

AVCC 3-Year Funding Success

The AVCC committee has announced the success of its three-year funding rebid to the Wellington City Council. This money provides financial assistance for the AVCC co-ordinator, accounts clerk, cleaner, and the community facilities until July 2016.

AVCC co-chair, Bridget Stocker, who put the application together, said that she is pleased that the WCC recognised the efforts of the current committee. "The 2013/2014 AVCC committee needs to ensure that all conditions are met for funding to be released, but on the whole, this is great news for the Aro Valley." Stocker said. "In particular, the potential for the Aro Valley to interact with the WCC in the development of an 'eco-city' is an exciting prospect and one that our community is ideally set up to address." Stocker, who said that the application took many weekends to get together, thanked Charles Barrie from Kai o Te Aro, members of the AVCC committee, and the wider community for their valuable input in the application process.

Councillor says funding at risk from conflicts of interest

The Aro Valley's \$42,000 city council grant risks being withheld if people with major conflicts of interest are elected to the Valley's governing committee on 30 July.

That's the message from Wellington City Councillor Stephanie Cook, who chairs the city council grants committee that approves the funding.

The \$42,000 was provisionally awarded to the Valley at a city council meeting in June. But Cook said grants were never given unconditionally, and the Valley's funds were being withheld until after the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 30 July, where a new governing committee for the Aro Valley Community Council (AVCC) will be elected.

Cook said: "The city council's officers will need to be satisfied the Aro Valley has proper systems in place and that they are functioning well."

"If the outcome of the Aro Valley's AGM means that council officers and myself, as head of the grants committee, aren't satisfied that the committee is able to function properly and receive public money, that money will be withheld."

Cook said one of the key concerns was that people who were elected to the AVCC committee might also intend to be paid by the committee to carry out work. That would be a significant conflict of interest because people's financial interests could

have their decision-making, she said. "It would be fair to say that we have serious concerns at this time. People's inability to recognise that they have a financial conflict of interest is alarming. "People don't seem to understand that they can't be on the committee and at the same time be employed by the committee. It's completely out of order."

Cook said other concerns included the practice of signing blank cheques, the way petty cash was used, and recent "vitrinolic" attacks on the AVCC's co-chairs.

Barry Thomas, who is currently on the AVCC committee and has been paid to carry out work for it, denied there was any issue. Via email, he said: "AVCC has its own constitution and within that constitution there are clear rules about conflicts of interest... which have been stringently followed.

"People only do work in the community because they care, because they feel connections and when that involves weeks of work why on earth not pay them... pay more people – is what I say..."

Valley resident Martin Wilson, who said he would stand for the committee if nominated, has had a contract with the AVCC to run the annual fair. But he said that people paid by the AVCC could be on the committee "as long as they abide by the conflicts of interest policies. That means, they don't partake of any debate or vote regarding the subject and activities of their



Tree felled by storm

A major pedestrian access way from Aro St to the Terrace was blocked for weeks after a cypress tree in the park was brought down by the mid-June storm. The path was cleared by WCC in July, although not before locals had hand-sawed away enough foliage to allow pedestrian access.



Above: After the storm. Below: Before

employment, and a few other requirements. "We are a small community, and need all the resources we can efficiently lay our hands on. It is merely a matter of handling the conflicts of interest correctly."

Cook said she remained hopeful that the AVCC would elect a committee that would be in a fit state to receive the grant money: "We will certainly continue to work with the committee to get things functioning so we can release the money."

Her fellow Lambton Ward councillor, Iona Samet, echoed Cook's concerns, saying that she had always admired Aro's "strong and thriving community", but "ongoing conflicts" were a concern. "Given ratepayer money is at stake, it is important that all communities receiving money from the council have excellent processes in place to manage that money," she said.

"The co-chairs and many people in the community have worked very hard to resolve some of these conflicts and I hope to see those conflicts put to bed and the AVCC continuing their great work in the community."

Co-chair's report from Bridget

Money – as they say, 'it makes the world go around'.

They also say that, "Money is the source of all evil," or if you're an ABBA fan, it's just "money, money, money." But whatever is said, it seems that the Aro Valley has been struck by the money bug.

There seems to be a belief held by some that good things cannot be achieved without salary being paid. What then does this say of all the amazing things that happen in the Valley by unpaid volunteers? The *Valley Voice* is made without salary changing hands. The editors are unpaid volunteers, the people contributing the stories are unpaid, the deliverers are unpaid; indeed, it is even being printed for free by the lovely folk down at Service Printers Ltd, because they believe in helping our community.

And what about the other great activities made possible because of volunteers – people sell Christmas trees, organise events (remember the sell-out history film nights, the talk on The Terrace Gaol, the Town Belt meetings), and volunteers are also involved in management/admin (e.g. grant writing, financial reporting, policy development, council submissions). Just last weekend, the community centre computers were 'defragged' by some kind Valley-ite. Now, I'm not entirely sure what 'de-fragging' is but it sounds important *and* it was done for free!

Back to grass roots

The Aro Valley Fair used to be run by the community. That was how I first got involved in 2011 and I will never forget the sense of achievement that I had in participating in something so great, and of course the "fun" that we had at the end when the truck got stuck in the mud! It saddens me that in subsequent years there has been a shift from this grass-roots model. There is no need. It only disconnects the community.

The other point is that the AVCC operates on a relatively small budget. We are also a community group. If a service can be provided for 'free', then any profit that is made by the community can be returned to the community as a whole. We can keep hall hire down, making the centre more accessible; we can provide more community assets. A recent Aro Valley survey indicated that the community would like a screen

and projector in the hall, and a swing for the tree in the park. Whether either is possible will depend on whether the WCC, as the owner of the facilities, is amenable to each activity, but also, whether the AVCC has the money to support such activities. Isn't this what we should be striving for – community money for the good of the wider community, not for the pockets of a select few individuals who want to get paid for helping out?

Of course, my stance on this matter has resulted in vehement opposition from some, and quite frankly, the abuse that I, and others, have received by simply attempting to get clearer frameworks and policies/procedures in place seems uncalled for. But it is not for me to decide. Attend the 2013 AGM and vote. Or better still, join the committee and help ensure that our community centre remains in the hands of our community. A strong, positive, and principled AVCC committee will see the Aro Valley through.

Co-chair's report from Madeleine

I think it would be fair to say that it's been a tough year.

While there have been some great moments – such as working with the regional council to make sure we're still able to catch our bus to the railway station (and gain evening and weekend services), helping to provide some awesome general interest meetings and film nights, lobbying to keep the Devon Street Gutly as green space, negotiating the boundaries of the area covered by the Aro Valley's heritage protection rules with the city council (a work in progress) – there's also been a lot of sorting out the AVCC's policies and procedures, especially issues around employment and conflicts of interest, and dealing with some very vocal people.

Bad behaviour has ranged from email and text bullying, to aggressive drunken appearances at meetings, and distributing pamphlets with wild and defamatory insinuations of misbehaviour on the part of the AVCC committee. Responding to the demands of these people can take hours of the co-chairs' time each week, leaving little for the concerns of the rest of our community – and to be honest, we can no longer keep up with the barrage.

The co-chair experience

My first experience of being an AVCC co-chair was when I joined Jane O'Leighlin part-way into the 2011-12 term (replacing Donna Congilton). In many ways that was a much easier and more enjoyable experience. While there were some differences of opinion and approach between individual committee members, and between the co-ordinator and some members of the community, nobody accused us of being 'unconstitutional' by not having formal General Meetings or any other deviations from a strict interpretation of the AVCC constitution.

We got on with things, from producing Peoples Republic of the Aro Valley T-shirts, organising a highly successful Xmas tree fundraiser in partnership with the Aro Valley Preschool and Te Aro School, and providing activities and events at the Hall, to fighting property developer Mehdal Yassine's crazy plan for cliff top hotels over Aro Street and resolving the zoning of the old service station site – now home to the Garage Project. For the record, the AVCC has never opposed the brewery and is delighted to have such an addition to the Valley. But we did negotiate conditions that should prevent the future construction of an apartment or office block covering 100% of the site.

The changing committee

With a change of people involved in the committee in mid-2012 and a fresh look at some of our practices, many of us came to realise that we needed to balance the slightly anarchic 'she'll be right' tendencies of the Aro Valley with some more transparent and accountable procedures. In particular, we needed better employment practices to give everybody in the community a fair chance to apply for paid work associated with the Community Centre, whether on the School Holiday Programme or odd jobs.

Not everybody has been prepared to understand that the committee is responsible to the community for managing financial conflicts of interest. It is not enough to put your hand up and say "I have a conflict of interest" – you must be able to prove that you were not in any way in a position to influence any decision in which you stand to gain personally.

Despite these difficulties, we have made considerable progress in getting

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hope that this continues with the next committee. If not, we can expect to have difficulty getting funding – from the city council, government departments or from charitable trusts – as all of these bodies need to have confidence that the money will be spent responsibly.

I would urge everybody who cares about the Aro Valley to come to the AGM on the 30th July, and help elect a committee that will put the needs of the community it represents first.

Treasurer's report from Mattie

Over the last year the Aro Valley Community Council Committee has gone to great effort to put better financial and employment policies in place. This is so the resources of the AVCC serve the Aro Valley Community at large, and not a select few who, in the past, have enjoyed paid jobs without due employment processes being followed, cheap rent, and free storage space or photocopying facilities. It is no coincidence, therefore, that those who enjoyed such benefits have since been pestering and providing much misinformation about those who are addressing these issues. There are many great people trying to support our community. Please come to the AGM to show your support for a committee free of financial conflicts of interest.

Come to the AGM

The new Aro Valley Community Council will be elected at its Annual General Meeting on **Tuesday, 30 July 7.30pm**

**Aro Valley Community Hall
48 Aro St**

Anyone who missed the postal nominations deadline can put themselves forward on the night. **Come along and VOTE!!**

We apologise for incorrectly spelling the name of former Community Centre co-ordinator Linda Beaton in the May 2013 issue of *Valley Voice* - Editors, VV.

Halo households wanted for the Aro Valley

A possum on a power line was a common sight in Aro Valley until the 1990s, when possum trapping began. (Photo: Greater Wellington Regional Council)

On July 24th at 7.30pm in the Aro Valley community hall, Ewan Kelsall, a Biosecurity Officer with the Wellington Regional Council, will talk to us about pest control in the Wellington region and what we can do in our home gardens to enhance the 'halo effect' of Zealandia.

Since the predator proof fence up there was completed in 1999, the endangered native birds liberated in the Sanctuary have been spilling over into Aro Valley. First tui, then kaka made their presence felt, and more recently Kererū are often seen. Saddlebacks and robins are also flying over from Zealandia into the suburbs. They are nesting and living in reserves outside of the fence but are vulnerable to rats, hedgehogs, cats and mustelids. Smaller birds like kingfishers, grey warblers, fantails, silvereyes and finches do live in the Valley but in much smaller numbers than they would be if there were fewer pests competing for the same food.

GWRC has controlled possums and maintained rat lines on public land above Aro Valley outside Zealandia's fence for many years. We can extend this good work by trapping

pests in our own gardens. Rats and hedgehogs eat a huge amount of native invertebrates which would otherwise be bird food. If you have a compost heap, you need a rat trap nearby. Ewan will explain how to install traps and bait stations in your garden.

Sir Paul Callaghan left us with a dream of NZ being predator-free by 2025. Thinking nationally, working locally, we can work towards this. Do you remember how impossible a smoke-free policy in public places once seemed? Yet this is standard practice today. With the help of local 'halo' households, we can bring plenty of native bird song back into the valley. Imagine how wonderful it was here just 200 years ago.

• For more information, contact Julia Stace: jwstace@gmail.com

**PUBLIC MEETING
Backyard Pest Control**

Aro Valley Community Hall - 48 Aro St
Wednesday, 24 July at 7.30 pm.

Ewan Kelsall Biosecurity Officer Policy Wellington Regional Council will speak on Backyard Pest management.

"21 of our bird species have been wiped out by introduced pests" (Forest & Bird #347)

AVCC NEWS!! AVCC NEWS!! AVCC NEWS!! AVCC NEWS!!

Congratulations to Karen MacIntyre who is the winner of our 2013 Aro Valley Survey Competition. This survey was available to people on the day of the Fair. See 'Stormy Meeting' story, pg 4, for a brief summary of the results. The full results will be posted SOON on www.arovalley.org.nz

AVCC Policies to be ratified are now online at: www.arovalley.org.nz/avcc-policies.html

Secrets of the Waimapihi revealed

Last month, *Valley Voice* received an email from a resident, saying, "I recently went for a run in George Denton Park and came across the house/hut in the park at the top of Holloway Road. Does anyone know much about it? Why it is there, if you can hire it, etc?"

The answer, says Holloway Road resident and local councillor Stephanie Cook, is that the hut dates from the 1980s, and "was used as a plant nursery by residents who developed the area about 25-30 years ago. It was a community regeneration project to improve an area that was full of gorse and dead cars! "They sourced local seedlings and grew them. They used voluntary and labour scheme workers and were supported by the council."

Another Holloway Road resident, Frances Forsyth, says the hut is called "The Lighthouse", "because it looked like one to our small children when it was first built." Two architects had a hand in it, Forsyth says, including David McGill, who lives on Haines Terrace, just off Holloway Road.

The Lighthouse has had a colourful history, and Aro local Julia Brooke-White recalls a "very successful" Fringe Festival performance in the grounds of the hut, at night.

Sadly the hut has no running water or toilet facilities, and the windows have been vandalised. Nonetheless, Forsyth acts as its contact person and takes booking from anyone wishing to use it "despite its limitations". She and others in the Waimapihi Trust would like to see the building used more often, and have it repaired, "and are working slowly towards that end".

• For bookings, please contact Frances Forsyth on 04 384 8891.

Stormy meeting debates Aro future

Robust views were expressed about how the Aro Valley Community Council (AVCC) is being run at a general meeting last month.

The meeting began with AVCC committee co-chair Bridget Stocker and treasurer Mattie Timmer summarising the results of a survey of 80 locals at this year's Aro Fair.

The survey showed that Aro's "proximity" to the central city is its number one attraction, followed by the people (although, oddly, "neighbours" featured among people's biggest annoyances). The native bush, the Garage Project and the "microclimate" also received mentions.

The biggest annoyances were crime and parking (mentioned by 30% of respondents), closely followed by traffic. A couple of respondents also mentioned "drinking in the park" and "drunken, noisy, glass-smashing students".

Better transport was the one thing that would improve Aro life. Four people also requested a wine bar, and three people a restaurant. Yoga was a popular demand for classes at the hall, while many also wanted to be able to have films screened there.

When it came to the AVCC, most respondents wanted it to focus on preserving the Valley's historic character, environmental work and "lobbying". The meeting then turned to general business, including the question of how the Aro Valley's boundaries are defined, which does not appear to be clear at present.

A sub-committee will consider how the Valley's boundaries should be drawn up. It includes Barry Thomas, Russell Taylor, Mattie Timmer, Andy Grant, Charles Barrie, James Grant and Chary Inwood. In an often heated general debate that followed, a number of residents either swore at the chair, shouted or were abusive towards other members.

Andy Grant criticised the committee co-chairs for not holding enough general meetings where residents could express their views.

Stocker replied that the committee was aware of its responsibility in this area, and was now organising more general meetings than previous committees had.

The number of people who have resigned from the AVCC committee this year – three – was then discussed, with

differing views offered as to whether this was a significant concern or not.

Marlin Wilson said there needed to be a clearer distinction between the wider AVCC, which could include everyone in the Valley, and the committee, which carries out the AVCC's wishes – but also acts with delegated authority in between meetings of the whole community.

Barry Thomas said the AVCC's constitution had been "run roughshod" over, and tabled a commentary by lawyer Sue Shore on the process around the resignation of community centre co-ordinator Linda Beaton. Andy Grant also asked questions about Beaton's resignation, but was told that the details of the mediation between her and the AVCC could not legally be discussed. Russell Taylor voiced concerns that the committee was not representing him and others in the community, and that there needed to be more clarity about the AVCC's funding and whether it was secure in coming years.

He also raised concerns about the changing nature of the Valley, saying: "Where have all the nutters gone?"

In addition to the report above, we offered people at the meeting the opportunity to reflect on it further, to a maximum of 200 words each. This is what we received (defamatory statements have not been published):

Charles Barrie says:

What is in the water in Aro Valley?!!? What magic flows through the suburban depths of Waimapihi that makes its residents (at least those who attend AVCC meetings) so inspirationally passionate, yet so frustratingly belligerent? I believe in Aro Valley, and I believe in the Magic of Waimapihi...so let's all do our best to keep the passion, and let go of the belligerence!

Julia Brooke-White says:

Bridget Stocker (co-chair) and Mattie Timmer (Treasurer) conducted a survey of residents at the 2013 Aro Valley Fair (a lot of work). They opened the evening with a powerpoint presentation (a lot more work) from those 80 responses.

This was followed by so much disruption, that after two hours attempting to deal with the current items on the agenda, the meeting had to be abandoned.

The next public meeting is the AGM on 30 July. Let's hope that there are still some members of the Aro Valley

community willing to continue the long hours and good work done by the current committee, despite the relentless criticism they will have heard.

The Aro Valley Community Council is responsible for directing the co-ordinator, for updating policy that guides the decision making, for dealing with issues that arise with the hall and the park and for overseeing regular events like the fair, Xmas trees sales and the school holiday programme. AVCC liaises with Te Aro School and the pre-school where their interests overlap. AVCC has also organised film and history evenings on specific Valley topics. The survey at the fair showed that there is great appreciation of these local highlights. The work of the AVCC underpins what makes the Aro Valley such a remarkable place to live.

Barry Thomas says:

Andy Grant said a lot, questioned a lot and did so very much to the point... A meaningless survey usurped most of the meeting... Martin made a good attempt to discuss the AVCC constitution but the chair had let the meeting run out of time. I put up a motion to co-ordinate a group to investigate AVCC boundaries which was the only decision passed in the three hours. Less than half the agenda was covered but at least many of the people in the community got to say things they had been prevented from saying over the past 8 months. No reports were given and no minutes or accounts were presented or accepted. As Tarlovsky describes art... "a purging Trauma".

Martin Wilson says:

At last! A long-overdue General Meeting of our Community Council; some people expressed themselves unabashedly. My contributions were, firstly, that we, the people of Aro Valley, are the Council, and the Committee should seek our input and mandate for their actions. This has been sadly lacking through no fault Council meetings for a whole year, and a tiny, shrinking Committee that has not been acting responsibly, effectively, or transparently. Secondly, we should start work now to prepare any constitutional amendments, ready for the AGM. I believe our constitution is very good, but needs some clarifications, and updating. I presented draft amendments for viewing and discussion; although the Chair moved on without the meeting viewing them and no action taken. Thirdly, when someone put a motion, I raised the point that according to our constitution we use consensus for decision-making.

Strangely, no-one there knew how to do that. I reiterated my recommendation that in future we ensure our Committee have the necessary skills to facilitate meetings effectively, and act according to our constitution, both of which have been lacking this year. People with the appropriate skills should come forward to lead our community into a positive new era.

Bridget Stocker says:

People choose how they behave in meetings. The committee should also work together and not against each other.

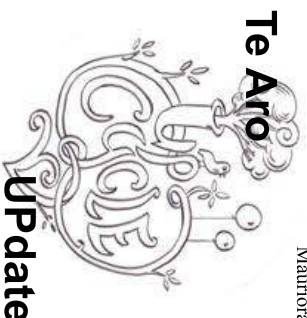


Garden notes by Charles Barrie
Well, the winter chill is certainly here, and while things may be slowing down in the garden, there are big changes happening in Kai o te Aro.

Firstly, Linda has moved on from the Community Centre to bigger and better things, and I on behalf of Kotia would like to take this opportunity to say a MASSIVE thank you to all the support she has given us. From day one of her time at the Community Centre, Linda was right behind Kai o te Aro, giving us materials, plants and advice, helping us with funding proposals, providing space in the Community Centre, and generally being an advocate for our group and the work we are trying to do. I will miss Linda and wish her many blessings on what she decides to do next.

In other changes, the Medbank grant which has enabled me to spend time each week supporting the development of Kai o te Aro is coming to an end. It has been a great year and I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to spend more time working on this project. A lot happened over the last year: a redesign of our visual identity (thanks Yasmine el Othfi), a growth in our volunteer numbers, developing relationships with other organisations, running our yoga in the garden workshops, providing fresh produce to Hays Deli, making huge steps forward in our community composing plans, deepening our relationship with Te Aro School and beginning to use the gardens to train horticultural apprentices to name some personal highlights.

Change is an inevitable part of life: we can resist it, or we can participate in it... and Kotia has always been pretty apt at the latter! We are currently exploring ways in which we can fine tune the process of Kai o te Aro to make it more easily managed, easier for new people to engage with and better suited to serve the needs of our community in the times to come. Please watch this space for an update of where we think we are heading next!



Things are well underway in our upcycled bottle greenhouse project, and the pile of bottles in the Te Aro School swimming pool is growing and growing!

We are also now collecting bottles at the Aro Valley Community Centre, so you will see a wheeled bin outside the front door for that purpose. If you have any CLEAN 1.5L or 2L plastic soft drink bottles (no. 1 plastic), we want them!

Jamie Murphy (a long time Arogardener) will be coming on board with the project shortly and will be helping us to finalise the design of the greenhouses and then facilitate the construction process. At this stage we are hoping to have two workshops to put the two greenhouses together: the first on Sat 27th July at the Kotia orchard, and the second on Sat 3rd up at Te Aro School - watch this space for more information. Entries are now being accepted for our Upsyde competition in which you can win some great prizes through entering your best answers to the following question:

“What could you make to help our gardens grow from something that would otherwise end up in the landfill?”

There are winter and runner up prizes in both a Te Aro School pupil and Community Member categories. The deadline for entry is Monday 29th July and winners will be announced at the community workshop on Sat 3rd April. Entry forms can be picked up from the Aro Valley community center or by emailing arogardener@gmail.com or phone Charles on 0274 30 1906.

Valley's role in helping immigrants integrate

By ESOL teacher Wendy Vink

The Aro Valley Community Centre offers a unique service to its local community and the Wellington community as a whole.

There are no other regular free English lessons for speakers of other languages (ESOL) that I am aware of which offer tuition to permanent resident and non-permanent residents alike. Year by year we welcome immigrants but we also attract learners who enter New Zealand for a variety of reasons apart from living here permanently. These latter students too are so grateful to find us and get help integrating into the social and work environments in which they have ended up needing to live.

All our students inform us of the struggle they face participating in New Zealand society. Language skills are essential, as are the initial friendships they establish from class and the encouragement and support they receive from each other.

As over past years, I have simply loved working with such willing and appreciative students. I am privileged to help provide basic tools to enable their learning and am grateful to our Aro Valley Community Coordinators as they continue the hard work to facilitate this.

There are fluctuations in attendance, but only those we now expect every year, i.e. those arising from the very nature of the community we serve. Many students are older and juggle responsibilities with children and grandchildren who are attempting to make their way in a new country. Their main issues continue to be those of ill health (often serious for the elderly); bad weather (many walk to class or depend on public transport); return visits to home countries; the rise in opportunities to attend daily classes at other venues; and the rise of opportunities to gain regular work.

Finally, I would like to thank AVCC yet again for the service you provide for Wellington's non-native English speakers.



Storm warning
Ian McKinnon, Lambton ward councillor

It is Sunday and the vicious southerly storm of 19-22 June is abating as I write. It wreaked havoc in parts of the city, particularly the south coast, and further, electricity was cut off to a number of households.

When temperature plummets, when fallen trees block access and when infrastructure is seriously damaged, it is a time to ask ourselves how well prepared we are in our home. Whatever the major disruption, there is every possibility we will be isolated for a period. Are we prepared?

The city council has distributed thousands of booklets which list requirements in times of an emergency, as does the Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office (WREMO) website. Preparation is important so let this storm remind us: water, First Aid kit (with necessary medicines), torch and radio (batteries), food, too paper and plastic bags, and face masks, to name just some. If you live upstairs, to enable free hands in an emergency, have such items stored in a backpack.

Responsibility for resilience doesn't just apply to individuals, though, for a city must also respond. Heritage gives a sense of place but if a building is earthquake prone (i.e. below 33% of the New Building Code) and the owner won't or can't strengthen it, if parts could threaten life, consideration must be given by city regulators to its demolition. Further, there must be reliable access in and out of the city, enabling the immediate movement of both people and goods, and this obviously means not just one but various access routes.

The storm was vicious but serves as a reminder, too, of another important aspect, also promoted by the city: know your neighbours - you will need each other. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any concerns: ian.mckinnon@wcc.govt.nz

Aro Valley Community Pre-school

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Email: arovalley@clear.net.nz

aorovalleypresschool.blogspot

GO NZ

REGULAR HALL USERS

Day	Time	Activity & Cost	Contact
Monday	7.15 - 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Kohu)	Yi Ching Mao 384 3588
	6.00 - 8.00pm	Copoeia (\$10 casual /\$40 - 8 classes)	Bobby Semu 027 6961708 bobbysema@gmail.com
Tuesday	12.00 - 1.00pm (Term time only)	Sit and Be Fit (\$3 per class)	Kathy McConville Contact: AVCC 04 384 8499
	5.30 - 6.30pm	Nia Classes	Alison Henderson 04 728 4618 021 861 849 alison@zenisation.co.nz
	7.30 - 9.00pm (excluding 16 July)	West Coast Fling social dance (experienced dancers)	Tim Gooddard 021 207 5001
Wednesday	7.15 - 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Kohu)	Yi Ching Mao 384 3588
	6.30 - 8.00pm (Term time only)	Starjam	Genevieve@starjam.org 2121497
			021 782 846
Thursday	6.00 - 7.00pm	Samba Hilary Mitchell & Fabiola Stevenson	Hilary Mitchell Hilary_Rice@vaw.ac.nz 021 230 8732
	7.30 - 9.00pm	Yoshukai Karate (\$10 a week - pay what you can attend. Includes 2 Weekly classes Northern Community Centre)	Colin Berry 027 249 3542 • 475 9985
Friday	7.15 - 8.15am	Tai Chi Class (Kohu)	Yi Ching Mao 384 3588
	10.00 - 11.30am	Chinese Ballroom Dancing Group	Yvonne Curry 938 7687 • 021 212 1635 17yvonne@163.com
Saturday	11.00 - 12.00pm	ZUMBA Fitness (\$15/\$10 with ID) No classes 15 June or 6 July.	Rafael Ferrer 382-8232 www.clubnauton.com.nz
	1.00 - 3.00pm (last Saturday of the month)	Capoeira (27 July 2013) FREE	Bobby Semu bobbysema@gmail.com
Sunday	9.30 - 2.30pm	Forward in Faith	Shadeek Marmute smarmute@yahoo.com 021 244 8045

Unspeakable secrets unveiled in new novel



The Valley's quirks and foibles have been laid bare in a satirical novel entitled *Unspeakable Secrets of the Aro Valley* by political blogger Danyly McLauchlan.

The novel, published this month by VUP, details a hunt for a hidden artefact of great power, conceived somewhere in the Valley by a sinister secret society many decades ago.

As the book's back cover blurb sets out, the story takes in "sleepy bohemian neighbourhood ... an ancient legend from the ancient past ... an explicit sex scene, then a struggle for ultimate power. And a final, unspeakable secret."

Along the way, the book finds room for a megalomaniacal but nerdy would-be dictator, a voluprious faith healer, a menacing tower looming over the Valley, a hidden temple, and something called



VALLEY VOICE

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Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not of the Aro Valley Community Council (AVCC) unless adopted at a general meeting.

AVCC co-chairs 2012-13:

Bridget Stocker

Madeleine Rashbrooke

Secretary: Barry Thomas

Treasurer: Maite Timmer

Committee members:

Jane O'Loughlin, Julia Brooke-White, Clary Inwood, Jay Buzenberg

Aro Valley Community Centre

Coordinator:

(to be appointed)

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the 'E-Z-Wellness Centre'. The inspiration for the novel, McLauchlan says, came from reading books like *The Da Vinci Code*, and having the idea "for a satire of it, in which the secrets of the universe, instead of being hidden in Paris or London, were hidden in the Aro Valley."

He had lived on Epuni Street as "a really poor student", though he now lives in Wadestown with his family and works at Victoria University in the School of Biological Science.

"When I lived on Epuni Street," he recalls, fondly, "the house next to us was an unbelievable student dive."

Every room in this damp, mouldy, rat-infested house was subdivided with MDF partitions: "To get the kitchen you had to walk through about 6 bedrooms with mattresses lying on them."

However, his targets in the novel are more often at the other end of the Valley's spectrum: "People in the Valley do tend to be overly concerned with spiritual matters," he says. "Often when

Lasenby honoured – "though don't get too carried away."

Aro Valley resident, author Jack Lasenby, was recognised this year with the unveiling of a plaque in his honour on the Writers Walk along Wellington's waterfront.



Jack and Lady Janine Mateopara at the unveiling of Jack's plaque on the Wellington Writer's Walk. Jack's quotation: 'I want to live among people who believe in truth and freedom... I want to discuss ideas... I want books...'. Photo courtesy of *The Wellington Writer's Walk Committee*, 2013.

Jack writes mainly for children – about thirty books published. He's had a variety of jobs including deer culling and teaching, and first wrote poetry and then short stories for adults. As we sit in his house on Aro Street with two gigantic sets of antlers looming from the balcony of his mezzanine-story above, Jack comments that his bush background helped when people implied there was something queer about a man writing for children. Writing for children is not an interior art, and Jack's books do point out that the best children's books equal anything in the adult literature.

His musings on the perception of children's literature echo his sentiments about humanity as a whole. "Life is made up of competitive status displays," he said. "It's about appearance, about demonstrating superiority." His analogy is the opera when for many, being seen, and in frenzy, is as important as the music. Drawing from literature, Jack points to the scene where Tolstoy's adulterous Anna Karenina is publicly humiliated in the theatre by somebody whose motives

house in Auckland where McCabon defended his practice and illustrated his argument with drawings sketched across one entire wall of the room, while Bill Wilson, leader of the Group Architects, questioned Colim's reasoning. Hugely stimulating. But McCabon's defence of abstraction was unconvincing.

When asked whether life in Aro Valley inspires him in his own work, Jack Lasenby remains noncommittal. Having lived in the Aro Valley for about 15 years, he values the convenience of being so close to town yet having a vegetable garden and fruit trees, definite benefits that fit well with his opposition to mindless, self-indulgent, status-tourism in an over-populated world that simply "cannot accommodate unnecessary travel. Wearing out the world."

The interconnectedness of the Valley, which has arisen not through any grand design, but rather because of a lack of planning, is another feature that Jack finds intriguing. People learn consideration through proximity. The vista from his window of back gardens, and trees bobbing above fences delights him, but he's careful not to romanticise the Aro Valley. It's now far from its working class origins, with a fair share of professionals or semi-professionals, as well as numbers of students. Whether that's good or bad is probably a moot point. "Celebrity" culture, he it about a person or a suburb, is not something Jack believes in. As I am about to depart after an intense two-and-a-half hours of discussion, Jack quotes Socrates: "The unexamined life is not worth living." He's keen to stress that one should honestly examine oneself, one's own contribution to the world, and not get too swept away. And then in his own words: "People need to step back from all that bullshit and ask themselves – what does it all mean?"

By Bridget Stocker. Thanks to Julia Stace for arranging the meeting and participating in the wonderful discussion.



L-R: Sir James McNeish, Elizabeth Knox, Joy Cowley, Jack Lasenby - who each had a quote unveiled (Photo courtesy of *The Wellington Writer's Walk Committee*, 2013)