



FOREST HILL HAPPENINGS

No 36

President: Stuart Williams

22 April 2020

STU'S SCRIPT

A big thank you to Bill for organizing our 2 Zoom meetings on Monday night. The 7pm Club meeting was followed by a Club Board Meeting.

I have sent hard copies of Happenings to Barbara Searle. I hope you are all doing Ok during this lock down time. We are fortunate. A good health system. Fairly compliant population and no curfew like Sri Lanka, much of Africa and even parts of Britain.

We are all planning on Rotary continuing. Please check out the District website. www.9810rotary.org.au/ Go to the District Assembly page. Register for the appropriate session for you. Training for club office bearers in 20/21 will be on-line and not the group type District Assembly.

I have enjoyed the contributions from people who have interacted with our club over the last 30 years. Understanding the experience of others certainly puts our disruption in perspective. If you have a friend in a country overseas maybe you can ask that person to write a half page reflection of what is happening in their country. Chris Tuck told us that his son was impacted in Qatar.

Thinking of you all, hope to zoom in again with you next Monday evening.

Stay safe, stay sane.

Stuart.

NEXT MEETING

Monday 27th April at 7.00pm in the Zoom Room.

Our numbers have increased each week but I know a number of members are still experiencing difficulty with getting on-line. Keep trying and give me a call if you think I can help or you would like to check your connection before the next meeting. Bill

ALPACAS – DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ

(Except this, of course!)

As most of you know, Christine and I have had a farm of about 1000 acres for over 30 years, (either at Longwood near Euroa or for about 3 years near Albury) with almost all of the time breeding sheep, either Merino or crossbred ewes. We have also had as freeloaders amongst other animals, foxes. Foxes can do horrendous damage in a lambing flock, especially when lambs are newborn, and also when there are multiple births, because Mum wants to go looking for feed and has difficulty if both lambs don't go in the same direction. There are three ways of control of foxes, either shooting, poisoning with 1080, or guard animals, being either alpacas or Maremma dogs.

Of these methods on our property, the safest place for a fox to be is in front of my rifle, so I gave that method up early in the piece. By the way, a few of the local farmers would each year go out together and they might get 100 or 150 foxes in a weekend, so they are a real problem. We did a lot of poisoning, and to give an example, when we were at Gerogery, one year I put down 150 baits and found evidence of 19 dead foxes, even though it is said that most 1080 foxes die in burrows, so I often wonder how many we actually killed. By the way we lay the baits under the ground in meat and therefore the only animals that get it are dogs, cats and foxes, which can dig up the bait.

So, we wanted something else. Maremma dogs are very good, but weren't any good for us as we did not live full-time on the property and they need to be fed each day, whereas alpacas graze exactly the same as the sheep. We read many articles about them – there was no internet in those days – and we were informed they needed to be put in their own paddock when it was not lambing season, and the usual way to move them was using people in a row with a barrier such as electrician's plastic pipe.

Well, how to give us a headache!

Firstly, you can't use sheep dogs to move alpacas, as dogs look like foxes, so the alpacas want to kill them and they will continue to charge at them. Then, with the plastic pipe, we gave that away, after trying it a number of times and the bl..... alpacas would suddenly bolt around the side of it, so, taking the easy way out we decided to leave the alpacas with sheep. We also found that when we weaned the lambs it was better to leave them with the weaners (as they are usually quite scatterbrained and will run off in all directions or crowd up together trying to suffocate each other), but when left with the alpacas the weaners were much calmer and would just follow the alpaca – all too easy for a usually frustrating job.

Alpacas are always considered to be spitters – which they are, and the stuff is putrid - and hard to handle, but we found if you grabbed one around the neck and as I used to describe to people, hug it hard towards you like your girlfriend, they are placid and easy to drench or vaccinate.

The official way of shearing them was to lie them on a flat surface, pull and tie front legs forward and hind legs back, someone holds the head down and the shearer does his job, one side first, then unties and reties on the other side, and so on. Blimey, a real performance. We asked our regular shearers if they would have a go. So, at the end of sheep shearing, an alpaca was dragged out, then someone sat him on his rump like a sheep and held it, whilst the shearer did his job. The third person had the oil can because whereas sheep's wool is naturally greasy, alpacas' fleece is not; in addition

alpacas love to roll around in the dust which infiltrates the dry fleece so the oilcan was used every 3 or 4 blows of the shears, or whenever the handpiece started smoking and you could see the metal of the combs and cutters getting pink in colour. It took a quarter of the time and there was almost no spitting by the alpaca. I should have mentioned that when we cleaned up the shearing shed after the first year's alpaca shearing, the walls were decorated for meters with olive green vomit.

Originally, we heard that you put two in a mob, but we found that if we did that, they would often stay together in a corner of the paddock talking about their knitting or the weather, often away from the ewes and lambs. As a result, we would put one per paddock, and always have an empty paddock between paddocks with ewes and lambs.

Alpacas have fantastic eyesight and alertness and it was this ability that alerted us to strange trespassers in one of our paddocks. Two men decided that they wanted to go ferreting for rabbits with no by your leave or anything, just opened the gate and helped themselves. If the alpacas hadn't been staring in that direction we would never have known.

Finally, we were very sorry when we saw them go at the clearing sale. We had bought six originally, one died, but we had the other five for about 12 or 13 years, and they all had names and we reckoned they improved our lambing percentage by about 20%. They would see a fox come towards the mob, so they would chase and try to trample it, just as they tried to do when our sheep dog was moving the mob of ewes and lambs.

Warwick & Chris Stott

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

We have been very lucky to have contact with a number of Exchange Students and GSE members who have been associated with the club over a long period. We have featured letters from various countries over the last couple of newsletters and continue today. These contacts have really demonstrated how the COVID-19 virus has spread world wide and had massive effects on people and economies. It makes you realize we are not alone in this stressful time and that we are, in fact, better off than many other countries and communities.

Marie France Metras in France

MF came to Melbourne as a 21 year old in the 90's for six months on study exchange. Robbie & I offered to be her "support" while she was here. She is now married to Pierre and has Camille (20), Pauline (just turned 18) and Christophe (almost 14). They live a few kms from the end of one of the two Marseilles metro lines. They bought a few hectares of land which was the top of a hill facing the coast and built 4 houses inside a fenced off compound for their families to live in. They live in the highest one with a glasshouse covered swimming pool. The other families never moved into the other houses. We have stayed with them a few times and their whole family came and stayed with us a few years ago with MF visiting the club.

France is in lock down since the middle of March. MF said

"I am the only one to go shopping once a week. I need an authorization to go out. We need written authorization if we want to do some sport, go more than 1km around the house, go to work or to visit someone who needs help.

All the shops are closed except supermarkets. We don't watch the TV ... too many fake news. Yes, people had crazy behaviour at the beginning of the confinement (no pasta, no rice, no toilet paper !!!); but now the situation is very calm because they realize the supermarkets are full....As it is Spring I am catching up on working in the garden doing all those things that have been needed years ago”.

Schools have closed and the teachers send lessons and exercises daily. Pauline is in her final school year and has daily Zoom meetings with her teachers. Camille was away at Art College but has come back home to live and continue her artwork which is photographed and sent to her teachers.

Pierre helps run the family small goods factory so still goes to work every day though sales are down as people buy less.

MF was the family company book keeper but about two years ago left to do a full time wine course and when that was finished they bought a house in Bandol about 50kms from Marseilles which she has been converting into a holiday home. It is ready to go and the website is just finished but the virus has put the project on hold. (Look at www.villadivine.fr).

Bandol is one of the wine regions mainly, rosé and reds, with Mourvedré grape dominant (added by Ron).

They have heard that life will start to get back to normal in May with schools starting on 4th May but nothing is certain yet. Twice a week they have ZOOM “aperitif” with their friends. She said “ZOOM is a great app. Funny to talk and have a drink with our friends without moving from the living room.... Unfortunately the economy is suffering a lot and if the situation lasts, it will be a real economic disaster”.

Yes, we are living a crazy time everywhere in the world. I hope the Aussies won't have to cope with this new disaster too long, after the fires...

What a sad period ...

Marie France

Teressa was a member of a GSE team from the USA.

The COVID-19 crisis hit at an interesting time for me. Shortly after returning from a vacation in Antigua during the first week of March, it became apparent that the crisis was becoming real and that impacts would be felt by everyone.

I work as a contract fundraising and marketing professional primarily serving non governmental organizations. I had designed a fundraising mailer for one of my largest clients shortly before leaving for Antigua. Upon my return, my client and I came to a decision that the piece needed to be completely redesigned and rethought to acknowledge the current state of the world. This actually meant that I was paid more for my services, and so far, it is looking like the organization may receive more contributions than they did for this annual mailing last year.

In addition to my work as a contractor, I work as a watercolour painter. For the past year, I had been pouring all of my efforts into creating a body of artwork for a solo exhibition to be held from March 21 to April 22, 2020, in Tucson, Arizona.

Three days before I was to hang this exhibition, it was cancelled. I still have no idea if I will receive a future opportunity in lieu of this one. I had invested significant time and supply costs in preparation for this show, and I was grateful that an online marketing effort I launched resulted in my ability to sell 24 of these paintings and recoup some of my expenses. While I remain disappointed by the opportunity lost, I am very grateful for the support I received from so many at this difficult time.

My husband and I were under contract to purchase a home during this time as well. We had felt fortunate to find anything we could afford in the very competitive Phoenix, Arizona, housing market. We worried a bit that something could happen to impact the sale, but successfully closed on the purchase on March 24. Since that time, we have watched that market slow significantly. While we love our home, we certainly wonder if we would have found something for less if we had purchased just a few weeks later after this crisis hit.

Phoenix is the fifth largest city and tenth largest metropolitan area in the United States, but has seemed to remain more "open" during the COVID-19 crisis than many US states. We were into the month of April before hair salons were ordered closed, for example. Restaurants remain open but for takeout orders only, and they are clearly struggling. Many retail establishments are exempted from the order to close, but most are limiting the number of customers inside and there may be a wait to enter (6 feet apart in line!). Thankfully, moving companies were exempted and we were able to take up residence in our new house. Last I saw, Arizona was ranked 36th of the 50 states overall in terms of impact.

As someone who works from home, the impact of this virus on me personally has not felt as significant as I know that it has for many. I have many home improvement projects, painting ideas, and some contract work to keep me busy. My husband has been working from home some, but he also still has to go into the office a few times a week, as he works in manufacturing. He has been given a letter to demonstrate his "essential" status if questioned. Honestly, the place I feel the impact the most is the grocery store, where I continue to see large empty spaces on the shelves (especially for items like toilet tissue, pasta, flour, meat, and peanut butter) and many people wearing face masks. That environment feels like a surreal experience.

I very luckily do not know anyone personally who has had the virus. A friend of mine in Kentucky lost her grandmother to it, and my mother has a friend in Indiana who is ill with it currently but is expected to recover. As far as I am aware, that is as close as it has impacted people I know.

Sending all my best wishes for health in Australia!

Sincerely,

Teressa L. Jackson

Jac Vilasini Nair GSE 2012/13 from Malaysia.

COVID-19 outbreak forced a lockdown on us starting 18th March 2020. Lesson learned, staying home was not fun at all. However, being part of the management team in a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur, I had to still work from home on the first three weeks. I could say that the 3 weeks were real nerve-breaking experience since my small home is not built with bright light, office chairs or even high-speed internet. My town, Kota Damansara become a 'Red Zone' on the 2nd week and police road-block were everywhere. Stressful. Many Malaysian were out panic-buying on the 16th - 17th March and supermarkets had shortage of food and basic necessities throughout the first week.

I barely slept 2 hours a day in the first 2 weeks, I was missing and worried over my family who live 5 hours up north (by road), in a different state, Kedah. We Face-time every day with updates on Covid -19 and other information. Finding ways to send facemasks and gloves to my daughter and parents was a big challenge. Both the items were not available in almost all the pharmacies due to panic buyers.

From the beginning of the 4th week, I began to go to office 3 times a week. Currently MCO is on week 5 here. This long unexpected staycation, opened us to many new lessons. Many daily-wager were out of food, many foreigners could not afford healthcare, many started blaming specific groups and many didn't dream that the sky would fall down.

Covid-19 made the Sapiens brighter, with many colours and shades.

Panic buyer didn't take a minute to think of everyone else. Those who had money bought it all but those with daily wagers got stuck. Politicians printed their face on rice bags and give it to selected people and was fishing for publicity. The minority or the poor was very much neglected.

Many fell into depression, being away from family and being lockdown. It is an unexplainable situation as in Kuala Lumpur, 70-80% population live in high raised building (some don't even have a balcony). Children were suffering most. However, depression is spelt differently for the rich and poor. For cure, the rich just wanted to go out, while the poor wanted to commit suicide. Dead of senior people left alone, domestic violence and even robbery are headlining every day.

Vendors, food industry and a few SMEs were all shaken up. Although, the banks had declared to postpone all housing and car loans for 6 months, the thereafter was still very frightening to think about. Some good landlords agreed not to collect rental, but not all. Many NGOs going around sending basic necessity to those who need them. Some team help despite all odds and there is also some that politicise the situation to their benefit. Many frontlines did not go home or had send their young children to relative's house till it is safer time. Some of my friends through face book had collected money and send food (basic rice, flour, cooking oil and dhal) around to some poor around Sungai Buluh area. Not sure how long we could do this or if it was enough.

Astonishingly, many front liners namely doctors, nurses and policeman were showing great examples and praised by netizens. The special thanks should go to Datuk Dr Noor Hisham, the Director General of Health Malaysia and his team, as they are the main reason Malaysia is recovering and managing the crisis very well. I am sincerely hoping and counting that MCO can be lifted by mid-may, however the international border should continue to quarantine everyone for 14 days before allowing them into the country.

While Facebook is keeping everyone close and entertained, many shares picture of food they prepared, laugh to silly tiktok or jokes, created games, asking survey questions, news, critics, laugh & tears together old memories, all just to kill time.

Regards to all, Jac.

WHY DID YOU JOIN ROTARY?

101 Reasons for Rotary (Well almost!)

Rotary gives members personal satisfaction
Rotary is great for teaching members new skills
Rotary members are never lonely, (or in self isolation, really)
Rotary is a team effort
Rotary members work towards improving the community.

Rotary provides students with confidence building programs
Rotary offers so many opportunities to youth
Rotary assists youth in better international understanding
Rotary gives students global opportunities
Rotary provides students with leadership training

To be involved in activities in the community we live in.

To make a difference in the lives of members of my community including all age groups such as youth projects.

To meet other people from my local community from different backgrounds.

To meet and influence businesses, government and influencers in the community to get projects done or to escalate issues.

To stay socially aware of what is happen in my local district

To stay mentally and physically active and relevant.

To be inspired by people around me to do more.

These were submitted by three of our members. See if you can add to them and we just might get to 101!!

SEE!!! WE ARE NEVER ALONE IN ISOLATION

Unless we choose to be.



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