

## LIVING IN NAGAMBIE DURING WWII

- EILEEN McDONALD SHARES HER MEMORIES -

The strength and beauty of the Community House are its amazing members. We have people from all backgrounds, ages and walks of life, but one thing everyone has in common, are unique stories. - Fascinating, interesting and curious tales and recently, I had the great privilege of listening to one of them. Well, parts of one I should say, because Eileen McDonald, or 'Eily' as her friends endearingly refer to her, has so many great memories to share it could easily fill a book. Today, I am honoured to share an interview with her about what it was like living in Nagambie during the Second World War. Perhaps it can give you some courage and strength to carry on through these peculiar and difficult times.

When the war broke out, on the 3rd of September 1939, Eileen was only 8 years old. "We were living at the Goulburn Weir back then, and moved to Vine Street in Nagambie when I was 10," Eileen begins to share over Zoom. "I went to School at St. Joseph's and was taught by the Josephite nuns. They used to tell us there were 700 people living in Nagambie, and 7 million in Australia!" In those days, the St. Joseph's school comprised classes of preps to Year 8.

*Continues on page 2.*



*Eileen McDonald with her Tigers!*

Nagambie Lakes Community House Inc.

7 Prentice St. Nagambie, VIC 3608

Email: [nlchouse32@gmail.com](mailto:nlchouse32@gmail.com) Phone: 0437 - 347 203 (Anna's phone)

Open weekdays between 10.00am and 3.00pm - Except during pandemics

Website: [nagambielakescommunityhouse.org](http://nagambielakescommunityhouse.org)

# Continuing from page 1.

**//** We would have a weekly air raid drill which involved the fire siren sounding. We all were then marched to the back of the school into a purposefully dug shelter. It had a row of seats and was in an L-shape. It felt like a cave!"

"Back then, Eileen continues, everyone had to shop in Nagambie because the war prevented us from travelling. The town had two butchers, a produce store, a bakery, three grocery stores, a blacksmith, shoe shops, two or three cafés and two mechanics garages but not too many cars." At the corner of Vine and High Street there was also a lolly shop which was very popular with the children. With a contagious chuckle, Eileen explains how she and her friend used to say that if Nagambie was bombed, they were going to swoop the ruins and eat as many lollies as possible before any adults arrived!

Entertainment consisted of both activities you did at home and in town and this is undoubtedly one of the many differences between our current pandemic and the toils of war. Eileen shares that the Nagambie pubs were very popular during the war years. "They opened at 10.00am and closed at 6.00pm each day, but weren't open on a Sunday. Ladies however, were confined to the lounge area." At home, Eileen's dad played the fiddle and the family played lots of cards, both with family members and friends. "There was no TV, but we listened to the radio to keep up to date with what was going on in the war." The Mechanics Hall also showed weekly pictures, and the newsreel shown prior to the film would often be about the war effort. "The cost for my friend and I to attend the movies would be 1/3, so we used to mow the lawn for a local lady and she would pay us 1/6, and with the remaining 3d we would buy lollies!"

There was also an annual circus which came to Nagambie and set

up where Glass Square is today. "It was relatively cheap to go so most people in town enjoyed attending it," Eileen says.

The war times brought on many changes, although Eileen describes her childhood as not being all too different or difficult. There were of course restrictions on shop items, and Eileen's mother would receive coupons for food and clothing from the government, which she traded with her neighbours. Lights went out during the blackouts and were otherwise often dimmed. Over by the weir, an army camp was stationed, and Eileen shares how most kids used to cross the weir going to school. "The soldiers gave us packs of chewing gum and we thought that was wild", she laughingly exclaims.

Eileen was one of nine children and as was the case in many other Australian families, some of her siblings enlisted. "They did it voluntarily, Eileen said. Back then many thought of it as a bit of an adventure and even lied about their age to be accepted, although that wasn't the case with my siblings. My older brother joined the army soon after the war started, he didn't see any active service but his role was to entertain the troops with his singing, spoon playing and whistling. Another brother worked in the



THE ROSE SERIES P. 3643

LOVER'S WALK BRIDGE, LAKE NAGAMBIE, VIC.

C. A. GILMOUR

*A period picture of Nagambie; Lover's Lane. Thank you Nagambie Historical society! SLV picture collection.*



THE ROSE SERIES P. 173  
COPYRIGHT

DIVING TOWER AND POOL, NAGAMBIE, VIC.

C. A. GILMOUR

*A period picture of Nagambie; The diving tower. Thank you Nagambie Historical society! SLV picture collection.*

ammunition factory in the area and one of my sisters was a cook for the RAAF. My father was working on the railways and was stationed in Tocumwal, so we didn't see a lot of him."

The end of the war was a different story in itself. Today it is almost difficult to imagine the huge sense of relief and anticipation which swept over the whole world and through the small Nagambie township as well. By now, Eileen is fourteen years old... "I remember the church bells ringing, the fire siren blaring and people laughing, crying and singing madly in the streets, "We'll meet again" and songs like that. People came out to their front gates and hugged each

other. Prime Minister Ben Chifley was speaking on the radio and told us that the war had ended. It was sad of course, for the ones who had lost their loved ones... After that, I don't know how long it took to get rid of the coupons but wool prices went up after the war..." Eileen finishes our interview by telling me about a true sign the tides had turned for good, when Queen Elizabeth II came to Victoria and Shepparton for a royal visit in March of 1954.

Thank you Eileen for taking time to share with us, encourage us and remind us that this too shall pass!



*A photo from when Queen Elizabeth II visited Shepparton on the 5th of March, 1954. Photo: Shepparton News, 5th of March 2014.*



# Member contributions

**W**e are always very happy to receive contributions from our different members! Do you have a photo, a poem or a quiz you would like us to put in the newsletter, please don't hesitate to email Anna on [coordinatornlch@gmail.com](mailto:coordinatornlch@gmail.com)

## SOMEBODY, NOBODY, NOT ME!

Is there a person in your house  
called Somebody, Nobody, not me?  
A ghostly kind of being  
quite impossible to see.  
A fiend who always manages  
by fair means or by foul,  
to take a shower, leave a mess,  
forget to hang the towel.

Have you ever dug the Vegemite  
out of the honey jar,  
Ever wondered how it got there;  
could that black stuff jump so far?  
I'll bet it put up such a fight  
when it landed in the butter,  
and the kitchen bench is gooey  
the results of its foul splutter.

There's a toothpaste loving demon,  
squeeze the middle not the base  
'till the flouride's oozing out the seams  
and the sink's a slimy place.  
There's a toilet-paper-Wizard  
an unraveller of rolls  
an earthly kind of being  
who's a blocker-up of bowls.

Lego blocks aren't popular  
scattered all across the floor  
when father in his bare feet  
lets out a thunderous roar.  
He threatens to evict the lot,  
consign them to the bin  
and the children quickly gather 'round  
tut-tutting at the sin  
of the someone who was careless,  
left those weapons on the floor  
so that poor old Dad would find them  
when he ambled through the door.

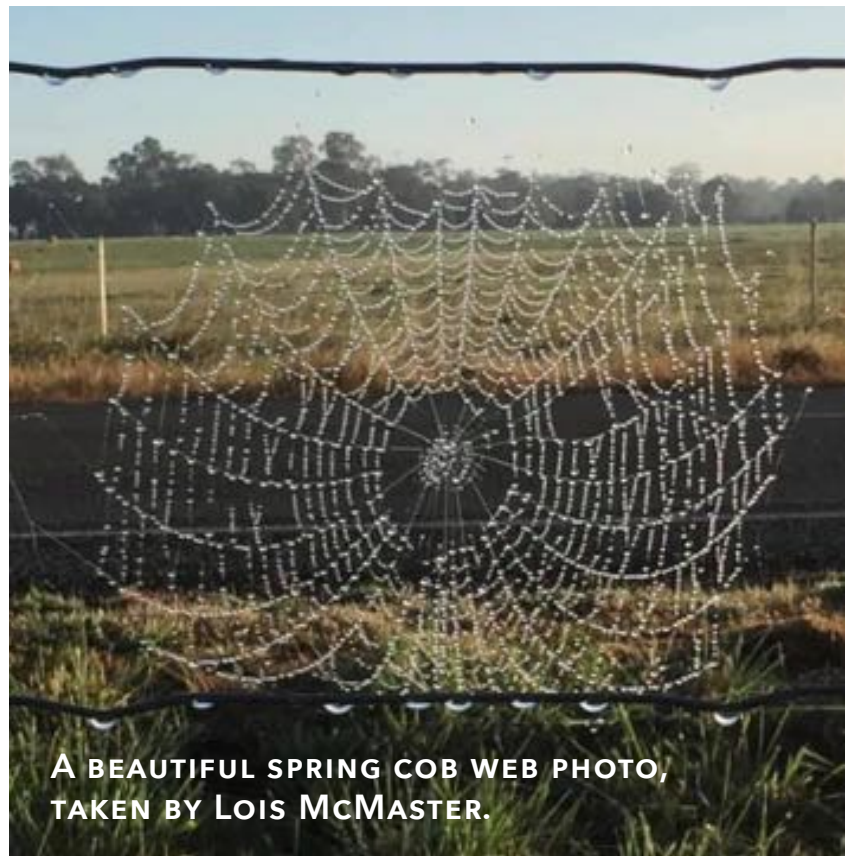
No matter what the crime is,  
no matter what the plea,  
in our house the answer stays the same,  
NOT ME! not me! not me!

**By Robyn Northey, 1984**



**Remember the ukes**

*Last little jamming session before stage three lock down; of course we were definitely socially distancing at the time and simply photo shopped the end result! By Robyn Northey.*



**A BEAUTIFUL SPRING COB WEB PHOTO,  
TAKEN BY LOIS McMASTER.**

# Member contributions

## GUESS THE PLACE!

**H**ere are a few mystery Victorian towns I found from very early golf trips.

**Example: "You are not right mum" - Marong**

1. Fairly cold, oh, oh, idiot
2. Chanced on young bovine.
3. Toffee nose's water way.
4. In my mouth.
5. Closing up, 2.240lb.
6. Blushing levee.
7. Mr Hood & child.
8. Dance a vermin.
9. You are not right mum.
10. Home for the aching.
11. Open your eyes.
12. Plenty of men.
13. Not stolen.
14. Tired insect.
15. Happy tree.
16. Bought poultry.
17. Ugly duck on the rise.
18. Nothing at all.
19. Observe water.
20. Part of a hat.

**By Robyn Northey.**

## ONE OF THOSE ANGELS...

**D**uring this pandemic we've seen a plethora of amazing initiatives to support, help, provide for and protect members of our community. One lady who really stands out in the crowd is our very own Denise Smith.

When a general call out was made asking for volunteers to make face masks Denise responded in a way which was up and above what anyone could have expected. Thanks to her time, effort and generosity, several people in our community, including some particularly vulnerable, have been provided with a face mask. The Community House even got a mention in the local newspaper!

Thank you so much Denise for your dedication, your empathy, kindness and hard work!



## NEED A FACEMASK?

Please contact coordinator Anna Close on 0437 347 203. If you can't come to the Community House she can do home deliveries.



We snapped this photo of Denise as she, on a rather windy day, was dropping off more facemasks at the Community House.



# Member contributions

A little while ago, we challenged members and friends to go for walks in the beautiful weather and snap a "spring photo". At the end of the day, coordinator Anna would pick a photo and make it our Facebook Cover Photo. The beautiful cobweb picture taken by Lois McMaster (see page 4) was the winner but so many of the other pieces of art were stunning in their own right and we thought we'd share them with you here in the newsletter! Enjoy!



*Beautiful colour by Denise Smith.*



*Trees full of singing birds, by Judy McDonald*



*By Harry Hilton.*



*Reflections on the dam by Lois McMaster.*



*Signs of Spring, by Gereldine Leonard.*



*Fishing pelicans, by Karyn Thompson.*



# Member contributions



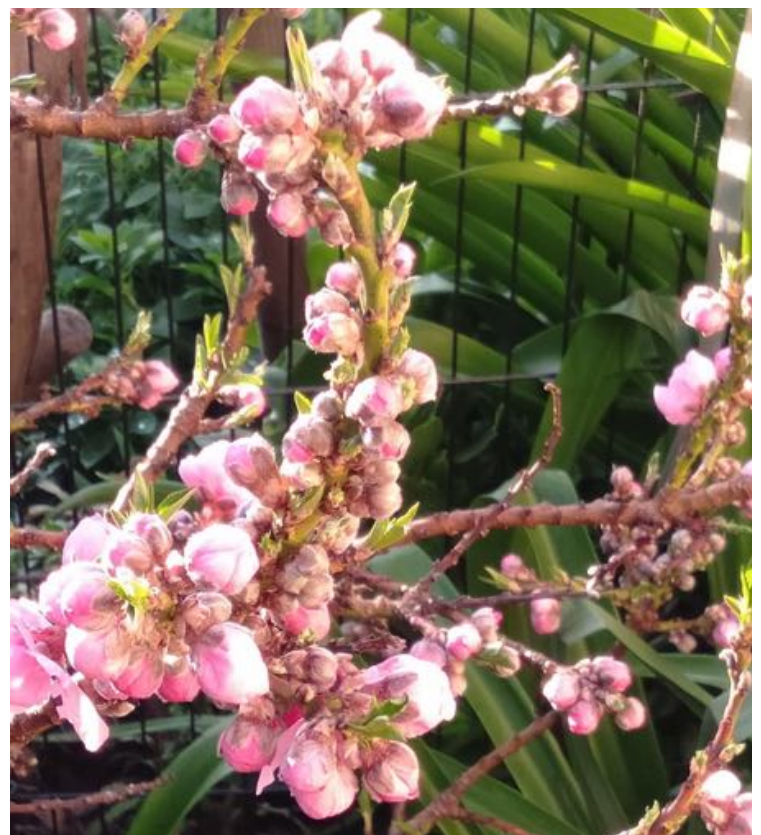
*Wonderful canola crops by Cheryl Haining.*



*Blossoms, by Marg Lodding.*



*King Parrot Creek, Flowerdale, by Rebekah Grant.*



*Nectarine tree in full blossom, by Judi Redfern.*



# Member Contributions

*GARDENING 101, BY GERELDINE LEONARD*

## Do you want to learn how to grow your own vegetables?

**A**re you interested in starting your own veggie patch? Post-Covid restrictions the Community House is considering face to face courses to introduce people to vegetable gardening. On offer would be sessions such as how to grow plants from seed, making your own mini hot house, potting-on for plants that need special attention, making a low-cost worm farm, how to compost and so on.

If you would be interested in an introduction to vegetable growing please contact the coordinator of the Community House. (Anna Close, [coordinatornlch@gmail.com](mailto:coordinatornlch@gmail.com) or 0437 347 203) Because face to face meeting is not currently possible and it is now time to prepare for spring and summer planting, some hints and tips to help you get started will be published in Newsletter and on the NLCH Facebook page.

There are some vegetables that can be started now from seed ready to be transplanted after the last frost. All you need is a well-drained container to give things like capsicum, chilli, leeks, eggplant, lettuce, spring onions and even some melons a head start. These should be kept under shelter until it is time to plant out.

An old storage tub under the shelter of a back veranda will do the trick for most plants, just cover at night and let the sun in by day.

All sorts of containers can be used to propagate seed. Everything from old seedling trays or pots from a commercial nursery to ice-cream containers with holes punched in the bottom will work just so long as it will hold seed raising mix and drain freely. Just remember to wash first in hot soapy water.

Pictured is a seed tray from a commercial nursery which has an open porous base. To keep the seed raising mix from falling through it has been lined with two sheets of newspaper. Add seed raising mix which can be purchased or made at home in the following proportions:

- Two parts homemade compost or commercial potting mix,
- Two parts peat moss or partly broken-down leaves

*Continues on next page.*





# Member Contributions

Gardening 101 by Gereldine Leonard

- One part sand. Make sure the sand is well washed and does not set like glue.

Wet the seed mix and then spread seed on the surface. Cover with a fine coating of seed mix and water. Misting is best because it keeps the seed mix damp but not soggy. A cheap spray bottle or a milk bottle with fine holes pushed into the cap will do the job.

Remember not to plant too many seeds at a time. A few lettuce seeds for example, can be planted every couple of weeks for a continuous supply rather than a glut. Tomatoes can be started in the same way and later transplanted into single pots. Tomatoes should be started indoors in a sunny spot. They will not germinate if it is too cold overnight.

## HELP! OUR NEWSLETTER IS GROWING IN POPULARITY!

Do you or your business want to sponsor the NLCH Newsletter?

It is of course a lovely problem to have, so please don't get us wrong! We love that so many of you enjoy our newsletter, read it and share it with your friends and family members.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have been putting copies of our Newsletter at IGA and occasionally the Visitors Information Centre, this as the Community House has been closed.

On a monthly basis we print over 50 copies and all of them are gone before the end of the month. This is a service we would love to keep going, and we believe that now, more than ever, do we need to keep people feeling connected, encouraged, seen and lifted.

The printing however doesn't come for free, so that's why we are currently reaching out to you. :-) If you, or someone you know, would be interested in sponsoring the Newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact coordinator Anna Close. We don't have a lot to offer in return, but however much advertising space you would like in our fun-loving newsletter!


Also, please remember you are welcome to send in any contributions you would like; favourite recipes, pictures, riddles, poems, etc. The sky is the limit! Just send it to coordinator Anna Close on [coordinatornlch@gmail.com](mailto:coordinatornlch@gmail.com)

Nagambie Lakes Community House

## Newsletter

June 2020  
No 6

### WE'RE OPENING SOON!



It's been a while hasn't it? Weeks and weeks of isolation, loneliness and for some, simply time to breathe and reflect. Regardless of whether you've enjoyed a break from the normal craziness of life, or if you've perhaps felt like the blinds were completely pulled down on you, we've missed you! We've missed your laughs, your hugs, your friendships, your talents, your jokes, your sharing of everyday life. And subsequently we so wish we could tell you the House will be open in full swing starting today, but unfortunately we will have to wait a little bit longer... Let us explain.

As the Government first announced that some of the state wide restrictions were going to be lifted, we excitedly hoped we would soon be able to open the doors of the Community House. - That we would finally see each other again; if yet with some distancing rules put in place. And technically, there is nothing preventing us from opening; if we were to adhere to the 4 squaremetre rule and the 1.5 metre distancing rule.

However, as much as we would love to see you all, the committee of management has decided to wait a few more weeks before attempting to go back to normal, here is why...

These are unprecedented times and in brief, we believe it is important to be very cautious. We do not want to put anyone's health or life at risk.

*Continue on next page...*

Nagambie Lakes Community House Inc.  
7 Prentice St. Nagambie, VIC 3608  
Email: [nlchouse32@gmail.com](mailto:nlchouse32@gmail.com) Phone: 0437 - 347 203 (Anna's phone)  
Open weekdays between 10.00am and 3.00pm - Except during pandemics  
Website: [nagambielakescommunityhouse.org](http://nagambielakescommunityhouse.org)

# Reports and recaps

Writing Group

## Staying at Home

*By Vonnie Deering*

**D**uring this time, when so many people lament the loss of contact with the outside world, I can't help thinking how lucky I am.

Without leaving home I can take pleasure from the river, not far from my own back door. I can sit at the back of our block, untroubled by the usual noise of holiday-makers, and take in the natural surroundings in perfect peace.

The river is still, or seems to be. A small white feather, at rest on the water, floating slowly downstream, is all that indicates a current. A pair of swans glide serenely along, leaving only the slightest wake behind them.

All is quiet. So quiet I can hear things like bark falling from a tree. A crested shrike tit is searching for insects, picking off bark and letting bits drop to the ground.

Pelicans, normally oh so shy, glide close to the river bank. They eye the water intently then suddenly snap up their feed of fish.

Undisturbed by boats or other human activity, the surface of the river is so calm that the clouds are clearly reflected. Water becomes sky; sky becomes water. And the water is cloud-coloured in some places, steel blue between, dusky green where it mirrors the reeds and bushes along its banks. And the colours change with the passing of clouds, the shift of the sun, until, at the end of the day, sky and water are both on fire with nas-turtium colours of orange and crimson.

A whistling kite circling overhead is mirrored; a heron flies upside down. Then a big fish leaps and a silver splash shatters the surface. A kook-aburra laughs, and a flock of ibis fly in to roost in the trees on the opposite island.

The river was here long before we came; it will go on long after we are gone. Doing nothing but watching the river, I am at peace.

The world is hushed; the spell unbroken. I hold my breath.





# Reports and recaps

Writing Group

## Staying at Home

*By Heather Higgins*

"Why is everyone barracking for you?" He asked as we began our weekly Upwords challenge. "Because you have all these medals already and they like to support the underdog", I replied. "Let the game begin". Perhaps I should have kept all the words of encouragement I have received to myself I mused.

We sat outside enjoying the sunshine drinking coffee after the breakfast I had cooked Sunday morning. Again! With a substantial clean sweep I might add. He was going over the challenges of the night. The first game actually took over an hour. I reached a score of 403 which is a record. He reached near 300 as well and this was because it was strategic play by both.

I think the apprentice is learning quickly. Sometimes I think I should not have been as willing to impart some hints. However, having breakfast cooked once in a while is something I dream of.

He faces two challenges on a Saturday. The first is a time trial on his bicycle at noon. He has continued to always beat and better the time of his opponent. After complaining that he cannot seem to win a game in the evening when playing Upwords I asked. "How do you think your rival feels after not winning every Saturday?" He looked quite

shocked. "I had never thought of that", he replied, and sat in silent contemplation for a while.

Saturday night this week was a little different too because a bottle of red did not feature. When I asked why he said he had to have a clear head to think and outsmart me. The dark chocolate however was evident. I don't think I have mentioned



Google Image.

the dark chocolate before. That too has become part of Saturday night lately. Unfortunately I like dark chocolate too so he does not have that all to himself, unlike the red wine when only a small glass is all that I take from the bottle.

However, I think that after a disaster the previous week he has changed his mind. Do have a feeling the omission will not last. Back to last week. It was game three, and quite intense, as I was not leading. He was feeling very confident. A glass of red and The Book were on his side of the table as usual.

Fortunately the Herald Sun was also on the table to cushion the blow, or should I say glass. In his haste to look up a word to block me, his hand caught the glass and half of the wine turned the pages of the Sun red. Catastrophe. He cleaned up the spill bemoaning the fact that he only had a sip and added an S to a word to get a score. All hopes and aspirations on the Sun, like the wine.

This happened again, a short time later. Hard to believe isn't it. He was devastated.

Cleaned up the mess again, looking in dismay at the even larger red stain covering the headlines on the front page of the Herald Sun. I was relieved that the paper was still there and managed to mop up another half glass. Disheartened, he acknowledged that he could not win but took the bottle to his chair in the lounge to finish off when he lost. It helps with his commiserations. Meanwhile I quietly celebrated another clean sweep.

Yes, I did cook a really special breakfast next morning to help him overcome his loss.

Some of my followers are wondering why I, as the winner, must pay the penalty. They say I am not giving him any incentive to try to win. Obviously you have not lived with someone who likes to win. No, loves to win.

# Reports and Recaps

Writing Group

## Rain - Experience

*By Karyn Thompson*

I know water. I enjoy a shower rather than a bath. I remember as a young boy running under the sprinkler, or throwing buckets of water over each other in order to stay cool, and of course I loved playing in puddles. I also remember how I loved the feel of water breaking between my arms as I entered the water after a dive off the top tower at the baths. I loved to swim in fresh rivers and listening to the soft or sometimes thunderous rush of water over rocks and pebbles.

My favourite water to swim in was salt water in the ocean. I loved the somehow natural buoyancy of the salt water, as I floated aimlessly on my back with heavens looking down upon me. Or, in contrast the sense of depth as I feel the pressure on my body as I dive deeper towards the ocean floor. I also love the feeling my ears get with the furthering depth. I also love the taste of the salt water and the feeling of the salt water in my nose as I got dumped by a wave whilst trying to body surf towards the shore. I loved skiing behind a powerful, fast boat, with the gentle spray splashing on my face or cruising slowly down the canals in Venice. I enjoyed the aura of listening to the explosion of water cascading down from Niagra Falls, just imaging the enormity of the height or the massive volume of the water being pushed down. I found this experience very exhilarating. I loved fishing from a boat or pier and the thrill of the catch and the culinary benefit later.

But, by far my favourite water is when it is raining, I enjoy soft rain falling from the sky or running for shelter as the rain gets heavier. And I have battled with an umbrella on a rainy, windy day. There is nothing like the smell of pending rain - fresh. I adore the sound of thunder rolling in and sometimes cracking when a storm is approaching (and I've been told that lightening is amazing and usually occurs illuminating the sky in different forms about 5 seconds before the rumble of thunder) I have learnt that lightening can hurt you and that you must seek shelter when this event occurs.

I enjoy the sound of the birds as they sense the changes in the weather conditions. OH, the beautiful sound of rain on a tin roof as I dry off in front

of an open fire, or lying in bed drifting off to sleep somehow mesmerised by its rhythm. The sound of overflowing gutters or the gurgle of the water trying to fit down a drain. Or the gentle drips into a puddle or container. Apparently, rainbows are very beautiful and occur in certain situations when a thunder storm is involved, causing different light effects in the atmosphere. There are so many variations of sounds caused by rain, depending where you are when it is happening. If I am outdoors, I can often sense the pending rain as I feel less heat from the sun rays as they become covered by clouds.

I learnt as a young boy about the world and the enormity of oceans. I learnt this on raised maps and elevations made on the world globe. I was also educated on why and how rain occurs. I know that without rain we would not be able to survive, I am well aware of its necessity. I realize that without rain I would not have wonderful memories of the times I have spent in the water or doing water sports and activities.

I have never witnessed floods, but I am well aware of the devastation that they can cause. But I have experienced drought. The smell of the dry dirt, the feel of the hot earth underfoot. And unfortunately, the sounds of the animals pleading for relief.

Yes, the varied noises made by rain are amazing and it is my favourite sense that is enhanced as rain occurs. But then there is the sense of smell. I love when the rain reacts with foliage and flowers and distributes the most amazing aromas, accentuating the scents of plants such as Eucalyptus and my favourite flowers, Gardenias and Daphne.

So, yes rain is wet sometimes cold, sometimes damaging, sometimes annoying. But to me it is perfect because it allows me to experience a true phenomenon.

You must understand, as you may have already realized. I have never seen rain as I am totally blind. But rain allows my other senses to become more alert. I can feel it, I can taste it, I can smell it and I can hear it. But most of all I can imagine it.

I love rain.



# Reports and Recaps

## Community Carols

### Update on the 2020 Nagambie Carols

As many of our members would remember, the 2019 Carols were held at the Community House. The committee responsible for arranging the event, consisting of representatives from both the Lions, the Larks, the Community House and different churches, put on an amazing show, backed up by the CFA who delivered Santa, and the two primary schools who sang.

The Community House is technically a non political, non religious affiliation, but we still believe in participating in and helping to arrange different community events which are culturally and traditionally important to the citizens of our town.

This year, with the pandemic hovering over us like a wet blanket, we are expecting to not be able to meet in person. In a Zoom meeting with the Carols committee, we were trying to come up with a fun alternative to our important tradition.

We then hatched the idea of doing a YouTube advent calendar. Well ahead of time we will record different short segments for the calendar, which can involve several different community groups. After the clips have been edited and provided with an intro, we will release them, one at a time, starting on the 1st of December.

We are hoping we can hereby keep our tradition alive but also remind ourselves and each other that we still belong, even if we can not yet see each other in person.

The Carols Committee and the Community House have also applied for a grant with Bendigo Bank to help pay for the recording of these segments, but as this newsletter is being written, we do not yet know if we've been successful in our application. We will keep you updated and let you know as soon as we hear from them. Any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Anna Close via email or phone.



*Some photos from the 2019 Carols at the Community House. We'll get there again, next year!*



# Reports and Recaps

## Craft Group

**T**he Craft Group is working away, if yet not in the same room. The members are creating some absolutely amazing items, which they share in the NLCH Craft Facebook Group! Have a look below and be inspired! Also a big shout out to Beryl Dukes who is doing such an amazing job running the online craft Group! Thank you lady!



*Our very own Denise Smith made this beautiful bag!*



*Denise also made this throw, which she posted on Facebook with the classic comment "I'm going to have so much to donate after Covid!"*



*Marg StLeone made this blanket for a special little girl called Rani.*



*Beryl Duke "finally finished this rug", according to her own words. Apparently it's been sitting in her cupboard for about two years, but I doubt it! ;-)*



# Reports and Recaps

Craft Group



*Anne Turville made this stunning jumper!*



*Barbara Horsburgh made this pretty blanket in spring colours!*



*Suzanne Sinclair made a bright and colourful poncho.*



*One sock finished, one to go! By Beryl Dukes.*

# Reports and Recaps

Art Group



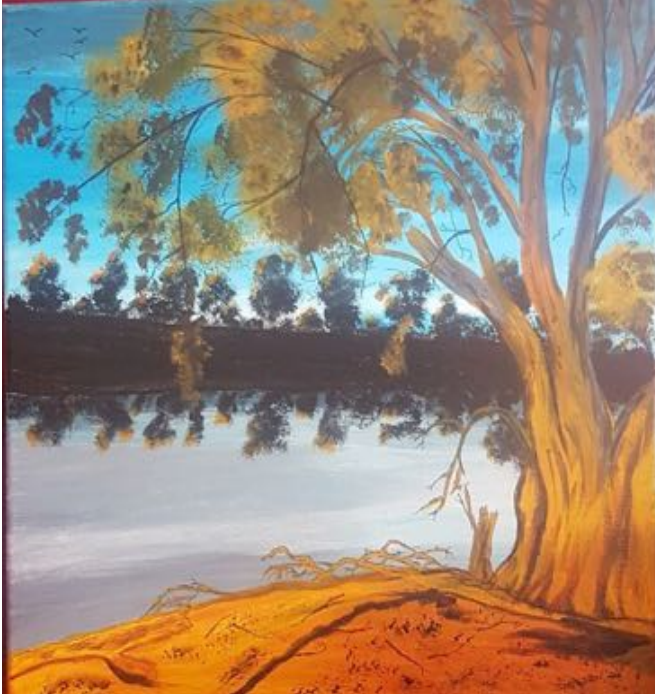
**W**endy Cook made these absolutely stunning flower paintings.

If you are a member of the art group, or just enjoy painting in your free time, please feel welcome to send a photo or several of your art work and we will feature it in either our newsletter or on our Facebook page or both! :-)



# Reports and recaps

## Art Group



*"Darling River", by John Fielden.*



*"Yellow Waters", by John Fielden.*

John Fielden made these colourful and inspiring nature paintings!



*"Golden Days", by John Fielden*

# From the Coordinator's desk

**A**re you feeling tired? Depressed, sad or lonely? Perhaps even a little bit embarrassed about it all? Have you too been told you should "chirp up" because at least you have a full grocery store to shop at and Netflix to watch? Well, I'm here to say **mercy**. Mercy, mercy mercy. Please try and be gracious towards yourself and know that it's ok to feel whatever you are feeling right now. You don't have to be one bit embarrassed or ashamed. See, here's why...

Australia as a nation is used to various different challenges and traumas. We have faced two world wars, numerous fires, floods, hurricanes and even terrorist attacks. Family members have lost their houses, neighbours their lives and through it all, we have still somehow prevailed; not seldom by supporting one another, helping each other and doing everything we can to show solidarity. And yes, in some ways the recent pandemic is similar to these previous situations, yet it is also fundamentally different.

Today we can follow the movements of a hurricane hour by hour via satellite. With pretty good accuracy, we know both **where** and **when** it's going to hit and most importantly; we know **when** the danger is over. We can hunker down at a mall until the coast is clear and then hopefully return to our every day lives. We know **exactly** what day the wars ended and we celebrated accordingly. Peace treaties were signed whereafter we could start rebuilding our lives and economies. When summer hits, we know the fire risk the season brings, and for days or weeks we might have to listen carefully to the news and keep tabs on the Vic Emergency app. Should disaster strike and our house or properties get damaged in the fire, we then know too, when it is over and when we are safe... And if all else fails, once temperature drops, rain falls or seasons change, we know we'll be out of the woods again.

The problem with this pandemic is that none of these previous rules apply. We have no idea **where** we risk getting sick. We don't even know **when** we get sick because for days we will not be showing any symptoms at all, and when they do appear, they will look no different to those of a regular flu or cold. Some never get any symptoms at all, which of course complicates matters even more.

Today, we also don't know if we are safe **after** we've had the virus, we also don't know **when** there will be a vaccine. We don't know if numbers will die down or spike. We don't know if our Shire will be spared completely, or if a massive outbreak is just around the corner. We don't know what our lives will look like in a week, or even a year from now...

Before anything else is said, **please** know I am in no way trying to downplay the immense suffering people faced in previous wars or natural disasters, not at all! I can only imagine their suffering and pain... What I am trying to point out however, is that the uncertainty we are all facing now, can also be a difficult burden to bear. This is why I think you should try and be gracious towards yourself and others. Remember that it is ok to feel tired from living in a constant "brace yourself"-mode. It is ok to feel discouraged at the outlook of not knowing when all this is going to end... It is ok. You are ok.

In the midst of all the uncertainty however, remember it **WILL** pass. The season of Covid-19, will one day be but a distant memory we share. You are going to come through this, stronger than you were before. And if you are looking for some coping mechanisms, perhaps follow the advice from the Swedish psychologist I listened to the other day. She stated that the one thing all happiness researchers or experts agree on, is that we feel better when we do things for other people. So why not pick up the phone, write the letter, send the email or sew that mask. Not only will someone else be blessed by your kindness, but chances are it will make you feel better too!

**At your  
service,  
Anna Close**

