

Chocolate Box Lunch

On the coldest Sunday of the year, over 50 members met at the Taradale RSA for lunch. The room was beautifully laid out with a small box on each table filled with chocolates. After a warming meal, the “Chocolate Box” part of the day began, with Branch Co-ordinator Faye Sherriff introducing seven member speakers.



First was Liz Gunn who spoke about the 1855 Wairarapa Earthquake, which occurred on 23 January with a magnitude 8.2. This is the most powerful recorded earthquake in New Zealand and resulted from movement at least 140 kilometres along the Wairarapa Fault, on the eastern edge of the Rimutaka Range.

This was followed by two stories by Brian Field, one regarding a cray fishing trip at Ocean Beach, and another recounting how his father landed a Tiger Moth on the beach at Ocean Beach.

Erica Tenquist thanked members for giving her the chance to write another book, this time aimed at child amputees. Each page of the book will be illustrated. She mentioned that we have two copies of her first book “Legless with Cuthbert” in our Branch Library which members can borrow.

Next up was Chris King who spoke of her family settling in Otago and a forebear being the first white boy born there. She went on to mention an uncle who was captured in Crete in WWII and was a Prisoner of War. He later had a lung removed and died at the young age of 58.

Richard McKenzie was a volunteer firefighter for 42 years and had a couple of near misses. One was fighting a bush fire in Wainuiomata; when the wind changed, he was surrounded by fire. Another was a house fire on Busby Hill when searching for people who may have been trapped in bedrooms. He showed us his blistered fireman’s helmet from that episode.

Beverley Fullerton-Smith spoke of her husband’s and children’s connection to the Umbers family and two brothers who came to New Zealand in the 1820s and 1830s.



Philip Mardon rounded out the afternoon with a talk about the Pernel Orchard Blossom Festival floats. Both Philip and his brother David were involved with the Pernel float which won Champion of Champions in the 1963 festival. Philip displayed a large coloured photo of the float, which was decorated entirely with fresh blooms and foliage. His entertaining talk explained how it was built and that they had smoke coming from a chimney, while brother David steered inside from the front. Another of their floats –

Castles in the Air – won in the Natural Blossom and Orchardists sections in 1965 and was also named Champion of Champions.

Member Athol Curtis thanked everyone for their talks. All up it was an entertaining afternoon. Thanks to Faye and her helpers, and to the entertaining speakers, who, just like a box of chocolates, spoke on a variety of subjects.

Marie Nichol

