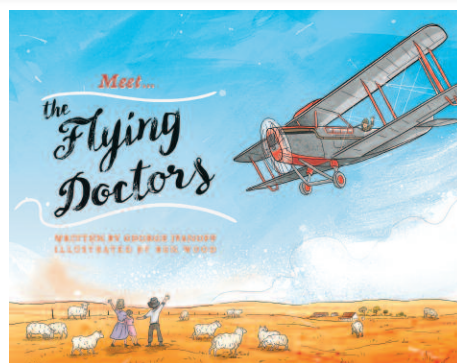


Remarkably, the Ailsa Craig Quilt and Fibre Arts Festival in this little town of 2,000, hosts a quilt show with quilts from a different country every year. Last year was France and next year is Spain.

Oh, and we did find my ancestor’s burial site, a very small well-kept cemetery right alongside a country road, in the middle of a farmer’s field.

All in all, a good day for me.

– Margaret Munn



BushYarn

The flying doctor...

Old Bertie watched as the Flying Doctor flew over the property.

When I was a young stockman, we didn’t have any need of such fancy medicine and flying doctors. Once I was thrown from my horse and landed on a big tree, breaking about ten of my ribs. I was in a terrible state but the old Chinese cook fixed me up proper and good. He made me eat a couple of handfuls of rice and then drink two pints of bore water. The rice started to swell up in no time and eventually pushed my ribs back into place. I was back at work the next day.’ [Source: “Classic Bush Yarns”, Warren Fahey]

Getting to know

history, and members of our club

On Thursday August 8, a memorial service was held for Gordon at the Winnipeg Squash Racquet Club. It was a beautiful opportunity for family, friends and colleagues to say goodbye to someone who was very important to so many. The DUCW will also be holding a retro night on **Friday September 20** at 7:00 pm (see Page 1 of this issue for details) for all of us to share stories and reflections about our best mate.

In the meantime, here is the write up about Gordon in the “getting to know” column from the **September 12, 2014**, issue of *The Southern Yarn*.

Remembering Gordon Keatch

One of our favourite people, Gordon Keatch, has retired as our intrepid “getting to know” columnist. In his letter of retirement, Gord wrote that his monthly column in *The Southern Yarn* about getting to know members was “a most rewarding and interesting experience”.

We are looking for someone to take over the column, but first we thought we’d let you all “get to know” Gord a little better.

Originally from Melbourne, Australia, Gordon “Kangaroo” Keatch came to Canada in December 1943 when he began military training as a wireless/air gunner under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). More about this part of his story and how he met his wife Anne is featured in the book “Canada’s War Grooms and the Girls who Stole Their Hearts” by Judy Kozar.

In Gord’s words, “The most exciting part of the war for me was the time spent in Winnipeg because I met my wife there.” Love soon blossomed, and when Gord returned to Australia, Anne followed, and they were married there on November 23, 1946. “Anne’s parents were devastated, of course, as they thought they would never see their daughter again. My family, on the other hand, was ecstatic, and they were delighted and charmed by this Canadian girl who came all the way to Australia to marry me.”

Two years later, Gord and Anne moved back to Winnipeg. “It was now my mother’s turn to be the disappointed parent.”

Gord will tell anyone who asks that moving to Winnipeg was the best thing he ever did. It was here that he and Anne raised two



sons and became active in the local community.

For 33 years, Gord worked for local machinery-manufacturing firm Kipp Kelly Ltd., and became involved with many commitments and interests, including the St James School Board, the Niakwa Country Club, and the Manitoba Theatre Centre. Anne was busy volunteering at the Silver Heights Community Club, and later the Manitoba Lung Association and Manitoba Head Injury Association.

As co-founder of the DUCW and president for 49 years, Gord guided the club from humble beginnings to a welcome resource for Aussies and Kiwis who move to and travel through the province. In Gord’s words, “the Down Under Club has become an active, long-standing and popular group here in Winnipeg and throughout Manitoba. We are proud to have been a part of this city and province ... and have enjoyed fostering Australian, New Zealand and Canadian relations”

Gord and Anne always seemed to be doing something in the Club, including hosting informal get togethers, and organising, attending and volunteering at many events and activities. As our way of saying thanks for their enormous contribution, they were awarded the first DUCW Life Memberships in 2000. Indeed, they were such a constant part of the Club that when Anne passed away in December 2006, we all mourned the loss of a gentle soul and a dear friend.

Among his many contributions to the DUCW, Gord also took the time to document and update our history, look after the Club’s finances, do the audits, recruit new members, incorporate the DUCW, play the role of newsletter editor’s editor, mail the *Yarn*, and organise, in particular, the annual ANZAC Day commemoration.

Gord also played a significant role in our first Folklorama pavilion. Peter Debenham remembered the meeting he was at with

Gord and Lucia Barron at The Round Table on Halloween in 1992. “We didn’t think we had the resources – people or capital or know how – but the zoo had an Aussie exhibit and we jumped on the bandwagon, deciding ‘If ever we’re going to do it, it’s now’.”

In the hearts and minds of many, Gord’s most enduring legacy will be the “getting to know” column that he has championed since September 2006. By showcasing approximately 150 members, he has definitely helped us get to know each other a little better.

By all accounts, Gord is a true gentleman who is loved and respected for his generous nature, kind heart, relentless community spirit, and willingness to step up and help out. He might be retiring from journalism, but there’s no doubt that Gord will be kept busy enough with his many interests and activities, his good friends, and his close-knit family, which now includes three grandchildren (Allison, Erin and Michael) and two great-grandsons (Ethan and Liam), with a great-granddaughter arriving in mid-December.

There is much more to Gord’s story, but I’m sure he would prefer to tell you himself when you chat with him at the next DUCW event.

Cheers to you, mate!

– Jenny Gates

While some things changed after this was published in the *Yarn*, notably the arrival of three more great-grandchildren – Iris, Olivia and Mia – many things stayed the same, in particular, his strong bond with family and friends, his deep and persistent love of theatre, and his commitment to the DUCW. You were one in a million, Gord. We all miss you very much.

If you would like to read the words that were shared on your behalf at the memorial reception for Gord on Thursday August 8, please visit <http://downunderclub.mb.ca/thank-you-gordon-keatch/>. Twenty four Club members attended the service to say farewell and thank you to our dear friend.



Stern words as NZ joins rebuke of China over Uighurs Muslims

Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters says NZ signed the letter of rebuke to China because "we believe in the liberty of personal beliefs".

The international rebuke of China's mass detention of an ethnic minority group has been called slander by the world's second-largest economy. But experts say NZ is unlikely to face serious backlash for joining the complaint. It was one of 22 countries that last month signed a letter to the president of the United Nations Human Rights Council criticizing Beijing for its treatment of ethnic Uighurs in the Xinjiang region. Rights groups say a million Uighurs and other Muslims are being held in camps in the remote western region, with reports of detainees being forced to renounce their faith and undergo psychological torture.

China's Foreign Ministry has described the statement as slander and said it had made "stern representations" to those involved. Its Government says it's fighting extremism in the region.

University of Canterbury China expert Professor Anne-Marie Brady said despite the diplomatic bluster, no serious consequences would follow for NZ. - SOURCE: New Zealand Herald



Donald Trump, with Bangla Hindu activist, Priya Saha (left) a minority activist at the White House

Hindu human rights activist faces sedition trial

A Bangladeshi minister, Obaidul Quader, says the organizing secretary of the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (HBCUC), Priya Saha, will face trial on the charge of sedition for her remarks about minority persecution in the country to US President Donald Trump, PTI reports.

The Hindu minority activist had been on a visit to the White House on July 19, when she told Trump that 37 million members of minority communities in the country had disappeared.

A video clip of the interaction went viral in Bangladesh and has evoked a strong backlash from the government and other quarters.

"Saha's allegation was absolutely false. No one will agree with her. A sedition case will be filed against her. The process is underway. We must take measures against her and are in the process of doing so as a Bangladeshi national, she has made false, purposeful and treasonous remarks," Quader stated.

Even the organisation she leads, the HBCUC, does not seem to be prepared to defend her.

"We are embarrassed. The comments she made were her own and not ours," HBCUC spokesman Kajal Debnath said. - SOURCE: Lankaweb

NZ approves six child marriages since law changed

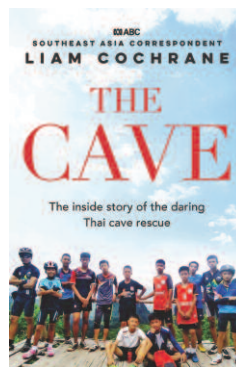
Just six marriages involving young teenagers have been approved since a law was changed to try to prevent forced marriage.

While some children's advocates say that's a sign the legislation is working, others are pushing for it to go further. However, before Parliament passed the Marriage (Court Consent to Marriage of Minors) Amendment Bill last year, they only needed their parents' consent. It's estimated an average of 30 marriages involving 16 and 17 year olds were registered in New Zealand each year before the law change. - SOURCE: reliefweb.

Books:

Liam Cochrane's *The Cave: The Inside Story of the Amazing Thai Cave Rescue* is a gripping account of the difficulties and triumphs of the rescue of a boys' soccer team and

their coach in Thailand last year. Every reader will remember how we all held our breath as the days passed until the boys were found in an impossibly difficult place deep inside a mountain with flooded access channels, narrow passages and the danger of heavy rains to come. The narrative grips the attention as



suspense builds and the dangers and difficulties become more and more apparent. Cochrane is the Australian Broadcasting Company's S.E. Asia correspondent based in Bangkok. He spent two weeks outside the cave witnessing the wait for news. After the rescue, he researched the whole undertaking, using his local knowledge and contacts to present us with an unrivalled picture of the various plans that were proposed and the difficulties that the cave divers faced. This is a book everyone should read, it is moving, inspiring and definitely not to be missed.

Sergio Ghione's *Turtle Island: A Journey to Britain's Oldest Colony* is a rare find: delightful, absorbing, and, above all, informative. Ghione joined three scientists whose research project



was to find out where green turtles go in the vast Atlantic after laying their eggs on the beaches of Ascension Island, one of the most remote islands in the world lying just south of the equator in the Atlantic Ocean. The book describes a month on the island, studying the turtles and exploring the dry, dusty landscape which lacks any form of lush tropical vegetation. The wind is a constant factor. Until recently, visiting was restricted to the military and essential services. Nevertheless, the island is rich in history which Ghione inserts into his descriptions and narratives making a fascinating read. Books about Ascension Island are hard to find; do not miss this one.

Read more from Commonwealth Corner on page nine of the electronic versions of most issues of *The Southern Yarn*.

Murray Burt is a retired editor and journalist who is concerned that lesser elements of the Commonwealth get poor media coverage.

Burt is president of the Manitoba branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society; past president of the Commonwealth Journalists Association; Hon LCol of the 78th Fraser Highlanders; a senator of the 166th Battery RCA (Kenora) and a director of The Intrepid Society. He is retired from more than 50 years of journalism.

Crows (again)

I featured crows in the third of these articles, back in the March 2015 issue. This time its going to be a bit more personal ...

Quite a number of years ago, when we started trying to encourage more birds to the yard – particularly songbirds and humming-birds, etc. – a pair of crows showed up and obviously assumed that, being birds, they would be welcome, too. So they set to work building their nest high up in one of our Manitoba maple trees. When I discovered it, I was not pleased. I had it in for crows because of their reputation for robbing other nests - nests of the very birds we wanted around. Squirrels, cute as they can be, also have this reputation. And don't get me started on cats!

I was working at a chicken plant at the time, so the idea crossed my mind that maybe if I smuggled some chicken guts home each day, I could offer that to them, and they'd leave the young songbirds alone. But what if they didn't clean up all the scraps? The neighbours might complain. I saw no other option than to get them to move on (the crows, not the neighbours). So I took a long pole up onto the roof of the garage and poked away at the nest. Mr and Mrs Crow were not happy! They circled and squawked and cried aloud as their nest was being demolished. It wasn't very pleasant for me either – all that bird stuff and sticks raining down on me. Then, down came an egg and splatted beside me on the garage. Then another. I felt bad. You can imagine how the crows felt. No wonder they were angry!

Crows also have a reputation for human recognition, and not forgetting, and I'm certain they, and their succeeding generations, bad-mouthed me for many years after that.

Fast forward to June this year. I notice there is a crow's nest high up in the same tree; only the tree is much taller now, so the nest is well out of reach of the pole – maybe the crows knew that? But they needn't worry – I am more philosophical now – they are going to raid songbird nests whether they live in our yard or not – its what crows do.

Anyway, over dinner one night recently, while sharing the exciting events of the day, Judy mentioned a close encounter with a crow – she was gardening and sensed a “presence” and, looking around, saw a crow behaving quite



unafraid within 6 feet of her. Unusual behaviour, we agreed.

Next day the neighbour reported that a young crow had flown to her and let

her feed it. My interest was tweaking. And the next day she demonstrated by feeding it on our back fence. Next thing it was on my shoulder and taking food.

This intimacy (with the crow, not the neighbour) continued for a few days and gained lots of “likes” on Facebook. I just had to step out the backdoor in the morning and there it was. I'd stretch my arm out and on it flew; and soggy bread and fresh earthworms went down its gaping gullet. The parents, of course, were very vocal about all this – no doubt warning their naïve child about getting too close to cruel humans. Then it showed up with an obviously injured leg – hungry and friendly as ever, but quite handicapped in its ability to get around. After another day or two we decided it really should have its leg seen to. So we drove it to the Wildlife Haven Rehabilitation Centre, at Ile des Chênes, just south of Winnipeg. We heard no more until I phoned after a week and was told the leg was broken too close to the joint for them to be able to do anything – so they euthanized it – “It was the humane thing to do”.

Realistically, we probably couldn't have kept on caring for it, anyway. But our neighbour was more upset and thought we/she should have been given the option.

But that wasn't the end of the story: the parents were still around. They would call their usual “ark, ark” – wondering where their kid was. I couldn't explain, but I tried to be friendly and would leave soggy bread on the fence for them, which I think they accepted, though not while I was present. And then a remarkable thing happened – something that is difficult to explain. They both showed up one morning, perched in a couple of nearby

trees and, using a “voice” I have never heard from a crow, before or since, they had a “conversation” with me. There were no harsh “ark, ark”s. It was more of a gentler “argle, argle” tone – and back and forth between them for several minutes. I believe that it was directed to me or at least for my benefit. Anyway, I got the sense that there were no hard feelings. We'll see what transpires next spring ...



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