NEWSLETTER FOR OCTOBER 2025

Ver – 27 sept draft

Greetings, Plett U3A members!

1 PLETT U3A EVENTS CALENDAR

Jan has prepared a one-page calendar of planned future events for your convenience: see below. You will note that this calendar includes a summary of all of the Monday programmes at Formosa Garden Village. The outings and presentations are highlighted in RED …. Remember that the full calendar is available on the website.

DATE			EVENT	TIME	LOCATION
Mon	**6**	**OCT**	**BULLSH!T - 50 Fibs That Made South Africa - Talk by Jonathan Ancer**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Wed	**8**	**OCT**	**From Footlights to Fishing - Talk by David Hall-Green**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**13**	**OCT**	**South African Shoreline - Richards Bay to Kosi Bay**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Wed	**15**	**OCT**	**ANNUAL LUNCH**	**12:30 – 3pm**	**Ouland Royale**
Mon	**20**	**OCT**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - Earliest Explorers & Xuanzang's Journey to the West**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**27**	**OCT**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville, Portugal's Great Leap Forward**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**3**	**NOV**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - The Enigmatic Christopher Columbus & Captain Cook Maps of the World**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**10**	**NOV**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - Alexander Von Humboldt - Explorer Genius & Jefferson dispatches Lewis and Clark**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**17**	**NOV**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - Sir John Franklin's Epic Disaster & Japan Discovers the West**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**
Mon	**24**	**NOV**	**History's Greatest Voyages of Exploration - Dr Livingstone and Mary Kingsley in Africa & The Race to Outer Space**	**10 – 11am**	**Formosa Garden Village**

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Welcome to new members

Welcome to the following new members who joined Plett U3A in September:

Linda Batt

Jenny Holton

Renée Leger

Sally Moon

Lesley Murray

Chris Roux

Our membership now stands at 218.

3 REVIEW OF OUTING TO GRAAFF REINET

Firstly a big thank-you to Beth who prepared the following report and who also took the pictures. We don't usually report on past events in this news letter but we made an exception in this case because, from all accounts, it was enjoyed by all and gives members, existing and potential, an idea of what U3A in Plett can offer.

Here is a group picture of the members who took part in the outing. It was taken at the Valley of Desolation which is close to Graaff Reinet and a well-known attraction.



Here is a view of the Valley taken from the lookout point where the group picture was taken. There was always a lot of alien vegetation here such as prickly bears and bug trees but the eradication efforts by Park staff seem to be paying off.



Beth now reports as follows:

Graaff-Reinet Historical & Fossil Trip – 2-5 September

Following months of preparation and anticipation our group of 27 members from U3A Plett gathered at the Coldstream Restaurant in Graaff-Reinet in the late afternoon of Tuesday 2 September. After a welcome drink, the group was entertained to a talk by Johan Minnaar, a local businessman who has a lengthy connection to the town. The town is the 4th oldest South African Town, & he described the early settlers' way of life, interactions with local Khoi, and between English and Afrikaans residents during the Boer War years. Thereafter we were treated to a plated dinner by the Restaurant.

The next morning we met our guide, Prof Bruce Rubidge, at 9am at the Karoo Origins Museum. Bruce has been at the University of the Witwatersrand for over 35 years and combines light humour, his knowledge of geology and his speciality of palaeontology, with an easy manner and encouraged interaction and questions from our group. This brand-new museum contains thousands of fossils of pre-dinosaur creatures from millions of years ago. These items were all found within a 100km radius of the town, by Stanley Rubidge, Bruce's grandfather. Bruce guided us through the museum with explanations of the topographical layout of the land as it would have been when these creatures were alive, and descriptions of the various species. and described how the climate and geography affected them. The fossils have recently been transferred to this facility, which will maintain the collection as well as promote palaeontology research and tourism in the area. By late-morning we were on our way to Nieu Bethesda to view the Kitching Fossil Centre there. After a quick lunch at Zalig's restaurant, we were joined by a local guide, and walked out onto the bed of Gats River. The rocks comprising the base of the river contain many fossils which are still embedded, but clearly visible. Bruce encouraged us to spread out and search for similar examples for ourselves, which was great fun. Some members then chose to visit the Owl House before heading back to Graaff-Reinet, to enjoy the rest of the evening at their own pace.

On Thursday morning we gathered at Reinet House, the large museum at the opposite end of Parsonage Street from the Drotsdy Hotel. Here Dr Anziske Kayster guided us though this building which had been built by Rev Andrew Murray in the early 1800's. This building contains fascinating examples of household items used in those days, as well as impressive yellowwood floors and other furniture. Later the group split between the adjacent Urquhart house museum and others to the Military Museum with guide Johannes Haarhoff. They were both able to regale us with stories of those times and people. While there are many museums in the town we only had time for three of them and the group was encouraged to visit others the next day.

We gathered outside the Karoo Origins after lunch to meet Bruce for the trip up to the Valley of Desolation. After a slow drive up through the Camdeboo National reserve we parked at the top for the short walk to the viewing platform of these rock towers. Bruce had been instrumental in a large display of posters of the geological features displayed in the Dolemite columns. He again led us with descriptions of the environment which kept us all enthralled. The group were then free to wander along the edge of the lookout to enjoy the views out over the rock towers & Camdeboo plains below.

This drew to a close the formal arrangements made for the group. However this had given us all a taste of the town and how good it is to benefit from the skills of local guides. They can paint a far better and complete verbal description of a place than merely looking at a picture on a wall.

We can only thank our 4 guides as named above, for making this such a successful outing for our club.



U3A members pay rapt attention at the introductory talk on Day 1



Fossil found by U3A member in the Gats River, Nieu Bethesda

4 OVERVIEW OF FORTHCOMING EVENTS

4.1 Monday 6th October - Presentation by Jonathan Ancer

We are breaking with tradition and offering members two talks in October! The first of these will be by Jonathan Ancer, an award-winning author, the son-in-law of our regular attendees, Julian and Sterna Luyt, who has offered to give a talk for U3A on the 6th October.

Jonathan has worked as a reporter at *The Star*, a features writer for magazines, and a crossword columnist. He is the author of six books, including biographies of Craig Williamson and Pravin Gordhan. He will talk to us about his latest book published in 2024 'BULLSH!T - 50 fibs that made South Africa'.

This is an outrageous miscellany of serious and lighthearted lies, myths, untruths, fibs and fabrications that tells the tall tale of South Africa. He has consulted with buffs, boffs and barflies, and produced a fascinating and worthy collection of the lies we've been told that shook, shattered, and ultimately shaped South Africa.

4.2 Wednesday 8th October – Presentation by David Hall Green titled 'From Footlights to Fishing'

The second presentation in October will be on Wednesday 8th, by David Hall Green and titled 'From Footlights to Fishing' After studying art at the Johannesburg Art School in Braamfontein, David started his theatrical career with the Brian Brooke Theatre Company. In 1960 he joined the Barry O'Brien British Repertory Theatre Company and performed in hundreds of plays all over Britain, including at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

Love called and he boarded a trawler in Brixham, Devon to go fishing, before resuming his theatrical career five years later. He also worked as a ship's officer for P&O, sailing around the world before returning to South Africa to become one of the pioneers of the newly-established SABC TV.

"From Footlights to Fishing" is the story of his life as a fisherman in the historical fishing village of Brixham. He describes the method of fishing, known as bottom trawling, today considered extremely harmful to the marine environment, as it is now practised on an almost industrial scale. His talk is richly illustrated with pictures and diagrams.

4.3 Annual lunch – Ouland Royale

Our Annual Lunch will take place on 15 October at Ouland Royale. I seem to recall sending out the invitations a while ago, so all members should have received one. If you intend to be there then please reply as soon as possible if you have not already done so.

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