

The Southern Yarn

September–October 2023

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

OCTOBER 2023

Annual not-so-Formal Dinner
Friday, Oct 20th, 6 pm
Bailey's, 185 Lombard Ave

This year, we will be upstairs in the Board of Governors Room. The menu chosen is the same as last year. There is no need to pre-order and the prices quoted are subject to PST, GST and 15% gratuity to be added. You are very welcome to invite a guest (or two); it is great to meet "new" people or revisit with folk we might have met at earlier events. BUT we do need to know the numbers attending; please RSVP by October 15 to Judy Powell 204-275-7083 or 204-218-1448; email judy_charliep@hotmail.com, or social@downunderclub.mb.ca

NOVEMBER 2023

Annual General Meeting
Friday, November 24th, 7pm
Scandinavian Cultural Centre,
764 Erin Street, Winnipeg

Our other not-so-formal highlight of the year – when we get to review our raison d'être and our continuous improvement strategy. Any and all input is welcome. Come along and make a difference and enjoy snacks and drinks (the bar will be open).

DECEMBER 2023

Family Christmas Party
Sunday, December 3rd, 4pm
Scandinavian Cultural Centre

Hopefully, Santa still remembers where to come! This is a family fun time, together with a potluck supper. Please bring to share either a main dish, or veggie, salad or dessert. The bar will be open.

FEBRUARY 2024

Australia Day & Waitangi Day
Saturday, Feb 3rd, 2024, 5 pm
Scandinavian Cultural Centre

Date and details are to be confirmed, but we're aiming at a Chili cookoff, so start perfecting your recipes as the weather reminds us how much we love a hot bowl of your finest on a cold day. Bring a plate, whether chili or otherwise.



Golf tournament

What a great day we had for golf. Almost perfect weather for a round. We played at "The Players" course, where we have found over the years to be just the right blend of interesting holes, but still not too hard for golfers of all abilities. And playing best ball, just about every shot is from a good lie in a good position. We were missing a few regulars for this game, and we hope we see you next year.

We had awards for "Closest to the pin" on hole #3, which was won by Charlie, and "Longest drive", which was won after a ruling by the "Rules Committee Chairperson" by our latest recruit, Tanner. For the main prize, the team led by Peter D, of Peter, Ricky, Vishad and Tanner, were determined to be Champions for 2023. They were closely followed by the team led by Charlie, which included Andrew and Peter M. So, keep the golf tournament in mind, we welcome you to

the next golf event – same place, same time, and at the end of August 2024.

– Peter M



Catch-up with Pat McGrath

Thanks to Lucia Barron's hostess-hospitality, a bunch of Club members were able to catch up with Pat McGrath and partner Robyn who were back in Winnipeg from Auckland for a visit. Also present were Phil Munro-Smith and partner Cheryl.

Not-so-Formal Dinner menu

New Zealand 7-point Rack of Lamb per person \$49.50; for each of the other five options per person is \$42.00 – 10 oz New York striploin, Chicken "Manitoba" breast of chicken filled with wild rice, mushrooms and 3 cheese blend, Rib-eye steak and garlic prawns (7 oz rib-eye with 4 jumbo prawns sauteed in garlic butter), Pork medallions with mushrooms and shallots in red wine demi-glace, and Filet of Salmon with creamy basil sauce. Included is a salad of Manitoba field greens with a creamy cucumber and dill dressing, fresh rolls, oven roasted lemon potatoes, chef's vegetables, and coffee or tea. Dessert will be available as an extra.

Land Acknowledgement

The Down Under Club of Winnipeg meets on Treaty 1 territory in the Province of Manitoba and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and gather, and all the lands from whence we came, including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Canada. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.

online



find us on facebook or the web

www.downunderclub.mb.ca

email: info@downunderclub.mb.ca

editorially yours

Charlie Powell



As we remind readers, from time to time, most of the founding members of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg ended up here as a result of their involvement in WWII. More specifically, most had come here for air and navigation training, under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan, before being shipped on to more active duty. Then, having survived, they returned to their Canadian sweethearts who were waiting.

So, again, in this issue are included a couple of airman stories – some from WWI, and some from WWII.

Also, the usual roundup of Club activities and other bits of news we hope you will find interesting and informative.

Be sure to mark the Calendar events in your diaries and note that if you plan to attend the “Not-so-Formal Dinner” you are encouraged to invite/bring a friend(s). Actually, that applies to all Cub events, although you likely won’t get many takers for the AGM.

Thanks again to all who have contributed to this issue – keep the suggestions and articles coming.

Downunder Travel is celebrating 20 great years

Be sure to read DUT’s note in their ad (opposite) and also read Peter Debenham’s kudos to their efforts helping him book his next trip to Australia.

“I have always booked my own trips to Australia online. However, for our next trip in January 2024 I used the services of Jason Webb at Down Under Travel. I decided to book through Jason as there were 13 of us travelling with stops in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. I am so happy I did! Jason booked all our flights at a very reasonable price, better than I could have done, and managed all the different issues for each of the passengers. He explained the visa requirements for Aussies and non-Aussies and was up-to-date with travelling rules, which change all the time. I will be using Jason for all my trips down under from now on.”

– Peter Debenham

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



We recently had a phone call from one of Margaret’s cousins on her father’s side. This lady was planning a birthday event for her father, Margaret’s uncle, and called to invite us to the get-together in MacGregor, about 120 km west of Winnipeg, off Highway #1. Not so unusual, as Margaret keeps in touch with her Uncle Bus by phone, and we often visited him and his wife when they resided in Carman.

The name Bus has been with him since he was a child. Christened Harold, he became Buster, shortened a long time ago to Bus. Bus has been a farmer since day one. He was born on a farm, and worked and owned a farm for his whole life, until he took “retirement”, which involved going back to the old farmhouse on a daily basis. Still an active person, bright as a button, up

to date on current events, and an avid curling fan, the celebration is for his 100th birthday. Yet he is the youngest in the family, as his sister turns 103 on her upcoming birthday. So, we are looking forward to saying hello to him again. He loves a good chat.

Margaret was thinking of all the changes he has seen in his lifetime, especially in technology. The great advances in air travel, the introduction of computers, originally big enough to need a room to accommodate one, and now a device that is basically a million or more times more powerful than that, and we carry it everywhere in our pockets. And the changes in his farm machinery, from iron-wheeled monsters, to the huge, air conditioned, computer-controlled behemoths that bring in crops today.

So, we will be off to MacGregor soon, and join our first celebration of a person’s 100th birthday.

– Peter



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THANK YOU, DUCW!

Downunder Travel Ltd has been honoured with a long and strong relationship with the DUCW. We are celebrating 20 great years in 2024, and all of you have been a very big part of our journey. All bookings made from DUCW members in 2024 will result in a donation of \$50 to the Down Under Club of Winnipeg. Our thanks to you all for your wonderful support and friendships over the last 20 years!

— Sincerely, Jason Webb

For more info:
www.downundertravel.com

Downunder TRAVEL
(403) 270-4414 Phone
1-866-470-4414 Toll Free
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Photos: Jenny Gates

When Haka Rugby came to town

On July 27 and 28, Haka Rugby Global came to town to present their Elite Camp 2023. The group specialises in summer rugby camps and clinics in 20+ countries around the globe, with the focus on the Māori culture, rugby, and developing the sport at the grass roots level.

Local organiser Caleb Stick kept us in the loop, CJOB and Christian Aumell did a live interview, and the Winnipeg Free Press and our friend and community correspondent Simon Fuller published a great article.

The camp was held at the Assassins Rugby Football Club in south Winnipeg, and on the last day we went to check it out. We particularly wanted to see the kids versus parent game that closed out the camp, and got the chance to meet director Regan Sue.

From what we could tell, there was definitely some great talent in the mix, and we look forward to welcoming Haka Rugby back to Winnipeg next year.

DUCW's Facebook Journey, so far

On April 19, 2010, we launched the DUCW Facebook page.

The idea was to provide an online vehicle to promote our club, share information about events, post news from down under, and further our reach into the wider community. To that end, we've posted good news about our members, visitors to town, and general goings on in the club, the city and the province.

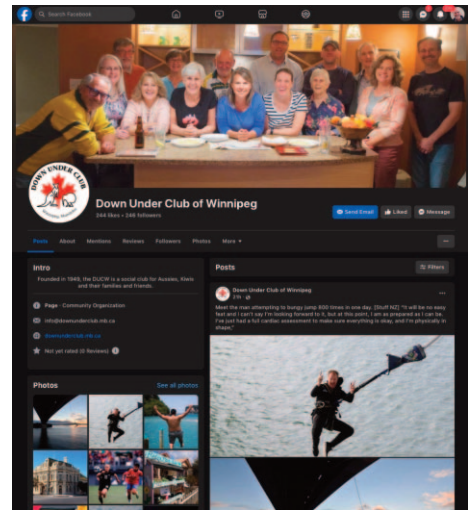
Most of the posts, however, have been light-hearted, quirky and/or interesting news tidbits from a variety of outlets down under – ABC Radio, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *New Zealand Herald*, Radio NZ, Stuff – and other carriers of news about our home countries.

We have posted at least three articles of news every day since we launched 4,865 days ago. So, as a conservative estimate, that's 4,865 days x 3 or 4 articles per day = between 14,595 and 19,460 posts for you to read and enjoy.

Right now, we have 245 followers, as well as a number of drop-in visitors. It might not seem like a lot, certainly when compared to some other sites, but we have a loyal and consistent following of individuals who like to stay informed, entertained, and connected in some way to our great southern lands. They represent all ages from 18+, and readers log in from across Canada, Australia and New Zealand, the US, Mexico, the UK, India, Pakistan, Qatar and Sweden.

It's a lot of work, but it's also loads of fun!

Unfortunately, on August 5, 2023, we hit a brick wall. Due to FB's Canadian news ban – even though our news comes from sources in Aotearoa and Australia – past, present and future posts are being blocked on our feed.



So, if you go to our FB page and scroll way, way back, you will only see on each post the relevant text and the following message: "This content isn't available in Canada".

Although we don't post articles that are political or antagonistic or inflammatory, anything that includes a link to a news outlet has been blocked. Fortunately, we were able to tell you about Jenny and Steve who have reluctantly decided to sell Miss Browns and start something new in the future. And we will let you know what that new venture is and when it's open for business.

The only way around the ban is to continue to post on FB, but only with photos and the title of the article so you can search for it online if you wish.

Who knows how long this will persist, but we will still be here when it's resolved. In the meantime, we will use the site to keep you up on club events and activities, and anything else we have to share. And we will continue to extend our reach into our wider community and support you, our members and friends.

– Jenny Gates

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Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle, the magpies said

[Source: ABC Science, 18Aug2023, by Amy Briggs] This is it ... the people have spoken, and your favourite animal sound is the iconic carolling and warbling of the magpie.

Swooping to a landside victory in our National Science Week 2023 poll with 36 per cent of the vote, magpies clearly won the hearts and ears of Australia.

Magpies' songs echo across most of the country, including in our cities and suburbs.

You can spot them in tribes of up to 24 individuals living in, and actively defending, their territory. While there is just one magpie species in Australia (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), there are up to nine subspecies, which can look quite different.

Down south, for instance, adults tend to have a white back, whereas in the north, they can be almost completely black. What they all have in common is a formidable repertoire of calls. Listen by visiting the QR link.



Cat free

[Source: Australian Wildlife Conservancy, by Brad Leue] AWC has completed the total eradication of feral cats and foxes from a vast 9,570-hectare fenced area at Mallee Cliffs National Park, creating the largest feral predator-free safe haven on mainland Australia and

triggering the largest re-wilding project ever to be undertaken in New South Wales.

This major milestone was achieved as part of AWC's partnership with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The partnership – the first of its kind in Australia – involves restoring at least 10 locally-extinct mammals to Mallee Cliffs under the NSW Government's Saving our Species program.

Feral cats and foxes are responsible for killing 1-2 billion native animals annually in Australia. New Zealand has a similar problem.



Australia



New Zealand



Why not, we (here in WPG) get along OK

[Source: The Conversation, 21August, Dominic O'Sullivan] Big policy ideas usually don't come up in parliamentary valedictory speeches – they're for saying goodbye and thank you. So departing Labour MP Jamie Strange was the exception last week when he made a case for New Zealand and Australia becoming one country.

The main problem, he joked, would be integrating the Australian cricket team. But he talked up the potential economic benefits, and the option does remain open under sections 6 and 121 of the Australian Constitution.

In fact, New Zealand did seriously consider joining the Australian federation in the 1890s. After all, it had been administered as part of the colony of New South Wales for about a year after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

And the relationship was already close. Māori traders began visiting Sydney from the 1790s. Settlers moved back and forth across the Tasman from the earliest contact.



Toha atu toha mai / I share with you, you share with me

[Source: cropswap.co.nz/] Crop Swap Aotearoa was once a tiny seed that fell into fertile New Zealand soil. In September 2014 a bunch of backyard gardeners met in a private house in Merrilands, New Plymouth, Taranaki, and experienced the joy of sharing their garden produce first hand. Crop Swap Merrilands was born, grew bigger, moved into a public hall and inspired people in other suburbs and villages to start their own Crop Swap hubs. We currently have six different venues in Taranaki and one in Thames, Coromandel, where backyard gardeners meet on a regular basis to share their garden's and kitchen's abundance with others. Crop Swap Aotearoa is now a sturdy and healthy plant that is sending its seeds out into the world.



Building Bridges: Bill Youren's Vision of Peace 2023

[Source: New Zealand International Film Festival, by Brannavan Gnanalingam] Farmer, family man, and unlikely leftist organiser Bill Youren gave up a career as a lawyer to live a traditional farmer life in the backblocks of the Hawke's Bay. He was also a zealous supporter of freedom of speech in a political environment, with the backdrop of the Cold War and the 1951 Waterfront Strike, where anyone labelled a Communist was seen as an existential threat.

Youren documented much of his work via his trusty 8mm camera, including his travels around the world and his DIY approach to farming. Youren was convinced that barriers between peoples and cultures could be removed by open dialogue and mutual respect, and he set about living his

life in a way that made such dialogue possible. Youren became a champion for China in New Zealand, including exhibiting some of the cultural artefacts he obtained on his three trips to China (particularly notable in a period when people rarely travelled to China from New Zealand).

Building Bridges: Bill Youren's Vision of Peace is a fascinating account of a man who firmly supported many of the largest social movements in the twentieth century. The centrepiece of the documentary is Youren's footage from his trips to China in the 1950s. With each visit, he documents the subtle changes in how China transformed itself from the ruins of World War II and a brutal Civil War, into one of the dominant twentieth century superpowers. It also captured his growing disillusionment with the way leftist movements shifted over the course of the century. Director John Christoffels has compiled a gentle portrait of an ordinary man capturing extraordinary things.



In 1968, Stedman-Henderson was taken over by Hoadleys, which was itself acquired in 1971 by Rowntree's. Nestlé took over the Rowntree's brand globally in 1981. They are now sold as "Allens Minties" (Nestlé acquired the Allens brand in 1985.) In 1930 or 1931, a factory was set up in Auckland, New Zealand. Cadbury now manufactures the lollies as "Pascall Minties". In November 2009, Cadbury New Zealand announced they were moving production from Auckland to Thailand and changing to a softer formulation that would be less stressful to teeth and may be consumed more quickly. Curiously, the 200g packets sold in Australia as (Nestlé) Allens Minties in 2010 are clearly labelled "Made in New Zealand".



didyouknow...

well, now you do!

[Source Wikipedia] Sir Richard Michael Hill KNZM is a New Zealand jeweller, entrepreneur and philanthropist who founded global jewellery retailer Michael Hill Jeweller in 1979. He retired as the company's chairman in November 2015. He currently resides in Arrowtown and was Ernst & Young's 2008 Entrepreneur of the Year in New Zealand. Born in Whangarei on 23 December 1938, Hill was educated at Whangarei Boys' High School from 1949 to 1954. He left school at 16 to pursue a career as a concert violinist but a year later was told he would have had to start much younger in life to be a noteworthy musician. Hill abandoned his hopes of a career in music and started working for his uncle, Arthur Fisher, at the family jewellery store. On 13 May 1979, Hill opened his own jewellery store nearby, calling it Michael Hill Jeweller. One of his main points of difference was to limit his store's product range to jewellery items, dispensing with silverware, clocks, porcelain and glassware commonly found in other jewellery stores at the time. In 2002 the company opened its first three stores in Canada, and by the end of 2009 the company had 242 stores in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

Hill's daughter, Emma Hill, succeeded him as chairman after the November 2015. Annual general meeting. Although he didn't become a concert violinist, Hill has maintained a strong love for the violin his entire life and continues to play. In 2001 he founded the biennial Michael Hill International Violin Competition "for emerging young violinists". The winner of the competition receives a substantial cash prize, a recording deal for international distribution and a "Winner's Tour" in which the competition winner performs in concert halls around New Zealand and Australia in the calendar year following the competition.



The History of Mateship

On 4 July 2018 Australia and the United States of America celebrated the first 100 Years of Mateship.

The date marked the 100th anniversary of the first time our troops fought side by side in an offensive action, at the Battle of Hamel on France's Western Front. They fought under the command of one of Australia's most revered military leaders, General Sir John Monash.

The battle plan devised by General Monash was radical for its time – it marked the first time tanks had been used as protection on a battlefield for the advancing infantry, and the first time aircraft had been deployed to drop ammunition to ground troops.

General Monash predicted that the offensive would last for 90 minutes. Incredibly it took the Allied forces just 93 minutes to secure victory and turned the tide against the Germans on the Western Front.

Since that day, which helped turn the tide of World War I, Australian and American soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and women have served alongside one another in every major conflict. This is symbolic of the deep and enduring bond, mutual respect and close co-operation that exists between Australia and the United States.



It's moments like these

[Source: Wikipedia] Minties is a brand of confectionery originating in Australia and manufactured in both Australia and New Zealand for their respective markets. They are hard white, chewy, rectangular and mint-flavoured, which on chewing become so sticky that they are notorious for causing dental fillings to come out. Minties are wrapped in waxed paper with a cartoon underneath the logo and the common caption "It's moments like these you need Minties". About 500 million are consumed each year. Minties were invented in 1922 by James Noble Stedman (1860–1944), son of company founder (and Australia's first confectioner) James Stedman (1840–1913). They were patented in 1926, and manufactured by James Stedman – Henderson Sweets Limited at the "SweetAcres" factory at Rosebery, New South Wales. Other well-known lines made at Sweetacres were "Fantales" and "Talky Toffee".

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The reluctant celebrity: New Zealand fighter ace Alan Deere is greeted enthusiastically by female workers at the HMV Gramophone Factory in London. HMV produced radar and communications equipment during the Second World War.

Getting to know Alan Deere

[Source: New Zealand History/ Nga korero a ipurangi o Aotearoa, by Gareth Phipps]

Alan Christopher Deere is possibly New Zealand's most famous fighter pilot of World War II. He was also one of the luckiest, surviving several near-death experiences to become one of the outstanding pilots of the Battle of Britain.

Born in Auckland on 12 December 1917, Deere was working as a law clerk in Whangarei when he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1937. After completing flight training he was posted to No. 54 Squadron along with Colin Gray, who would go on to become New Zealand's top fighter ace of the war.

Deere's first taste of combat came in mid-May 1940 when his squadron was assigned to cover the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from Dunkirk. In the course of one week he destroyed six Luftwaffe (German air force) planes and was shot down himself – returning to base 19 hours later after hitching a ride on a boat across the English Channel. For his efforts during the Battle of France, Deere was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), which was presented to him by King George VI in June 1940.

During the Battle of Britain Deere's squadron was part of Keith Park's famous No. 11 Group, which bore the brunt of the

German aerial assault against London and southeast England. Between July and September 1940 Deere shot down eight more planes, earning another DFC (Bar) in the process.

Deere survived several brushes with death during the campaign. The first was on 9 July 1940 when his squadron was scrambled to intercept an enemy formation near Dover. They discovered a group of Messerschmitt Bf 109 fighters escorting a sea plane, which had been sent to undertake pre-invasion surveys of the English coast. Deere's section immediately engaged the fighter escort and the New Zealander quickly sent a Bf 109 down in flames. He was manoeuvring to attack another fighter

when a German plane suddenly headed straight for him. Locked in a deadly game of chicken, neither pilot gave way and their aircrafts collided. The engine of Deere's Spitfire was severely damaged. Unable to bail out and with his cockpit filling with smoke, he managed to head inland and crash land in the middle of a corn field before bursting into flames. Deere was able to smash his way out and walk away with minor cuts and burns. Remarkably, he was back on patrol the next day.

A few weeks later Deere was shot down again. He had pursued a Bf 109 across the English Channel and shot it down near Calais when he was attacked by five German fighters. Outnumbered, Deere was able to evade his pursuers long enough to reach the English coast, but was forced to bail out of his bullet-ridden Spitfire. Describing this incident, Deere said:

Bullets seemed to come from everywhere and pieces flew off my aircraft. Never did it take so long to cross the Channel. Then my Spitfire burst into flames, so I undid my straps and eased the stick back to gain height before bailing out. Turned my machine on its back and pushed the stick hard forward. I shot out a few feet but somehow became caught up. Although I twisted and turned I could not free myself. The nose of my aircraft had now dropped and was pointing at the ground which was rushing up at an alarming rate. Then suddenly I was blown along the side of the fuselage and was clear. A hurried snatch at the rip cord and, with a jolt, the parachute opened.

As Luftwaffe raids over England intensified in late August 1940, Deere, along with fellow New Zealanders Colin Gray and John Gibson, quickly established himself as an



A restored Spitfire IX, bearing Deere's markings as they appeared during his time at Biggin Hill. At this stage of his career, his Spitfire was personalised with his nickname AL, in large letters on the fuselage. [Wikipedia]

outstanding fighter pilot. Perhaps more importantly, his luck continued to hold.

On 28 August 1940 Deere was forced to bail out over the Kent countryside, landing in the middle of a fully laden plum tree – much to the annoyance of the local farmer. Three days later No. 54 Squadron's airfield at Hornchurch was bombed just as Deere was preparing to take off. Shrapnel tore off a wing and the propeller of his Spitfire, flipping the aircraft over and sending it sliding along the airfield upside down. Deere was dragged out by another pilot, who promptly collapsed and had to be carried to safety by the New Zealander.

Rested in December 1940, Deere had a spell as an Operations Room Controller before returning to operational duty in May 1941 with No. 602 Squadron. Based in Scotland, Deere was one of the pilots scrambled on 10 May 1941 to investigate reports of a lone German plane flying toward Glasgow. He did not make contact with the aircraft, which later made a forced landing on the outskirts of the city. It was discovered later that the pilot was deputy Nazi Party leader Rudolf Hess.

In January 1942 Deere embarked on a short tour of the United States to teach fighter tactics to American pilots. He was back in action three months later, taking command of a Canadian spitfire squadron before being posted to staff duties at the headquarters of No. 13 Group. In February 1943 he was appointed Wing Leader at the Royal Air Force Station at Biggin Hill. He led 121 sorties over the next six months and earned the Distinguished Service Order (DSO). He went on to command the Free French fighter wing through D-Day and the liberation of France before returning to staff duty in England.

Deere finished the war as New Zealand's second-highest-scoring air ace – behind Colin Gray – with 22 confirmed victories, 10 probable victories and 18 damaged. He was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in May 1945 and went on have a prestigious post-war career, including service as Aide-de-camp to Queen Elizabeth II in 1962.

Alan Deere died on 21 September 1995 at the age of 77. Fittingly, his ashes were scattered over the River Thames from a Spitfire.



If Snoopy never shot down the Red Baron, who did?

[Source: ACT Heritage Library, by Michael Hall] On 21 April 1918 the German air ace, Manfred von Richthofen died near Corbie in the Somme valley. Dubbed the “Red Baron”, von Richthofen shot down 80 Allied planes before his death. But who shot the Red Baron?

Von Richthofen had been chasing a Canadian flyer (Lieutenant May) along the Somme valley when they flew low over Australian positions to the east of Corbie. Australian gunners fired at the Red Baron as he passed overhead when suddenly his plane banked to the right and crashed near the Bray-Corbie road. Initially another Canadian pilot Roy Brown, who was above and to the rear of von Richthofen, was given credit but later investigations showed that he was unlikely to have fired the fatal shot.

In his *Official History* Charles Bean suggests that it was probably **Cedric Popkin** who killed the Red Baron, but there are at least two other possibilities favoured by some historians; Gunners **Robert Buie** and **Snowy Evans** from Beavis' 53rd Battery, who were manning Lewis guns when von Richthofen flew by them.



Clive Robertson Caldwell, DSO, DFC & Bar (1911–1994) was the leading Australian air ace of World War II. He is officially credited with shooting down 28.5 enemy aircraft in over 300 operational sorties, including an ace in a day.



George Frederick “Buzz” Beurling, DSO, DFC, DFM & Bar (1921–1948) was the most successful Canadian fighter pilot and flying ace of World War II.

Beurling was recognised as “Canada's most famous hero of the Second World War”, as “The Falcon of Malta” and the “Knight of Malta”, having been credited with shooting down 27 Axis aircraft in just 14 days over the besieged Mediterranean island. Before the war ended his total was 31 or more.



Why the Yarn is late, this time...

This edition of the *Yarn* was particularly delayed as club members Brian (responsible for layout) and Liz were on a long road trip in their campervan out in the Maritimes. Starting in Halifax, Brian circumnavigated Cape Breton with Liz joining him a week later to carry on in Nova Scotia, then PEI, then New Brunswick, and Québec. A fantastic trip, really. You can check out some stories as they catch up with telling them, at www.gutefahrt.wordpress.com



Kingfishers

A couple of outings recently had one thing in common – the belted kingfisher (*Megascops alcyon*). First was when we were camping at the Victoria Park Campground in Souris, MB. The well-treed site is bordered by the Plum Creek and offers the birds plenty of overhanging perches for fish watching. The second sightings were while walking the Seine River South Trail in Winnipeg. Again, the kingfishers were following their usual tactics – sit, watch and wait, then move on to try further along the stream. Unfortunately, they don't seem to like the distraction of nearby humans. But I managed to get a few photos by going to full zoom.

For nesting, they excavate a burrow, which could be as deep as 2 to 4m, in the riverbank soil and line it with grass and leaves.

They incubate 6 to 8 eggs and their diet consists of small fish, frogs, tadpoles, aquatic invertebrates, small birds and rodents. Unlike many birds, the female is more brightly coloured than the male – known as reverse sexual dimorphism.

The belted is native to North America and has several cousins downunder: the azure, little, yellow-billed, collared, forest, red-backed, sacred, and the two kookaburras (blue-winged and laughing). New Zealand shares the azure.

A poem, "Prayer is like watching for the kingfisher" by Ann Lewin

Prayer is like watching for
The kingfisher. All you can do is
Be there where he is like to appear, and
Wait.
Often nothing much happens;
There is space, silence and
Expectancy.
No visible signs, only the
Knowledge that he's been there
And may come again.
Seeing or not seeing cease to matter,
You have been prepared.
But when you've almost stopped
Expecting it, a flash of brightness
Gives encouragement.



Picture this ...

Photographer Jack Zhi's dramatic picture of a female peregrine falcon protecting her young has won this year's Bird Photographer of the Year award. The picture was taken in California and beat more than 20,000 entries to claim the prize.

(Thanks, Dean in Perth)

Dean also sent in these shots of a honeyeater in King's Park, Perth, WA.



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CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.
Station Main, PO Box 1655,
Winnipeg Manitoba Canada R3C 2Z6

info@downunderclub.mb.ca
www.downunderclub.mb.ca
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