

MALA MESSENGER

Newsletter of the Mature Adults Learning Association Inc. Rockingham Branch

MAY 2020

FROM THE CHAIR

COVID-19 still has us in its grip and has certainly changed the goalposts when it comes to 'normal'. I am sure most people are coping and readjusting to the new reality of life, where self-reliance is the key. How lucky are we to have telecommunications. It is no substitute for a hug from the grandchildren or a movie and coffee with a friend, but it does keep us in touch in a way previous generations could only dream of as one of the articles this month will illustrate only too well. I remember well my mother talking of a time when yellow ribbons were tied to the gates of homes that had lost members to the 1918 Spanish Flu, and of a quarantine centre set up for those coming into Kalgoorlie by train. Today we have much to be very grateful for.

Thanks for the patience of those who requested a refund, we did have a few teething problems with the change to electronic banking, but hopefully that is all sorted now.

Many thanks to the wonderful members who have rallied around with tales to share. I think you will agree the diversity of topics is fantastic. I think many of you will recognise bits of your own memories in these pieces.

And for those missing their travel options just remember:

"You can never really get away, you can only take yourself somewhere else"

And maybe it is time to hop under Grandma Blackburn's Mental Umbrella:

"Always prepare for the worst. If it happens, you are prepared, if it doesn't, you will be pleasantly surprised"

Bronwen Usher – Chair



CONTRIBUTIONS

Our first contribution comes from Esther

THE CREEK

Memories of a young girl - Third and Fourth Avenue area in Bassendean in the 1940 - 1950's

I remember the Creek as we called it when I was growing up. My family and I lived in 13 Third Avenue Bassendean, we owned a house block, on which our home was built and we had another block, where we kept our milking cow, grew our veggies, and buried our household rubbish in the War time.

My memory of playing down the Creek, was with the neighbouring kids, catching gilgies, and other little creatures, and having great adventures. When some of us were in trouble at home we would go down to the creek to reflect and think about what we had done wrong. Quite often other neighbouring kids, who could have had problems as well and were there.

I can remember a few times when the Creek overflowed – but fortunately for us the water mostly ended up down at the Swan River, as it was a tributary from some area, I am not sure where. I remember once the cow's block got flooded and my eldest brother Doug, rowing down the middle in the cows chaff bin, what fun.

There was vacant land on the other side of the street from our house and on Guy Fawkes' Day the whole street came together to have a great bonfire to celebrate. We would eat sausages, burn up the rubbish that we had been saving for this date, have lots of crackers, and it was a great time to meet new residents.

Our neighbour across the Creek were the McDeirmads, an Irish couple, whose son Peter lived with them, and occasionally their grandson Robert came. I clearly remember when I was a bit older watching Robert swinging off the tail of their milking cow, I was not impressed. I was very fond of our cows.

The neighbours surrounding where we lived were the Lyons. They lived at the back of us past our cow yard. Later they moved down to a Timber Mill out of Bunbury, and we did visit them, as I was friends of the daughter. The family living next to the Lyons were named Geary I think. On the opposite side of the road from them was a Mrs O'Leary, whose daughter Mary married an American man, Max Kitchens. After the War time they came back from America to live in Bassendean. Max Kitchens was famous in starting a Soft Ball Team in Bassendean called the Bassendean Bombers.

The elderly people on the other side of the O'Leary's were called Mr & Mrs Ackland, a nice gentle couple who lived there until they passed away. I'm not sure who had this property after that. Life then was so simple and so much fun.

Many a child today would envy the simplicity and freedom of Esther's early years.



More from the Bard

I hope this finds you all “as merry as the day is long” (Much Ado about Nothing/King John) although these are not at all times for the “feint hearted” (Henry VI).

For those of you who have ventured out having been “eaten out of house and home” (Henry IV Pt II) or who are on a “wild goose chase” (Romeo and Juliet) for toilet paper and disinfectant, may you all return safe and well. I can’t help but see “in my mind’s eye” (Hamlet) the days when we were “fancy free” and shopping for essentials was a “foregone conclusion” (Othello).

It would be wonderful if in “one fell swoop” (Macbeth) we could defeat this virus and see it “dead as a doornail” (Henry VI Pt II), but alas in reality the “game is afoot” (Henry IV Pt I) and we must “cry havoc and let loose the dogs of war” (Julius Caesar), isolating ourselves until we can “send it packing” (Henry IV Pt I).

Hopefully the time will soon come “Full circle” (King Lear) and we can all meet up again at MALA.

So mindful that “brevity is the soul of wit” (Hamlet) I will conclude, with again many thanks to Martin.



Read and Recommended by Members

“This Changes Everything - Capitalism Vs The Climate” by Naomi Klein

An intense read but well worth the effort. This book tackles the most profound threat that humanity has ever faced, pandemics included, that of the war our current economics first driven model is waging against life on earth itself. It is very well written and very accessible read, despite the complex topic.

If you have read a look you loved, why not share it – Just a quick paragraph will do to let others know about the pleasure they could get from a good read.



A very different contribution from Steven Sims

Hi,

as we are living through our own COVID-19 pandemic I thought the following may be of interest to the MALA newsletter readers & others.

I have a few original letters written by my grandmother in 1919 - making them over **100** years old. The letters are to my grandfather and are a personal account of a time of great worry and change as World War I ended & a new terror started - the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-20.

The letters tell of my grandmother's worry and thoughts as she sees streets being decimated by the "plague", her 'soap' man die, her extra stress in her Textile Trade as her workmates get the sickness and she finds solace in Biblical passages among other things.

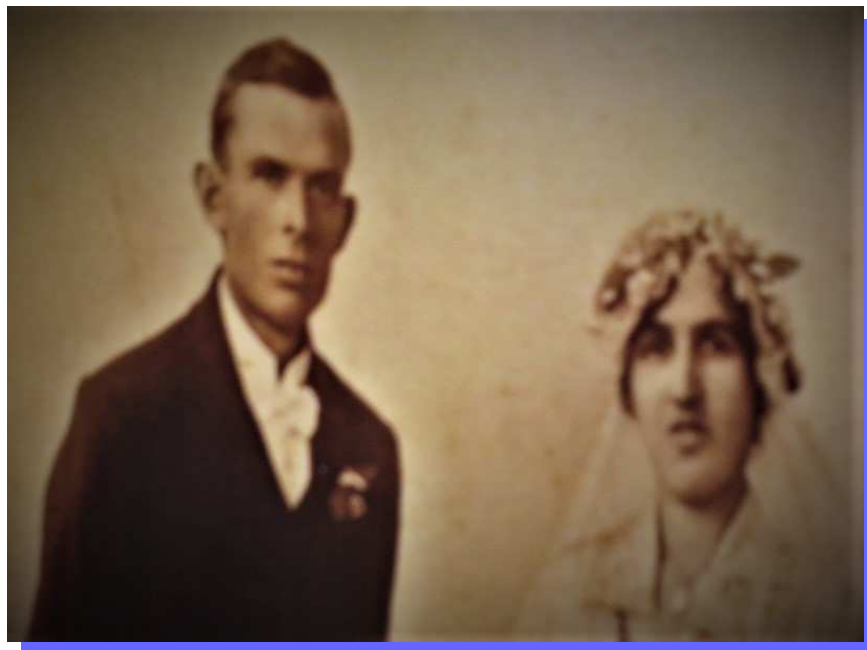
I never got to meet this lady, she married my grandfather in 1921 and had one child in 1922, my dad. She died of pneumonia in 1936 (14 years before I was born) so these letters are like an 'echo' from times past also relating to now - **they got through it so can we** - rest in peace grandma!



Young Elsie with Family circa 1895



Phillip 1916



Phillip and Elsie 1921

service. The deceased was a native of Sussex (England). He visited Great Britain several times after he was 83 years of age, and was in some exciting scenes on the bosom of the "great waters" during the war-time spell. We may give next Saturday an interesting illustration dealing with some of his vicissitudes, after undergoing rescue subsequent to a torpedoing incident.

Arthur St
Granville
July 16 19

Dear Phillip

Received your letter of the 9th. & I am glad you take
our letters like you do. I must tell someone how I feel about
things, you would understand me telling you to be careful of
the flu, if you could see the funerals go along Sydney Rd.
they cannot be buried quick enough, the saddest cases are,
when both Mother & Father are taken, & a young family left.
you say you are only having it mild but you must watch it,
restrictions will not stop it, if once it gets a hold, & you
are taken very sudden. But it says in the Bible Phil, about
all these things coming to pass, Wars, plagues, strikes, etc.
so it cannot help it self, it is what Mr Martin calls
the signs of the Times your mom & Dad know Mr Martin
he is a seven way Adventist, I am thankful to say we
are all keeping well. We were all glad to hear Frank's
safe home. It is as you say Phil, the returned soldiers are
making our trade busy, I have had a hard time of it,
since I write to you last, Mrs Coglin, the other troupe para
could not work on account of sickness, so I have been
working nearly every night & day, for some time, so
one knew how I felt by the week end, never mind,
I have got over it, things I hope will be normal again.

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Well Phil it is a blessing to know Peace is signed, to be hoped
it will be lasting peace. Things will never be the same again,
erist this strike terrible, it must make it bad for you, I have
felt gas down in the dumps at times lately, what with one thing
& another, I am thinking I am a bit of a coward. The children
have gone with Mum & Dad to the park, it is the childrens
day, as I am by myself, I hope to go down to Sydney tomorrow
going out does not worry me, I generally feel any how coming
home, its because I do not go out enough, I had a p.c.
from Annie, I would ^{not} be surprised to see them on Sunday,
although it is rather cold for going home yet, we are having
heavy frosts, Arthur gave me a good whistling canary,
he goes in for keeping a number, & makes something out of
them, I have not heard anything of Mrs Woodman, will
have to go down, in case they are sick,
our poor old soap man died Phil, he was dead when I was
last, but we did not find out until later, I will never
forget him, he lived to see the war end. Well Phil I will close
now hoping all your people are well, Wishing you good luck
& health from yours: Sincerely. Elsie. A. P.

Arthur St
Granville
Tuesday

Dear Phillip

I received your letter this morning, I was pleased to hear you were so near home, & safe. You must have started soon after you wrote your last letter in Belgium. I received the address delivered by the Bishop of Amiens, it was good, to be hoped they will ever think of our dead, you must have patience to write it all out. I also received photo, thank you for both. I only have four photos of you. I expect you have seen the group we had taken at Demas. I am screwing up my face as usual, it was a very windy day. We have had glorious weather for Easter, could not wish for better. I think we have such a lot of sickness about, we never know who is going to be stricken next. It is a plague alright: over the town a Mr Lomas, the same name as yourself, was taken with pain in the back, & lasted a short time & when he died, the body fell to pieces. a young married woman I know, buried her husband last week. also her sister-in-law in the same str.

it is terrible alright. I am not frightened of it, but
you can't help worrying. We had father had with
a cold last week, so kept him in bed. We must
hope for the best: it is terrible to be cut off so sudden.
I was down to see Mrs Woodman. she is expecting Mr
Woodman, but was not sure when he would come.
Annie was there, so you can guess we done some
talking. Mother told me to tell you to be sure to
Frank, Annie has another pup. He loves pups.
Poor Frank, I bet he grieved not getting home the same
time as you. We are looking forward to seeing you
but by no means come while this influenza is raging.
It may fade away like it did in New Zealand
or all God's good of mine, took me for a drive
round the hills yesterday, Easter Monday, it was
such a nice day, in the morning, I was mending
Lulu's pants. Poor Les, he is the real old married
man. Well Phillip, you must have had a good
trip home. You have seen a bit of the world abroad.
You will like Annie I am sure, they are like a
pair of kids. They were going to bring the little
girl up to show us the other Sunday, we have
not seen her yet. but Annie is nervous about
the influenza. Well Phillip I will close with
kind regards to you & people. Yours sincerely
Elsie G. G.

Thanks so much to Steven for sharing just a couple of his Grandmother's letters of 1919. They will give a graphic insight into the **true** isolation and uncertainty that a pandemic brings. No internet, no medical cures, little aid at all. All that with a war going on and loved ones overseas. How lucky are we today, let's take strength from their survival and tenacity in the face of such odds.



On a lighter note from Charles and Eleanor

Dear MALA Friends,

The Virus Enemy has stopped our meetings. So I am now writing my next book about our medical experiences (Eleanor and I) over the years. She is my proof reader and critic! We work together in these special isolating days. (We share our viruses!)

Bronwen told me about your Newsletter. She suggested I might make a contribution.

My immediate thought was to write about 'keeping our brains alive'. If I really knew how to do that, everyone would be at our door. But I do know one way: learn a 'new language'.

And not just a regular language; most activities can be a 'new language', a new stimulus to the brain, forming new brain connections, and even creating new brain cells. For example, Art History is a 'new language' for me – but I never hear Carl, his sessions are the same time as mine.

However, the Science of Medicine, though not a new language to me, is a 'new language' to many of you. I hope that my talks have been a 'new language' for you; **me helping you keep your brains alive**. What you don't know is that discussions with you are a 'new language' for me; **you helping keep my brain alive**.

Bronwen gave me mala.org.au ! I saw Martin's contribution "Anyone for Shakespeare?"

Being but a poor doctor, I responded with medical quotes, not so erudite, but fun.

- ◆ An alcoholic is someone who drinks more than his doctor!
- ◆ The superego is that part of the personality that is soluble in alcohol.
- ◆ One tequila, two tequila, three tequila, floor!
- ◆ Frank Burns: *"Margaret, I should warn you that alcohol is quite fattening."*
- ◆ Hot Lips Houlihan: *"That's alright Frank, I plan on throwing up later."* (for M*A*S*H fans)

Don't be misled: I cannot, officially, approve of alcohol (except when medicinal!); these quotes were merely those that started with A.

Perhaps I can give short pieces, from the book of our medical life, for your newsletter from time to time. Any suggestions? Though I do have plenty of my own!

Stay safe, stay happy, and very best wishes. Charles and Eleanor



THAT'S ALL FOLKS

Let us hope that by the next edition of the Messenger things will be on the up and there is a little more light at the end of the tunnel.

Bronwen Usher

