



THE RAILWAY EXPRESS #12

A SPECIAL WEEKLY NEWSLETTER TO HELP US STAY CONNECTED

AROUND THE HOUSE

Well Spring has definitely sprung and how delightful it is to feel the warmth of the sun and smell the sweet scent of blossoms in the air. Let's hope that everyone keeps up their efforts to contain the virus so that we can get out and about a little more to enjoy the new season.



Thank you to the 60-odd people who have so far completed our **survey**. The information gathered will assist us with our planning for the coming months as well as help us with funding and grant applications. It also gives you the opportunity to tell us your ideas for activities at the House post COVID. We would love another 40 or so responses to our survey so if you have 10 minutes to spare, please fill it in. The survey can be found [here](#).

We are delighted to bring you the details of our new look **cooking program** with the wonderful **Georgia Karavis**. The **Food in Common** project is aimed at people over the age of 60 and will start in Term 4, with fortnightly healthy recipe packs that can be picked up at Railway House, instructional cooking videos and regular online catch-up to share meals and stories. Later on, when restrictions allow, you will have the option to attend in person if you would like. Please see attached flyer for more information - please email **Lisa C** by 15 September to book (15 places available).

It was wonderful this week to see some of our **Knitting Circle** members get together for the first time since March! On Tuesday, 12 people participated in a 'Knit and Chat' session on Zoom, hosted by **Philippa** and **Lisa G**. It was really lovely to hear the group chatting away as they knitted, just as they normally would at the House! There will be two more sessions before the end of term - 10.30am-12pm on Tuesdays. Please get in touch with **Lisa G** if you would like the zoom link.





Last Saturday over 20 people participated in the first of a series of fortnightly **origami** sessions, hosted by **The Melbourne Origami Group**. The session was a roaring success, with both adults and children participating, and **Alison** found it was a very enjoyable and relaxing way to start the weekend (despite messing up and having to go into a Zoom 'break out room' for some private instruction!). The next session is on **Saturday 12 September** at 10am if you would like to give it a go - please contact Alison for the Zoom link.



Our friends at **Holden Street Neighbourhood House** in North Fitzroy are extending an invitation to Railway House participants to join their extremely fun online **Zumba** classes. Designed for young at heart people over 65, the class offers a slower pace of Zumba for beginners of any fitness level and any dance experience. The classes are on **Friday** mornings from 11am - 12pm and the cost is \$10 for four weeks. Bookings can be made [here](#).

Finally we would like to wish "Bon Voyage" to **Ashley Masters**, who is packing up and heading home to New Zealand. Ash has been part of the Railway House community for two years, as a member of our Bike Riding group and participant in our Art Class. He has also been on our Committee of Management for the past 10 months. We have really enjoyed having you as part of our community, Ash, and wish you all the best back in your home country.

Alison, Lisa C, Lisa G and Jeff

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YOUR NEWS: WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Pam Tuffield writes "I have always enjoyed baking and find it relaxing but during lockdown it has become a bit of an obsession. Not being able to have visitors to share my products has not done my waistline any good & I am wondering if I will ever be able to wear anything other than track pants. My neighbour, who also likes to bake, suggested that we provide the occasional teatime treat for the street. We notify people on WhatsApp that there are goodies left in a bag on her gate & they can help themselves."



Some of you will remember **Tom Guarino**, one of the VCAL students from Princes Hill Secondary College who spend time at the House a few days per week. Tom has written in with an update on what he's been doing:

"Every day at 12:00 I have a Zoom meeting for class and each day it differs between all the VCAL subjects. I've found it very strange and different from last year as the VCAL program at our school is fairly hands-on and being at home essentially takes that element away. Our VCAL teachers have come up with different ways for us to be pro-active around the house that can count towards our final grades. For example, for Physical Education, we have to set a health goal each week. This can be cooking a healthy meal or going for a bike ride.

In our project class we had to make a reusable mask and document the process and now we have to build something around the house. I decided to build a built-in desk in my room. I had been planning to make it for a few years so I thought it would be a great project. Dad said I could use a



spare and unused bench top we had left over from when we built our house. I was very lucky to have my dad there to help me in case I ran into any problems and sure enough, I did! Dad and I took our time to work around the things that were going to make it a little more difficult. For example, the walls the desk was going to be mounted to not being exactly square. We decided to make a test desk out of cardboard to ensure we had all the angles right and it would fit just right.

My dad guided and taught me throughout the process. He would ask how I would do something first rather than tell me how it should be done. It was a very enjoyable and challenging project for me and I am extremely happy with the final product. I have also used this spare time to focus on my custom made jewellery business @tommaso.designs



on Instagram. I have had a few commissions for rings and necklaces and a pendant. The pendant was quite difficult and challenging but my customer was really happy with the end result. I've also done other pieces such as a small pendant for my best friend's 18th birthday, I set a ruby in my signet ring and made a signet ring for my sister with two rubies in it for her 21st birthday. These were also challenging for me because I am mainly self-taught and have only been doing it for a couple of years in between my school and social life. As with all things, you learn by mistakes - setting the stones in my jewellery for the first time was a little scary - but I watched some tutorials online and tested my skills on some old pieces so if I mucked it up, it wouldn't matter. I was nervous and I did make a small mistake when setting the stone in my ring so it's a little offset but I am happy with it, especially for my first time.

I've been helping around the house - from hanging out washing, mowing the lawn, building other things with my dad to helping with the gardening and walking to the local supermarket to get a few items. And of course, playing with mates on my Xbox.

Some days I'm really busy, other days, I'm quite bored so I'm looking forward to going back to school - hopefully I can spend my last term at Princes Hill back at school with all my friends."



Lisa G.'s daughter had her 8th birthday a couple of weeks ago and Lisa really went to town to give her a special lockdown birthday celebration! Harry Potter was the theme and I think you will all agree that Lisa did a spectacular job! They had a Harry Potter movie-thon, made potions for Professor Snape, did a present hunt, played a game in the driveway where you run to the different school houses, and even had the famous disappearing platform 9 ¾! It was all topped off by a spectacular cake. Happy Birthday, Arung!



TOP PICKS



We were delighted to see that our creative writing teacher, **Barry Dickins** – author, playwright, poet and artist – had his new book, **One Punch**, well-reviewed by Steven Carroll in *The Age* a couple of weeks ago. Congratulations, Barry!



PICK OF THE WEEK

One Punch

Barry Dickins, Hardie Grant, \$29.99

The subject of this meditation is random, deadly violence – the “coward punch”. Another writer might have used gritty prose, but in Barry Dickins’ hands it becomes a melancholy reflection on the deep sadness violence causes as well as the nature of the world in which the news has become a crime report wedged between endless commercials. In simple, often moving writing with little sense of artifice, Dickins takes us into well-known case studies such as the doctor killed at the Box Hill hospital after asking his assailant not to smoke, then back into Dickins’ childhood in a loving, peaceful family, yet surrounded by outbreaks of puzzling violence. He also draws on his own experience and the random bashing of his son. A kind of elegy, all the more resonant for being quietly spoken.



And **Philippa** from the knitting group has written in to recommend a couple of movies:

“I recently watched ‘**The Bicycle Thief**’ and ‘**Last Train Home**’. Without telling the story and spoiling it for people I would simply say that they were both very powerful films that put our current situation into perspective.

I streamed these movies from Beamafilm. Just in case people are not familiar with this service - it can be accessed via your public library membership. Simply go onto to your public library’s website, click emovies and then select Beamafilm. You’ll be prompted to enter your library card details. It is possible to stream an unlimited number of films from Beamafilm.”



Phillippa’s rating for “The Bicycle Thief” and “Last Train Home” ★★★★★



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Geoff Hopkins is a local resident and a regular visitor at the House - dropping off soft plastics and books as he walks his dog Rosie. Geoff has been on the Railway House Committee of Management for 2 years. He has also volunteered at our Learning Club and Soccer Clinic, and helps us out with maintenance jobs. Thank you Geoff for your many contributions to the House.

How I'd love to be a time traveller. I would go back in time to meet the 20-year-old Geoff, troubled and aimless as he was. Many life lessons could be passed on. There were no mentors for me back then and life felt tough.

Over the years since, I have met some amazing people who believed in me and provided advice. Life became fulfilling. What my mentors did for me underpins how I treat people now. I stop and listen, providing reflection and emotional support. That is what I lacked in my home life as a child.



My parents had been shipwrecked by tragedy and circumstances in their own lives, and they put their noses to the grindstone to get food on the table for their six children. It was tough for them – a big family and a small income. Tiredness made them emotionally aloof. It was country life for the first eleven years, living remotely in the South Australian wheatbelt and the children were schooled by correspondence. My parents had been forced to leave school young. They channelled their discontent by encouraging the children to do better.

I embraced the advice, which was to get as much education as I could. I pushed. I obtained a Master of Business Administration and I've worked in public relations and human resources for my whole career, including the last fifteen running my own business.

I have lived and travelled overseas for more than five years. I became a helicopter pilot and I ran nine marathons, with my fastest 42 kilometres being run in under 2 hours 40 minutes. My best mentor has been my wife Alison. We had two children and we sure did listen to them. They are grown up now and they think we did a fairly good job!





LET'S TALK FOOD

If you're anything like us, you might be feeling a bit weary at the moment. We've been in lockdown for 5 weeks and thinking of meal ideas is getting harder and harder! Well, we've got two lightning-fast and easy recipes to share this week - both of these can be put together in under 5 minutes.

Pam Tuffield sent in a delicious quick pasta sauce, and **Alison**, Railway House manager, is sharing her foolproof oven-baked rice pudding recipe.

PAM'S PASTA SAUCE

INGREDIENTS (Serves 1)

30 grams pine nuts
2 slices bacon cut in small pieces
1 tablespoon sun dried tomato strips
130 ml sour cream
Pesto - to taste
Pasta of your choice - I use penne



METHOD

1. Toast pine nuts in dry frying pan , stirring because they burn quickly.
2. Set aside & fry bacon pieces.
3. When cooked add tomato strips, sour cream & nuts.
4. Stir & when hot add pesto.
5. If sauce seems too thick add a little of the pasta cooking water.
6. Pour over pasta & enjoy!

ALISON'S RICE PUDDING

This takes literally **3 minutes to prepare**. Then into the oven for a couple of hours, so you can cook dinner whilst it's cooking. For a fancy presentation you can serve it to look like an egg (as they do in Italy), in a small bowl with a peeled peach half on top. We just top it with a few slices of canned peaches (and someone in the family - I won't mention names - even adds a little scoop of ice cream as well!). A real treat.

INGREDIENTS (Serves 4)

1/3 cup (2 1/2 oz) of uncooked short or medium grain white rice
4 cups (1 litre) of milk, or a combination of milk and cream, or half and half (I use 3 cups of light milk, and 1 cup of cream)



2 1/2 tbsp sugar (this is not very sweet - use more if you like it a little sweeter)
1 small pat of butter (more to butter the dish)
Sprinkle of nutmeg, cinnamon or mixed spice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350F (175C)
2. Butter the inside edge (no need to do the bottom) of a baking dish, then add the rice and the milk/cream.
3. Add the sugar, and stir until it dissolves.
4. Add a small pat of butter, and a sprinkle of your chosen spice.
5. Place the dish in the centre of the oven and cook for 30 minutes.
6. After 30 minutes, take the dish out of the oven, stir well, and return it to the oven. Cook for another hour.
7. Check the pudding (you may have to break the skin to check the rice is cooked). Continue to cook for up to another half hour, if necessary. The rice pudding is ready when it has started to thicken (it won't be runny)



LOCKDOWN LAUGHS





WRITER'S CORNER

FOR THE LOVE OF DOG

by Carolyn Ilsley

I had my heart set on a black dog. A poodle. In the Yellow Pages I found an ad for Poodle Ranch in Mickleham. I rang the breeder immediately. He revealed he'd had a litter of miniature black poodles born that very morning... the gods of poodle-lore were with me!

Breathlessly I asked "Are they all spoken for?" "No," he said. "Could I have one? The strongest female?" "Yes." So I sent off my letter with a deposit of \$50.00 and waited. All the while imagining a tiny blind pup and what she'd be like. Her name would be Sucette, a French word meaning something sweet. My timing was perfect. I'd be at home on my long service leave for six weeks when she'd be old enough to join me.

I had treasured childhood memories of a bevy of poodle beauties with their wild, excited greetings and robust cavortings from summer visits to my Aunt May in Fentree Gully. She regularly boarded poodles for vacationing Toorak ladies. Two of her boarders were pretty apricots called Fleur and Folie. One of which fetched the paper each morning of their stay via the dog door. Needless to say, Aunt May was a very capable carer and dog handler. Her own two dogs were corgis. They hung on May's every word and gesture and zealously guarded her.

Having made up my mind to acquire a poodle I did quite a bit of research on the breed's characteristics. This included contacting the Poodle Association which assured me that the poodle was the companion animal "par excellence". Each one possessing a unique personality.



When I collected Sucette from the breeder she was a compact black powder puff of twelve weeks with a tiny black "leather" nose just visible in her wool. I'd taken a cardboard box with me in the footwell of my friend's car to transport her home. She was not to spend a minute in it! Her breeder popped her out of the back of his SUV and she bobbed along the grass of the paddock to greet me – enchanting! "Go on, pick her up" he said. So I did. Her wool was silky to the touch, she smelled sweet, was obviously well cared for.

On the drive home, she snuggled in deep on my lap, one eye trained on me as I stroked her. Our attachment was immediate. She knew she'd found her place with me. And so did I.

We lived together for 17 long and happy years.

In the present flurry of dog acquisition, please remember, dog lovers, a dog is "for keeps". Not just a delightful and temporary antidote for the stress and loneliness of COVID-19 blues. Good luck!



AND FINALLY...

Our friends at Mildura Community House have organised a fabulous Indigenous Cultural Arts 'virtual exhibition' to celebrate Adult Learners Week!

Please click on the link below to open the Sunraysia Cultural Arts Book that has been put together to showcase the work of local indigenous artists, musicians and authors:

https://www.indigartmildura.com/uploads/1/2/1/7/121719570/cultural_arts_book20.pdf

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