

The Southern Yarn

August/September 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

AUGUST

Annual Golf Tournament

Saturday 29th August, 1pm

at The Players, 2695 Inkster Blvd.

Our annual golf tournament is back on! Saturday, Tee off times start at 1.15pm, and we are running this as a 9 hole event. The format will be similar to last year, where we play as teams, everyone gets to hit from the most advantageous previous shot, each time, and only the best shot counts on your scorecard. So even if you are not the best golfer, you will enjoy this format playing in a team. The course asks that social distancing is practiced, and please note that the flag is not to be removed (ie, no hand touching). We will meet at the lakeside clubhouse immediately following the game, for a beverage, prizes, and socially distanced socializing. Please call Peter to let us know you wish to join in, at **204 237-1805**.

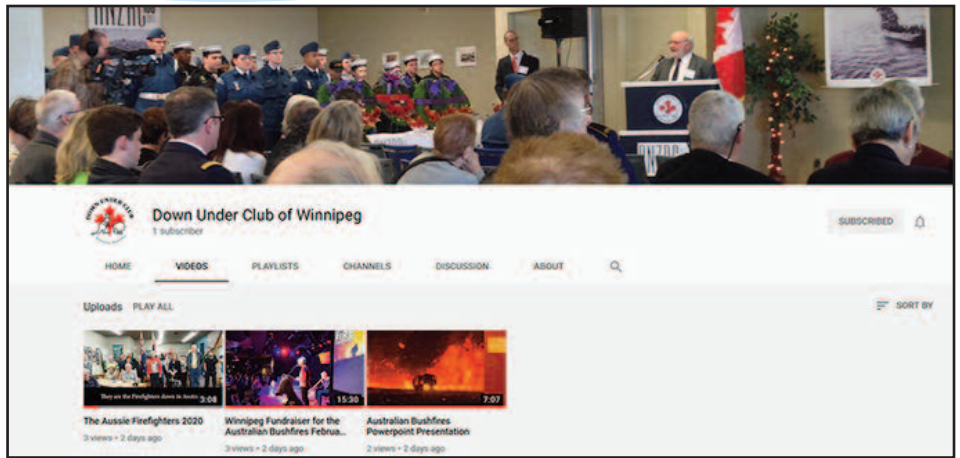
It is tempting to look back to our spring/summer activities of 2019. Ah, those were the days. As you all know, our current health and safety concerns means all social gatherings - High Tea bakery afternoon tea, ANZAC Day commemoration, pool party/BBQ - have been cancelled. We can be thankful that our provincial experts have guided us well through uncertain times, and maybe, just maybe, it will not be too long before Club members can do more than text, email, and social distancing on patios.

But wait. There's **golfing!** Thankfully, golfing is a sport where social distancing can occur, although in my case, I would be not 6 feet from my playing partner but maybe 160 feet behind him/her. Thanks to Peter Munn for organizing this event — and remember to not touch the greens flags!

The Scandinavian Centre, where some of our more "official" events occur, is closed, of course, but they have used the downtime and fundraising to install a new elevator. The SCC plans on opening unless provincial guidelines change, but as of now, they have a garage sale on Saturday August 15, and a TGIF dinner on Friday October 23.

Stay tuned for more information on DUCW events as we find out what we can and cannot do. And remember to keep 6 feet (one polar bear) apart.

Judy Powell



What's new at the DUCW

Two things are new since our last newsletter, and one of them in particular needs your help!

Website banner photos

Big thanks to **Lynley Wesselingh, Lucia Barron, Katrina Epp and Brian Hydesmith** for adding their photos to mine so we have 27 new banners on the DUCW website.

After the fundraiser event in February, we decided to update the banners that have been on the site since Brian built it more than 10 years ago.

The new banners portray scenes from Australia and New Zealand, and DUCW members at Club events. Our goal is to periodically update these with other photos submitted by you so we can keep the site fresh and engaging.

Bushfire fundraiser video

Big thanks to **Brian Rougeau and Corinne Napper** for being part of our bushfire fundraiser

event, and recording this beautiful and moving video documentary. The 15-minute video is amazing, and not only did Brian and Corinne research the type and amount of content we were looking for, but volunteered

their time before, during and after the event to make it happen. You can see it now on our new YouTube channel at the temporary link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNDsQmp5y_v_Kuzw2jwP7VQ/ or search for the **Down Under Club of Winnipeg** (not DUCW).

In addition to the fundraiser video, you'll find on the channel:

- the PowerPoint presentation that was running on screens during the event, and
- the video Brian Hydesmith recorded of members of the DUCW singing Charlie Powell's "The Aussie Firefighters" to the tune of "Lili Marlene".

AND THIS IS WHERE YOU COME IN – Eventually we'd like to change the current link to a dedicated DUCW one, and we need you to:

- **SUBSCRIBE** to the channel – we need 100 subscribers before we can change the link.
- **LIKE** the videos – the more people who like them, the more people will see them
- **SHARE** the videos – share the link with anyone you think might enjoy watching them.

Hopefully we'll be able to add videos from DUCW events whenever they happen again, and we've also got a few other ideas we're considering. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy what you can already watch on our new YouTube channel.

Jenny Gates

online



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

editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Another thing I enjoy about this “job” (as editor of *The Yarn* newsletter) is when one of the stories, chosen, is relevant enough to a member/reader that they take the time to respond to express that fact. That was the case for Vilma Myers Wilkie and the “Getting to know ...” piece about the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan last issue. Her generous feedback is shared on p.3. Part 2 of the BCATP story provides more details and is in this month’s “Getting to know ...” (p.7).

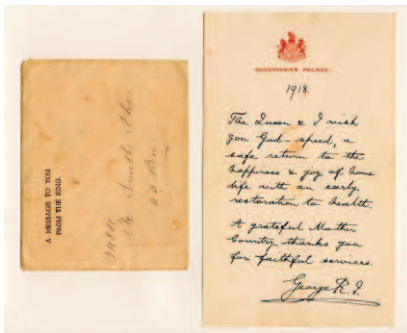
If you make it all the way to the back page and read “Birds I view”, you might get the impression that I have nothing better to do than feed peanuts to crows. You would be mistaken. I also feed sunflower seeds to chipmunks.

And there is much more for your interest and entertainment.

A big Thank You to our advertisers, our contributors and you, the readers!

Charlie Powell

100 years ago



Letter from George V to those who were wounded

Text of letter from George V to those who were wounded, inscribed with the Royal Coat of Arms, Buckingham Palace, dated 1918:

The Queen and I wish God-speed, a safe return to the happiness and joy of home life with an early restoration to health. A grateful Mother Country thanks you for faithful services.
(Signed George R.V.)

The original letter would probably have been handwritten by the King, however it would have then been printed so that multiple copies were created. How these were distributed is not clear - they were not sent to every soldier, but were probably mailed. Source: Australian War Memorial: [Link]

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



Summer has come in with a bang, and the temperatures have been really warm. For those who plant a garden, the warmth and rain has really brought most gardens along really well. I once had two small, bordered raised plots, side by side, about 8 x 8 feet each. Now it is down to a single plot, as one has been hijacked by a four year old who loves trucks, and playing in the dirt with two large dump trucks. He slept over last week, and once outside, turned on the garden hose to make some rivers and lakes in his 8x8 section. It was an entertaining morning, and probably expensive, as he

rerouted every lake and river several times. Needless to say, a lot of the garden stuck to him.

In these Covid-19 days, there has been one mixed blessing for me. With most North American sports shut down, there has been a dearth of sports broadcasting to show. So TSN has partly compensated by showing more than its usual complement of Aussie Rules games. For weeks now, we have been seeing 5 and more games a week, which has been a real treat.

Talking of sports, the Club is holding its annual golf tournament at the end of this month, 9 holes, easy rules for beginners, and we would like to see you there. More details on page 1 of this issue.

Take care out there,
Peter



Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR), meet with Chinese soldiers on a hillside in the area of The Hook after the Korean War armistice was signed.

70 years ago

On Korean Veterans' Day (AUS, 27 July) we commemorate the signing of the Armistice that ended three years of fighting on the Korean Peninsula. Negotiations of peace began on 10 July 1952 but were suspended in August after the building being used was reportedly bombed. Discussions did not resume until October, and were held in the village of Panmunjom. An agreement for an Armistice was reached on 19 July 1953 between the UN and the Communists and the date for the signing was set for 27 July 1953. The Armistice was signed at 10am and would come into effect 12 hours later, which meant sporadic fighting continued throughout the day. However with the fall of the evening came silence. Australian forces remained in Korea until 1957 as part of a multi-nation peacekeeping force. [AWM Link]

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Message from DU Travel

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DUCW making toys for tots Christmas, c. 1949, courtesy Vilma Myers Wilkie.

Reader Feedback ...

Thank you always for an interesting, fun newsletter. It is the glue that holds the club together, especially for those of us who no longer live in Winnipeg.

Thank you especially for the article on the wartime training plan. My dad, Laurie Myers, who was one of the founding members of the DUCW, was one of the Aussie pilots sent to Manitoba to train new pilots. He never wanted to discuss the war too much, but told me a story of their difficulty in getting planes, equipment, etc. One of his memories was the US agreeing to give the Commonwealth some planes, but they would have to be delivered to the border and retrieved by those in Canada. My dad remembered going to the border and reaching for ropes tied around the nose cones of the planes and pulling them across. There was a chilling moment in the movie, the "Darkest Hour" where Churchill was in the War Room begging President Roosevelt for planes. The US was not yet involved in the war and the President finally relented, saying they would supply some but they could not be delivered by Americans – only the way my dad had told me. One of many defining moments in history.

He met my mom, a war bride (see photos on page 9 of the e-version), and I was born in Australia, but we returned to Canada when I was quite young. A homesick mom for sure. After visiting Cronulla and Australia several times it was hard to imagine leaving for the frigid Winnipeg winters, but it never seemed to bother Dad.

Keep up the good work.

Vilma Myers Wilkie, California

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Tim Tam

Penguin

Tim Tams or Penguins?

[Source: Goodfood, Callan Boys, 23 Jun 2020; and thank you Peter Munn] For decades the debate of whether Vegemite is the superior yeast-based spread to Marmite has raged between the United Kingdom and Australia, but now a new food rivalry is rising: the Tim Tam versus the Penguin.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson held out the promise of cheaper biscuits to cheer up British consumers.

"We send you Penguins and you send us, with reduced tariffs, these wonderful Arnott's Tim Tams," he said when launching free trade agreement negotiations between Australia and the UK last week. "How long can the British people be deprived of the opportunity to have Tim Tams at a reasonable price?"

It's a fair question, considering a packet of Tim Tams costs £8 (\$14.44) at UK department store Selfridges compared to \$3.65 at Coles.

Meanwhile, McVitie's Tim Tam-like Penguins can be found for as low as £1 a packet in Britain, but will set an Australian punter back \$7.90 from Sydney-based online store British Sweets and Treats.

Which country will benefit most in the forthcoming sweet stakes then? Does Australia really need more competitively priced Penguins? Are Tim Tams not already the perfect afternoon snack? Is a Jammie Dodger any better than Arnott's Raspberry Shortcake? Good Food held the Ashes of taste tests to find out, albeit played in the tearoom rather than Lord's.

McVitie's Penguin Original v Arnott's Tim Tam Original: The chocolate-covered, cream-filled biscuits are identical except for the Penguin being longer by more than a centimetre. The British biscuit is crunchier too, but an overload of sugar makes the treat cloying and one-dimensional. Meanwhile, the Tim Tam's cocoa notes are pronounced and the texture is smooth.

Winner: The Tim Tam, no competition. [Link]

Australia holidays: 12 places that are like going overseas ...

[Contributors: Lissa Christopher, Jim Darby, Anthony Dennis, Ben Groundwater, Jane Reddy, Jane Richards [Link]

Who needs the world when we have Australia? Stop. Take a look. It's all out there. From Tasmania to the Top End and Western Australia to South Australia there are hints - glaring reminders even - at every twist and turn of the places overseas that we've temporarily left behind.

Although some state borders remain frustratingly closed, the opportunity will eventually materialize to explore our own country. Thanks to the pandemic, the world will have to wait as we rediscover, or in some cases discover anew, our own backyard.



Evandale, Tasmania -
REMINDS US OF... England

Tasmania is replete with gorgeous heritage towns that seem cryogenically-preserved from the Victorian or Georgian eras, during which they were mainly constructed. One of the best examples is Evandale, just down a quiet road from Launceston Airport, dominated by the steeple of St Andrew's Church of England, opened in 1837 by Sir John Franklin, the governor of Van Diemen's Land. The town, outside of once-in-a-century pandemics, also hosts the suitably-themed National Penny Farthing Championships, while its weekly Sunday markets have long been a drawcard.



Darwin, Northern Territory -
REMINDS US OF... Southeast Asia
(The Parap Markets. Photo: Matt Cherubino/Tourism NT)

This city is closer to Indonesia's capital than it is Australia's. Almost 30 per cent of its population is overseas-born and they are having their way with its abundant food and produce, adding to the Darwin's youthful, tropical, energy. One word creates the bridge

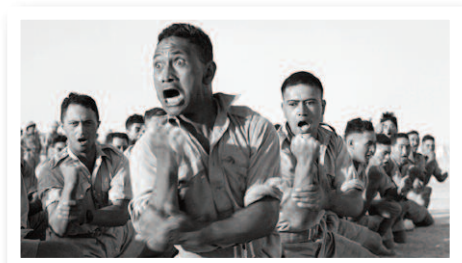
between Darwin and Southeast Asia: "laksa". It comes from Peranakan culture which takes its origins and influences from Malaysia and Indonesia and Chinese migrants to those countries. That delicious bowl of noodles, coconut milk, spices and seafood or chicken is made with the kind of pride here that Italians reserve for pasta. Head to the Parap Village markets on any Saturday morning and join the queue at Mary's or Yati's, find a spot in the shade and devour that deep cup of goodness. Alternately, in Darwin's CBD, take a seat at the Rendezvous Cafe where you'll get change from \$20 for a big bowl. The city runs a laksa festival each November - want to try a crocodile meat laksa? Only in Darwin. The climate also brings you to Southeast Asia; perfect for an outdoor lifestyle. For southerners, that's probably best enjoyed in the dry season (May to October).



The Barossa Valley, South Australia -
REMINDS US OF... Germany

Named after the fertile valley Barrosa (Barrosa) Ridge in the Spanish region of Andalusia, it was the settlement by German Lutheran immigrants escaping religious persecution in Prussia that made an indelible mark from architecture to food and of course, wine. On a visit to Tanunda in 1851 German travel writer Friederich Gerstaecker observed: "The traveller would believe himself in some little village of the old country between the Rhine and the Oder." It's just over an hour's drive from Adelaide to the region that is home to 550 grape growers, many sixth-generation farmers and where the distinct Lutheran church spires dot the landscape. Townships of Bethany and Krondorf are in hufendorf style, a line with cottages along the main road and farmland extending in long narrow strips reflect the German heritage and toil of these pioneers. Pick up mettwurst at Linke's in Nuriotpa that's cured in the wood-fired smokehouse or take a tour of what is believed to be the world's oldest shiraz vineyard, The Freedom 1843 at Langmeil Winery.

There are 9 more at [this Link].



Main image: Members of the 28th (Maori) Battalion performing a haka in Egypt, 1941

A brief history of the Maori

[Story by Te Ahukaram Charles Royal]

Māori are the tangata whenua – the people of the land. In over 700 years of settlement, they have shown an extraordinary ability to adapt first to a new environment and then to the arrival of European immigrants and culture.

Early settlement: The ancestors of Māori arrived on canoes from Pacific islands before 1300 CE. Settling first on the coast, they hunted seals and moas. They also began to grow food, and some moved to the forests. They lived in small tribal groups, with a rich culture of spoken stories, and strong traditions of warfare. Their ancestors, and the gods of the natural world, were very important.

Europeans arrive: The arrival of Europeans from the early 1800s had a major effect on these early communities. Among the newcomers were missionaries, and many Māori became Christians. They learnt to read and write and began trading, especially in pigs and potatoes.

The Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 established British law and government, but it could not prevent warfare in the 1840s and 1860s as Māori defended their lands and local authority. After the wars Māori lost land through confiscation and sale, mostly to British settlers.

Revival: In the first half of the 20th century important leaders such as Apirana Ngata and Te Puea Hārangī worked to make life better for Māori and to revive the culture. There was a new interest in the language, and in arts such as carving and weaving.

After the Second World War many Māori moved to the cities in search of jobs. In the 1970s and 1980s groups protested about their rights to land, and helped promote the language and culture. Important events were a march down the North Island to Parliament in 1975, the creation of the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975 to look at claimed breaches

of the Treaty, and the occupation of Bastion Point in Auckland by protesters in 1977–78.

Māori today: In 2019 there were nearly 800,000 Māori people, with most living in cities. There were kāhanga reo (preschool language nests) and schools using the Māori language, two Māori television channels and 21 radio stations, 29 members of Parliament who identified as Māori, and many creative projects in film, music and art. [Link]



Known unto God: Unknown warriors ...

The Unknown New Zealand Warrior interred at the National War Memorial in Wellington lost his life in France some time between April 1916 and November 1918.

One of the countless victims of the ‘war to end all wars’, he died on the Western Front, a vast arena of misery and suffering in which New Zealanders were slaughtered in unprecedented numbers. We will never know the circumstances of his death. Did he fall advancing towards the enemy after going over the top in one of the periodic big pushes or in the darkness and confusion of a minor trench raid? Did some random shell burst instantly snuff out his life or did he lie in agony for hours, even days, before his shattered body gave up the struggle to survive?

We do know that his body was found without any form of identification other than some indication that he was a New Zealander, perhaps a fragment of his uniform. He was buried in one of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries that dot the now peaceful countryside of northern France. His simple white headstone carried the words A New Zealand soldier of the Great War known unto God. It was one of many such unidentified graves on the Western Front, for the unknown soldier was one of the sad features of the Great War.

The idea that victims of war should be honoured in named graves is a relatively recent development. From the dawn of time, those who fell in battle could expect only the anonymity of the mass grave – if they were buried at all. Only in the 19th century did the idea of recovering bodies and burying them individually emerge in Western countries.

In the Great War this was no easy task.

The nature of the battlefields often made identifying fallen soldiers difficult, if not impossible. In the close quarters fighting on the Gallipoli Peninsula opportunities to bury men who fell between the lines were limited. After the evacuation, three years would elapse before the Allies could return to the battlefield and seek out their dead. The Turks in the meantime had buried some in mass graves; others, buried during the fighting, lay in long lost temporary graves; others again lay where they fell in the scrub. On the Western Front the graves of many soldiers who had been buried were lost as the front advanced or receded, and shellfire pulverized the burial areas. When these men’s bodies were found later they were usually unidentifiable. They became unknown soldiers. [Link]

BushYarn

During the *Endeavour’s* great voyage up the east coast of Australia in 1770, James Cook has been naming everything after himself: Cooktown, Cooks River, Cook Reef. The list goes on and on, much to the chagrin of the aristocratic botanist on the voyage, Joseph Banks.

One day, the two are ashore, marvelling at the strange wildlife, when they see and hear a previously unknown bird.

It’s a bit like a Kingfisher but with a strong beak and a strangely magnetic, laughing cry. Banks, as ever, wants to name it a “Banksoburra” but Cook, as ever, overrules him.

Peter FitzSimons.

[More jokes: link]

[Thanks to Malcolm W. for sending in this tale.]

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

(continued from Jun/Jul)

A Demanding Training Regime

The BCATP expected a lot from its recruits. The exhaustive curriculum and intensive schedule of classroom and flight training turned out air crew members at a dizzying pace, ready to serve overseas.

Elementary training took approximately eight weeks, which included at least 50 hours of flying. Aircraft commonly used at Elementary Flying Training Schools were de Havilland Tiger Moths, Fleet Finches, and Fairchild Cornells.

Successful trainees then progressed to Service Flying Training Schools for more advanced instruction. Because syllabus revisions were made throughout the war, the course length varied from 10 to 16 weeks, and flying time varied from 75 to 100 hours. Potential fighter pilots trained on single-engine North American Harvards while pilots selected for bomber, coastal, and transport operations received training on twin-engine Avro Ansons, Cessna Cranes, or Airspeed Oxfords.

After five weeks of theoretical training at Initial Training Schools, air observers would move to Air Observer Schools for a 12-week course on aerial photography, reconnaissance, and air navigation. This also included 60 to 70 hours of practical experience in the air. Observers learned the science of bombing during their 10-week stay at a Bombing and Gunnery School. With an additional four weeks at an Air Navigation School, recruits were then ready for posting overseas. After June 1942, the duties of the air observer were divided between navigators and air bombers, thus replacing the observer category.

Navigators specializing in bombing spent eight weeks at a Bombing and Gunnery School and 12 weeks at an Air Observer School. These men were then qualified as both navigators and bomb aimers. Navigators specializing as wireless operators trained for 28 weeks at a Wireless Training School and 22 weeks at an Air Observer School. Airmen studying to be air bombers spent five weeks at an Initial Training



School, 8 to 12 weeks at a Bombing and Gunnery School, and six weeks at an Air Observer School. Besides learning how to drop bombs accurately, air bombers learned the map-reading and observations skills necessary for assisting navigators.

Wireless operator-air gunners spent 28 weeks at a Wireless Training School where they became proficient in radio work. Gunnery training took six weeks at a Bombing and Gunnery School. Straight air gunners, also taught at Bombing and Gunnery Schools, underwent a 12-week program involving ground training and actual air firing practice. Later in the war, a flight engineer was added to heavy bomber crews. Besides being an aero-engine technician, flight engineers received enough training to be able to replace a pilot who was killed or injured. Most engineers were trained in the United Kingdom, but about 1,900 engineers eventually graduated from the Flight Engineers School in Aylmer, Ontario, once it opened in July 1944

Canadians took great pride in making the trainees feel a part of their communities,

An Economic Boom

Coming on the heels of the Great Depression, the economic benefits of the BCATP were warmly welcomed by Canadian communities. Even before the final BCATP agreement was signed, local officials began lobbying the government to build an aerodrome in their community.

As bases were being built, local companies expected to win contracts for labour, gravel, and lumber supplies. Residents hoped to be employed on construction crews, while merchants anticipated that construction workers would spend their pay cheques on housing, food, clothing, and recreation.

Construction was not the only economic benefit of the BCATP aerodromes – large numbers of students, instructors, and their families brought business to local merchants. Host communities also benefited when local companies secured contracts for



supplying electricity, water, natural gas, coal, and food to the base. Once in operation, the airport needed to fill many civilian positions, from clerical posts to aerodromes and aircraft maintenance.

Newspapers in Saskatoon noted how "Jarvis [Ontario], with a normal population of less than 600, has been transformed into a thriving town since preparations for the training centre [a Bombing and Gunnery School] began." As Yorkton, Saskatchewan, waited for construction of its aerodrome to be completed, the local newspaper projected the Service Flying Training School to be staffed "with personnel of one thousand with a monthly payroll of \$100,000." In addition, the town estimated that "fifty percent of the officers will be married and will require furnished quarters."

Canadians took great pride in making the trainees feel a part of their communities, and the air force personnel warmly welcomed the morale-boosting recreation that came from meeting with local civilians, who were often invited to station parties and dances. Local residents attended wings presentations and graduation ceremonies, and bases were often open for the public to view and participate in sports competitions. Communities provided recreational diversions for airmen with summer fairs and winter carnivals, while station bands frequently provided the entertainment for community events. At some schools, airmen helped civilians bring in fall harvests. [Link]

Catherine Bowering kindly sent this dispatch from Victoria, Australia

Locked Down in Lilydale ...

Here's a cautionary tale. Stay vigilant to stay safe and well. Respect and obey the restrictions imposed on us by COVID-19. They are in place to protect us.

The greater Melbourne area and Mitchell Shire (part rural and part urban), all five million plus residents, have been in Lockdown 2 for the first few weeks of a projected six week period. This came about after selected suburbs with growing numbers of new cases from community transmission had been confined to their own area. Then the numbers jumped dramatically. That was the point at which the much larger area was included and Stage 3 restrictions reimposed. Still high numbers persisted. It was mandated that masks be worn for outdoor activity and in all public indoor spaces. There are only four narrowly defined reasons to leave home.

You may ask "How does everyone cope?" and the short answer is "as best you can" remembering the lessons learned from Lockdown 1 with adaptations for the current situation.

Essential shopping: both shopkeepers and customers are now quite used to on-line ordering or social distancing and hygiene measures for in-person shopping. Delivery logistics have kept pace.

Care and care giving: likely the most

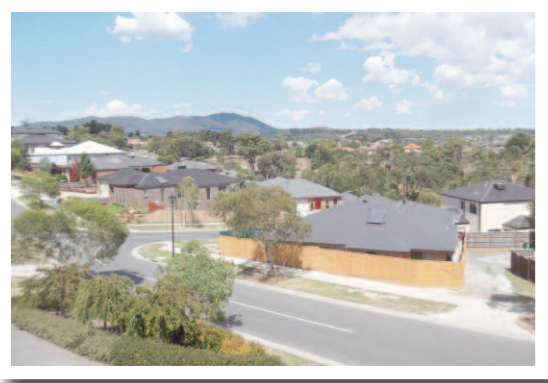
difficult to define and manage. Most medical appointments are done by telehealth. Caregivers, whether personal connections or paid staff, must be super cautious with hygiene to prevent transmission. Many allied health services have limited availability. There are no visitors to hospitals or aged care facilities.

Work, school: working from home as much as possible and remote learning (except for years 11 and 12).

Exercise: strongly encouraged but it must be undertaken as close to home as possible.

"Always look on the bright side of life" is good advice. For Ian and me, it means being grateful that we have each other and that we are locked down TOGETHER in the same country. Our home is located on a hill on the outskirts of Lilydale about 40 km from Melbourne CBD. We have a gorgeous outlook over the dale and around to the Dandenong Ranges. The Lilydale-Warburton Rail Trail is just behind us so it is our closest walking track. Walking our steep neighbourhood streets is not a favoured option. We can keep in touch with our family, near and far, via telephone, email and Skype even though we cannot visit personally. Both Ian and I can continue our board involvements via video meetings.

The reality of this pandemic came close to home when we learned that a member of our extended family had tested positive, was hos-



pitalized in ICU, but is now recovering in a respiratory ward. A friend who is also a Winniepegger, a young doctor at the Alfred Hospital, had to go into quarantine when a co-worker tested positive. She never tested positive, but found the quarantine period difficult to endure. It was heart-warming to hear that even though her fiancé had to move temporarily to his parents' home, he returned to their apartment parking lot to talk to her Romeo and Juliet style and bring her food and gifts. O, the romance of young love!

Suppression or elimination of COVID-19 is still a debate among scientists and politicians. Ongoing research for treatments and vaccines is progressing and promising. We, the general public, know what we need to be doing and most people are cooperating, although the stories of stupid and selfish actions are mind boggling. We will all be happy to arrive at the "other side" of this and to begin living the "new normal".

Stay safe, stay well. Be happy!

Did you know ...

NSW buys outback station in state's largest single property purchase for a national park ...

[Source: ABC Broken Hill: Saskia Mabin, 27 June 2020] It's the vast embodiment of outback beauty and heartbreak — a sweeping western NSW cattle station that is, by turns, arid no-man's land and lush waterbird haven, home to ancient Indigenous artefacts, the ghostly trail of Burke and Wills and now the nation's newest national park. "It can be very good and then it can be vile," said Bill O'Connor, 84, owner of Narriearra station, which has just become the largest block of private land bought for a national park in the state's history.

With nearby Sturt National Park, Narriearra will create a conservation area of close to half a million hectares, or twice the size of the Australian Capital Territory.

The 153,415-hectare station sits in the north-west corner of the state, with the dog-proof fence of the NSW-Queensland border forming its northern boundary. Flowing south from Queensland, the Bulloo River ends on the station in an expansive floodplain and wetlands that attract tens of thousands of water birds during inland flooding.

The property is also home to Indigenous artefacts, tools and stone arrangements.

Explorers Burke and Wills traversed it in 1860, with an engraved post marking one of the ill-fated expedition's two camp sites. Read more here: [\[link\]](#)





Two crows for comfort.
Photo: Charlie Powell

birds*i*view...

by Charlie Powell

Crows, yet again! ...

I first featured crows in the March 2015 *Southern Yarn*. Then again in the August issue last year I shared a touching interaction with a crow family. You'll find both articles on the DUCW website.

This summer I have been having some fun with these clever corvids – beginning with the simple offering of a peanut:

I placed a raw peanut (in-shell) on a bench in the backyard (with a clear line of sight from the kitchen window). If a squirrel didn't grab it first, a crow would come and take it away – usually just across the road, to open it and devour the nuts. This went on for a few days. Then I upped the difficulty: I placed the peanut inside an open-ended clear plastic container. At first this frustrated the crow (and the squirrels) – it pecked at it, jumped on it and picked up the container by the open end, with no luck. However, before long it discovered it could empty it out by picking up the closed end. After this “Ah-ha” moment, it would fly down and immediately tip the peanut out. Time to take it up another notch: I anchored the closed end of the container, so it was free to pivot and move but could not be tipped by that end. More frustration! So I provided a “tool” – a hook-ended stick. I was hoping it would figure out it could use the stick to remove the peanut. That was apparently too much of a leap – it



failed to see any connection between the peanut and the stick, even when I placed the stick in the container with the peanut. I had to position the stick so that the peanut was in the crook. Before long, the now somewhat educated crow learned to pull out the stick and the peanut. Just as before, the crow would now fly down and with one swift jerk with its beak, it extracted the stick, took the peanut and was gone. I thought for sure it would now understand the connection, so I went back to leaving the stick nearby. So far, no luck classes continue ... stay tuned.

Thank you for your patience as members of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg, as we all make adjustments to rules relating to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and all the risks associated with gatherings. The DUCW executive will continue to monitor rules and risks, and reschedule and/or adapt our activities accordingly. We trust that your connections in New Zealand and Australia are well, and that you are staying in touch to compensate for any travel plans that might have been impacted. Stay healthy!



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Reader Feedback, continued from page 3

Photos provided by **Vilma Myers Wilkie**.

See if you can spot Gordon Keatch in at least one of these photos!

Right: Laurie and Gwen Myers

Far right: DUCW making toys for tots Christmas

Centre: Planes from Gimli area, used for training – looks cold!

Bottom: Anzac Day 1949.

