

Myrtleford MAGPIE



MYRTLEFORD & DISTRICT NEWSLETTER
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Welcome to the November 2018
edition of *Myrtleford Magpie* – # 10

Christmas Break Up – Lunch



The committee would like to invite all members of join together for Christmas lunch on Thursday December 20 in the main hall of the Myrtleford Senior Citizens Centre from 12.00 to 2.00pm.

To keep it simple, everyone is asked to bring a plate of finger food to share. *As a rough guide people whose surnames start with A – M bring savoury and N - Z bring sweets.* Tea and coffee will be supplied.

We hope you can all come along, share your stories from the past year and enjoy new friendships.

Garden Tour – Friday November 30

As per the email you will have received on 20/11/18, there are still spare seats for the Garden Tour. Contact Jan Mock (0401 064 030) ASAP to book a seat.

Annual General Meeting

All incorporated organisations are obliged to hold Annual General Meetings. We are planning ours towards the end of January, 2019. The date will be published in the next newsletter.

All organisations, like ours, are also dependent on a working committee. This committee will be elected at the AGM.

If you would like to nominate for the committee please do not hesitate – you will be most welcome. A nomination form is attached as part of this newsletter.

Make your own Christmas Wreath

There are still spots available for this activity on 6 Dec.

Recent activities:

Tour of the Old Beechworth Gaol



Razor wire in exercise yard



Cell door

A group of us went on a tour of the Old Beechworth Gaol on Friday 16 November.

This tour is thoroughly recommended by us. Our tour guide was very knowledgeable and has a keen interest in the history of this gaol, and of the penal system in Australia, as a whole.

We were shown the exercise yards, the cells where both men and women were incarcerated and we all got out of there without being detained although we were worried about Gabrielle !!!



This gaol housed both Ned Kelly and his mother Eileen Kelly.

Conditions were barbaric right up until the gaol closed in 2004. There was no heating or cooling in the gaol, with summer temperatures reaching 45C in some of the cells and winter temperatures averaged 2 - 4C, getting down as low as -5C. Flushing toilets were not installed until 1994.

As we all enjoyed the tour we will plan another trip to the gaol next year.

Our Last Speaker for 2018 was Liz Walpole “My Journey to Lacluta”.

Seasoned veteran of the Friendship Agreement between the Rural City of Wangaratta and Lacluta in East Timor, Liz Walpole, was the guest speaker at U3A Myrtleford’s Coffee Afternoon, on Friday 9th November.



Liz spoke about the work of volunteers helping to rebuild East Timor after the devastating events suffered by our tiny neighbour, only 700 kilometres from Darwin.

Pertinent to Liz’s talk were the reasons why, what was formerly Portuguese East Timor, was left in ruins with 100,000 dead and 75% of the infrastructure in ruins. It began in 1974 when, after 500 years of colonisation, the Timorese Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) declared East Timor independent.

Immediately Indonesian West Timor infiltrated, beginning a twenty-four year period during which human rights were violated. Murder, forced relocation and economic and cultural suppression were the norm.

In 1979 Australia, motivated by the need for oil and gas rights in the resource rich Timor Sea, was the only western nation to formally recognise Indonesia’s sovereignty over East Timor, giving tacit approval for the invasion.

Sukarno, the Prime Minister of Indonesia, was deposed in 1999, and East Timor held a referendum

to vote for independence. Of the population 99% voted, and 78% voted to be independent. Again East Timor was attacked, this time by Indonesian military backed militia, with genocidal intent. Fortunately the United Nations stepped up and sponsored an Act of Self Determination forcing Indonesia to retreat, creating the first new Sovereign state of the 21st century.

In 2003 Premier Bracks set up Friendship Groups between Victorian cities and areas in Timor Leste to raise funds to assist with the reconstruction of East Timor and public meetings were held to attract interested people.

In 2008 three members of the Wangaratta group travelled to Timor to see for themselves, what could be done. The flight from Darwin to Dilli took one and a half hours. The road trip to Lacluta, 220 kilometres, took eight hours. The road was almost impassable. They found inadequate housing and little or no health care and schooling. Infant mortality rates were astronomical. There was limited access to clean water and no power. Food sources were inadequate. Over time and over several visits from members of the Wangaratta group, changes have included power to some villages, central water points, new school buildings and renovations to existing structures. Cement blocks are being made to create better housing, and importantly a Health clinic with a Birthing Centre has been set up.

Schooling has been increased to include secondary and has extended into the mountainous areas. Pre-school now receives support as a teacher is being funded and another trained.

The lack of doctors was solved with the intervention of Cuba, who trained Timorese doctors and locals have been trained to repair necessary items such as pumps and generators. A recent development has been assistance from China.

Current projects for the “Friends of Lacluta” include university and vocational scholarships, encouragement awards, educational equipment, mentoring children and assisting with accommodation. Liz Walpole’s own special project is to provide girls with aids to manage menstruation so that they do not remain absent from school. Liz has spent four weeks every year for eight years visiting and working to improve the lives of the East Timorese people and with her colleagues is to be greatly admired for her incredible effort.

Our thanks go to Liz Walpole, for her educational and enlightening talk.

Coffee afternoons with a speaker will commence again in February.