

BRIDGING THE GAP



VOLUME 45

ISSUE 4

DEC 2023



Jean-Paul
Tedeschi

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Everyone!

Let's start with the Melbourne Cup when the decorations by the committee were fantastic, but next year we should have a look at buying some new ones for the club.

Our Christmas party and trophy presentation was well attended and Denise, with the help of Carol and Rob, did a great job, with a great atmosphere from members.

We were very lucky to meet Hannah, the granddaughter of Margaret McRobbie, and her friends who came in October to film our club members in action and in words. The film is actually going into the best short film festival in Perth. Good luck Hannah and your friends.

On the 30th of January we became the proud owners of 80 new chairs, purchased with generous donations by Eleanor Rowley, Carol Sexton, and Lottery West. Thank you.

We at the committee have been working towards the leveling of the side car park - IT WILL HAPPEN. Soon!

I think we can say Australia Day with the lamb on the BBQ was a great success. With nearly 16 tables the room

was noisy, with everyone enjoying themselves and there were great prizes for the raffle.

This year's competition has not started yet, but remember the Mix and Match on Saturday 10th February. If you are a good player come and share your knowledge with a less experienced member.

The KDBC Congress is coming up fast on the 16th and 17th of March. The catering committee will be requesting some finger food and there will be some posters for donations please and also for helpers. Don't be shy, we need your help!

Jenny Tedeschi and her committee are having an open day on the 22th February from 12 to 2 PM, a couple of weeks before the new lessons for beginners. If you know anybody interested please advise them or Jenny. We need new members.

Well, that is it for me. I will leave you with one thought:

NO MATTER WHERE I GO, I CAN ALWAYS MAKE NEW FRIENDS AT THE BRIDGE TABLE. (Martina Navratilova)

JP

WELLBEING OFFICER



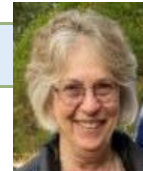
Please contact Anita Davis on 0448282164 or at the club if you know of a member who is ill, hospitalised or suffering bereavement and Anita will respond accordingly on behalf of the club.

Anita also assists should you have difficulty finding a partner for Bridge.



BTG EDITOR

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NOTE: For our quarterly *Bridging The Gap* newsletters,

Please send/give me any photos, current news or stories (e.g. Bridge events, holiday reports, special birthdays etc.), jokes, notices or articles to include in our next newsletter. More photos of club members in action does make for a more engaging 'read'.

Please advise if you'd like your profile photo to be updated for future use!

<http://www.kalamunda.bridgeaustralia.org/index.asp> kdbclub@bigpond.com



On Australia Day big thanks were given by Dianne Barker, with a bottle of wine each, to current members of our Directing Team: Lynne Roberts, Rob McMahon, Denise Borger (Chief Director), Ross Pringle, Alan Harper, and Jean-Paul Tedeschi.

(Absent: Cora Brown)

Thanks to Kate for organising.

CLUB EVENTS AND RESULTS

NOVICE PLATE COMPETITION <15MP Sat 14 Oct 2023

Much competitive fun was had by many of our novice players .
9 pairs played on the day.

Winners:

KEN BOWNESS - MEG BOWNESS



Runners up:

GERRY DAVIES - DENNIS MCKINLEY



MELBOURNE CUP COMPETITION 7 Nov 2023

Members served up the usual scrumptious lunch, sweeps, raffles and champagne.

We also played Bridge with 20 pairs Playing on the day.



Hat winners were
JOHN SHINNICK and
ANITA DAVIS

RESULTS:

Winners:

Runners up:

North/South

ERIK MOLLER - ROSS PRINGLE



KEN BOWNESS - MEG BOWNESS



East/West

LYN SHINNICK - JOHN SHINNICK



MADGE MYBURGH - STEPHEN THYER



KDBC ANNUAL AWARDS

Our club Christmas party started with presentation of awards for the year:



Championship	Winners	Championship	Winners
Individual Championship	Elizabeth McMillan	Novice Pairs < 15 MP <i>Susan Collinson Plate</i>	Ken Bowness Meg Bowness
Most Masterpoints <i>Helen Wolyniec Trophy</i>	Steve Thyer	Restricted Pairs < 50 MP <i>Gerry Riley Vase Trophy</i>	Robin Ward, Helen Ottoson
Men's Pairs <i>Rex Mizen Cup</i>	Nick Moniodis Peter Clarke	Open Pairs <i>Mike Hopper Shield</i>	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann
Women's Pairs <i>Constance McCullough Cup</i>	Wendy Harman Madge Myburgh	Knockout Pairs	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann
Mixed Pairs <i>Elfrida MacLean Trophy</i>	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann	Most Improved Pair <i>Mercia O'Meara Trophy</i>	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann
Daytime Pairs < 300 MP Sponsor - DVG Cup	Alan Puckey Gudrun Kemmer	Monday AM Champion Pair <i>Vera Kenworthy Memorial Trophy</i>	Steve Thyer Guy Gaudet
Daytime Teams Commencing 2022 < 300 MP	Ross Pringle Alan Puckey Jenny Tedeschi Gudrun Kemmer	Wednesday PM Champion Pair <i>Doris Broad Plate</i>	Steve Thyer Peter Clarke
Open Teams	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann Carmen Jackson Stephen Thyer	Friday PM Champion Pair <i>Venture Cup</i>	Steve Thyer Madge Myburgh
		Saturday PM Champion Pair <i>Mike Nestor Cup</i>	Tom Lemann Kit Lemann



SOME OF OUR 2023 AWARD WINNERS



ROBIN WARD-HELEN OTTOMAN



KIT LEMANN - TOM LEMANN



ROSS PRINGLE - JENNY TEDESCHI - GUDREN KEMMER



CARMEN JACKSON - STEVE THYER



MEG BOWNESS - KEN BOWNESS



GUY GAUDET



ELIZABETH McMILLAN with our Director



WENDY HARMAN - MADGE MYBERG



NIC MONIDIS – PETER CLARKE

KDBC CHRISTMAS 2023 COMPETITION & CELEBRATIONS

KDBC CHRISTMAS PARTY COMPETITION Sat 9 Dec 2023

After all the presentations and Christmas fare, the serious part of the celebrations began. 32 pairs participated in our Christmas afternoon Bridge session.

RESULTS:

Winners:

Runners up:

North/South

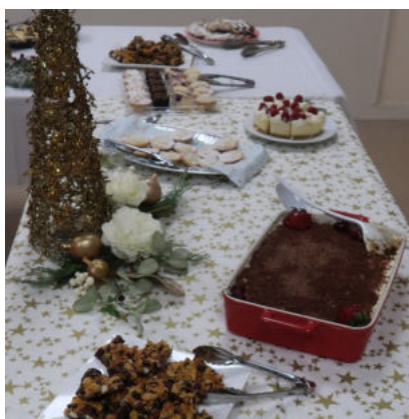


East/West



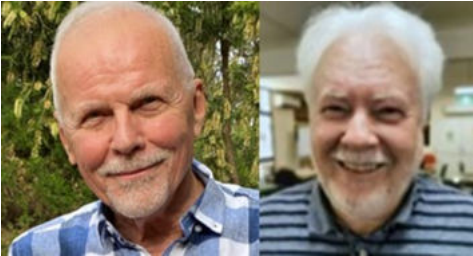


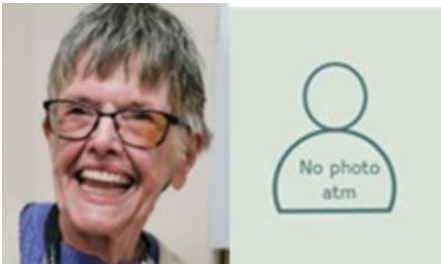
KDBC CHRISTMAS PARTY

Much fun was had by all before the afternoon's Bridge session. Members served up the usual scrumptious lunch, sweeps, raffles and champagne. (Amazing desserts came during the afternoon break).



KDBC AUSTRALIA DAY 2024 COMPETITION & CELEBRATIONS

KDBC AUSTRALIA DAY COMPETITION Fri 26 Jan 2024
?? pairs participated in our Australia Day afternoon Bridge session.

WINNERS	SECTION A	SECTION B
North/South	ERIK MOLLER - ROSS PRINGLE 	NICOLAS MONIODIS - BETTY ROBERTS 
East/West	GEOFF BLACKLAWS - MICHELLE MCDIARMID 	ELIZABETH MCMILLEN - COLIN MEEK 



Members at play
on the day



KDBC AUSTRALIA DAY 2024 FOOD & FUN ON THE DAY

Thank you to all who helped to make it a great day!



Our members at CONGRESS STATE AND NATIONAL EVENTS Dec 2023

Code	Name of Event	Colour	ABF No	Name	Masterpoints
SEI	STEPBRIDGE DECEMBER CONGRESS - NOVICE	Red	972258	Dodd, Wendy	0.35
			1082973	Malthouse, Ronnie	0.35

Our members - SUMMARY OF RANK PROMOTIONS Dec 2023

ABF No	Name	Masterpoints	Previous Rank
Silver Local			
0972258	Dodd, Wendy	37.41	Bronze Local

GRAND SLAMS Oct-Dec 2023		
DAVID KININMONTH / JOHN EWING	7D E	SATURDAY (30-DEC-23)
MICHAEL BARKER / DAVID HARRIS	7H W	FRIDAY (29-DEC-23)
KIT LEMANN / TOM LEMANN	7D E	SATURDAY (23-DEC-23)
PETER CAMERON / DOUG HEGARTY	7D N	WEDNESDAY (20-DEC-23)
JOSEPH GAUDET / STEPHEN THYER	7D N	MONDAY (18-DEC-23)
CAROLE MCMAHON / ROBERT MCMAHON	7NT W	FRIDAY (15-DEC-23)
MICHAEL PEPPER / MARY PEPPER	7NT W	FRIDAY (15-DEC-23)
JO COLLINGS / PETER CAMERON	7NT W	FRIDAY (15-DEC-23)
BRUCE COWEN / BRUCE GARDINER	7S E	WEDNESDAY (6-DEC-23)
ELIZABETH MCMILLEN / JEAN-PAUL TEDESCHI	7NT S	MONDAY (13-NOV-23)
BARBARA BIBBY / LORRAINE STIVEY	7H E	TUESDAY (7-NOV-23)
JOSEPH GAUDET / JOE LOUIS	7H W	WEDNESDAY (1-NOV-23)
JULIE BECHELLI / GUDRUN KEMMER	7H W	WEDNESDAY (1-NOV-23)
MARY PEPPER / TRISH CHRISTY	7NT S	MONDAY (9-OCT-23)

70 Percenters			
Jul-Sep 2023			
MICHAEL BARKER	DAVID HARRIS	73.90%	FRIDAY (21-JUL-23)
GEOFF BLACKLAWS	CORA BROWN	73.20%	THURSDAY (10-AUG-23)
GORDON BROWN	SHEILA PRYCE	71.40%	SATURDAY (5-AUG-23)
Oct-Dec 2023			
SHEILA PRYCE	GORDON BROWN	71.90%	SATURDAY (7-OCT-23)
NICOLAS MONIODIS	MADGE MYBURGH	73.20%	WEDNESDAY (29-NOV-23)
DOUG HEGARTY	PETER CAMERON	70.40%	MONDAY (11-DEC-23)
TOM LEMANN	KIT LEMANN	70.60%	SATURDAY (30-DEC-23)

The **Kalamunda Open Congress** will be held on 16th and 17th March 2024. You can see full details on the MyABF site: <https://myabf.com.au/go/KDBC>

In order to register, you will first need to set up an account on MyABF: <https://www.myabf.com.au/accounts/register>.

AROUND THE CLUB (continued)

NEW MEMBERS

The Kalamunda District Bridge Club welcomes:



Graham Cowell
Robert Gill
Mary Annette Roberts
Allan Larsen
Brian Andrijich
Kathleen Wilding
Michelle McDiarmid (Returning member)

NOTE: ABF New Member's Information Kit can be found at:

https://www.abf.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ABF_New_Members_Kit.pdf



Birthdays coming up

January	February	March
Kerry Elliman	Betty Roberts	Shirley Eaton
Wendy Dodd	Kaye Prance	Sheila Pryce
Maureen Keast	Nic Moniodis	Marlene Robertson
Anne Todd	Mike Pepper	Marie France Van Hall
Eleanor Rowley	Judith Poole	Alan Sharp
Bruce Gardiner	John Offer	Michelle McDiamid
Barbara Daniels	Doug Hegarty	Raymond Datodi
Allan Larsen	Lyn Shinnick	
	Kate Sayer	
	Tosh Tielman	
	Eileen Bresland	
	Lee Sharp	
	Hilary Danskin	
	Betty Collins	
	Robert Gill	
	Sheila Bradshaw	

Julie Bechelli, Sita Weggelaar and Joan Andrews on **Joan's 99th birthday**. Joan is a life member and Julie played with her for many years until she could no longer manage. Sita also played with her. Joan is now in care at Villa Maria and is doing very well.



AROUND THE CLUB (continued)

Vale Jane Pike

Jane died on Tue 14 Nov at home with her husband, Glade, and their children with her. We extend our sincere sympathies to all the members of the family.



Jane started playing bridge at KDBC some years ago, and as well as club bridge she played social bridge regularly with a group of good friends. Her bouncy good spirits were always in evidence although she was a fiercely competitive player who gave and asked no quarter.

She will be remembered for her bright self and her abiding love of music which she shared with her friends and promoted in the community.



STORIES AND ARTICLES FROM MEMBERS

A Pilgrim's Tale by Denise Borger

So many people were aghast that I was planning to join a tour of Israel, it is right in the middle of the Middle East!! I surprised myself, overcoming my preconceived ideas – that they don't treat Westerners or women very well and they don't like Christians, I wouldn't feel safe.

It came about when I attended a "House Blessing" event for friends Armin and Judith – South African parents of my daughter-in-law and members of St John's Lutheran Church, Northbridge. There I met Graeme Lienert, Tour Organizer, and a few of the people already booked on The Holy Land Tour.

Saturday 30 September Armin, Judith and I arrived in Amman, Jordan, 2 days prior to joining the Tour Group. At Queen Alia International Airport, it was reinforced how naïve I am. Pre-paid taxi transfer, we were met by Mohammad, taken ahead of the queue, cleared in immigration very smoothly and transitioned to our taxi driver. Mohammad was so charming and friendly, he met some of the officials like brothers or cousins. This was clarified by Judith, who had noted a few "financial" handshakes occurring with the brotherly shoulder wraps.

Something that stood out in Amman Airport, was how quietly the children waited in queues with their parents. The whole atmosphere was quiet and sedate in that airport, possibly because of how quiet the children remained.

My highlight in Amman was visiting "Down Town Bazaar" – well not the bazaar itself, but The Citadel, situated on a hill top plateau with a 360° view of Amman. Being fit Aussies, we walked to the top, I could compare it to walking up Kalamunda Road without as much traffic. The photos below are of the ruins of a Roman Temple at the Citadel to honour the hero-god Hercules. There is also an even larger area of ruins for a Muslim Mosque with the entry gate still intact and a modern museum.

Trying to gauge the area of this hilltop as we walked over the ruins of the mosque, my estimates increased as we walked, and I settled on 6-8 hectares. Keep in mind I am accustomed to wheat farm paddocks. Mr Google records it as 11.6 hectares.



The museum on this site has Roman artefacts, including some glassware. You expect the pottery and some of it was very large with a few chips missing, but 2,000 year old glassware was a surprise.

For coming back down we noticed a steep stairway similar to Jacob's Ladder in Kings Park and used these stairs to make our way to iconic Hashem Restaurant. It was opened in 1948 and is famed because King Hussain has eaten there. We were NOT treated like King Hussain, more like pestilent flies. They were very busy with

local people. However, our food – flat bread, humus, falafel, dip and pickles – when it came was delicious. And they accepted our money the same as the other people. (Maybe we paid more? We will never know!)

Monday 2nd October: Armin, Judith and I returned to Jordan Airport to join the tour group as they arrived from Australia. Our Jordan tour guide met us with a tour coach for a 3 hour trip to Petra Moon Hotel, arriving at 8.30pm to a sumptuous buffet dinner.

Tuesday 3rd October: We had a Lutheran Pastor from Perth on our tour and he offered a 6am meeting time to share prepared bible readings and hymns relevant to each day's itinerary. The first light of day is my favourite time, so of course I joined in these sessions.

After breakfast we walked the short distance to the entrance of the once hidden city of Petra, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. I didn't attempt to photograph it – it is immense. A Google search records "It extends for at least **60 square kilometres** through canyons, up mountains and along dry riverbeds — most of its ruins are sized for giants". We followed a dry riverbed through towering limestone walls to enter the ancient city. The buildings are carved out of limestone and into the limestone walls of the canyon, which raises the question of "how did they achieve these massive columns, entrance arches and decorative features 40 metres high?"

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

About 2km into Petra we viewed the Treasury – which was actually a tomb for a king. We had the option to explore further at ground level OR climb the 900-step ascent to the top of a mountain. Some of our group chose to have lunch at an open-air restaurant before the climb. I joined with people who decided that vigorous exercise after a big meal was not desirable – I lived to regret not carrying a couple of lightweight snacks that day!

Our 900 steps, like everything else, were carved into the natural limestone of the mountain. They varied in every dimension, sometimes passing narrowly between 2 high walls, and other times wider with a high stone wall on one side and a big drop on the other side. Dating back to 4th century BC, these steps were showing signs of wearing away.

Local traders offered transport to and from the summit via donkeys – and the donkeys with their passenger and handler used the same steps as people walking. Fortunately, the sound of the donkeys' hooves announce their arrival, allowing enough time to move to a secure side of the steps to let them pass, especially for their downward journey when the donkeys are going quite fast and would not be able to stop. It didn't look comfortable for the passengers, particularly the downward ride. It brought to mind the image from "The Man from Snowy River" film as the lone rider and horse follow the wild brumbies down an impossible slope.

It was a really tough climb – we began asking people who were on their way back down how much longer did we still have to go. When we finally arrived, there were more buildings at the summit, and a food outlet. Against my better judgement, Judith and Armin chose to eat something before going back down – 2 days later, I wished I didn't join them!

Wednesday 4th October: We departed Petra and travelled by coach to Mt Nebo, where after 40 years in the desert Moses led the Israelites. It overlooks the Jordan River Valley, the Dead Sea, Jericho and Jerusalem. Here Franciscan monks have built a monastery over the remains of a 4th century AD monastery – the grounds and gardens are pristine.

In the afternoon we crossed into Israel via the Sheikh Hussein border crossing, which is a bridge over the Jordan River bed, which was dry and overgrown with shrubs. Our coach deposited us and our luggage, so that we could proceed through the Jordanian Security. Reloaded into the coach, we were driven across a barren no man's land between Jordan and Israel, made ominous with security fencing and razor wire.

At the Israeli Security, 6 tourists from our group (3 men and 3 women) were randomly selected to be interviewed by security. When they were cleared, we all filed through to an Israeli tour coach for the 2 hr drive to Tel Aviv. Heavy peak hour traffic was made worse by a parade in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles, an annual Jewish holy day.

Thursday 5th October: I awoke very unwell due to food eaten on Mt Petra. Our tour left for Caesarea Maritima at 7.30am. I skipped breakfast but selected some dry bread to take with me for lunch.

Caesarea is a harbour with an arena built for chariot races during the reign of King Herod. We viewed a video showing its turbulent history before walking through the ruins. I stumbled over rock steps in the arena, and seconds later, fainted – twice. Second time I remained on the ground surrounded by members of the tour until site security could arrange an escorted vehicle exit for me back to the coach. And that is how I came to know that there were 4 registered nurses in our tour group! They tag teamed my recovery care.

We were scheduled to view the Bahai Gardens at Haifa, unfortunately they were closed – our coach drove past at the base of the hillside so that we could view the ornate, ordered gardens.

Then on to Nazareth and the Church of the Annunciation, a new building dedicated to the announcement of the Incarnation by the angel Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:26–38). Gates through a perimeter stone wall opened into a courtyard. A 5-metre-wide roofed colonnade against the outer wall has benches for contemplation and the walls have mosaics of the Annunciation from many different countries. I noticed that Biblical figures in the mosaics have the features of modern day people of that country e.g. Asian mosaics have Asian facial features, also Polynesian etc.

Then on to the Church at Cana (Jesus' first miracle at the wedding when he changed water into wine). Five married couples from our tour reaffirmed their vows in this church.

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

I admit to being disappointed at Nazareth because although these historic sites were geographically close to each other, they are engulfed by a teeming, modern city.

Friday 6th October: Early start, departing 7.30am to the Mount of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, etc). This mountain top overlooks the Sea of Galilee – not a disappointment!

The church here is owned by Franciscan monks, so no speaking is allowed. However, as singing is allowed, Pastor Peter led our group in a hymn – obviously in his element! As the church is a modern one, I preferred to be outside where I could envisage Jesus teaching his disciples up here under a tree.

Down from the mountain top at the Sea of Galilee is, of course, another church called the Primacy of Peter. A number of gazebos are set in the gardens leading up to this church and Pastor Peter held a Communion Service for our group. And then, down at the waters' edge, we could paddle in the Sea of Galilee. It was awesome – a very rocky sea floor and feeder fish. Standing in water to mid-calf depth, the feeder fish swarmed our feet, nibbling away at dead skin. It felt pleasant after the initial surprise at the sensation. Oh, and the water was warm. But sadly, we had to move on. As I turned to walk out, the rock I chose to stand on tilted and so did I. Yep, I fell in and was wet up to my mid-riff. So, barefoot and trailing water, I dripped up to the coach and sat on the top step, to put my shoes on and for the next journey to Capernaum.

At Capernaum we walked in the ruins of The Second Temple, made of white stone, with excavations revealing the basalt foundations of the First Temple which was the Synagogue where Jesus taught. Directly in front of this are walls that remain of the houses of Capernaum, such as Peter's mother's house. The day was really hot and humid. Fellow tour group members were hot and uncomfortable. I on the other hand, was quite comfortable thanks to my unscheduled dunking in the Sea of Galilee, and my clothes were drying nicely.

Final stop for the day was at Yardenit – the Galilee Baptismal site on the Jordan river (this part of the Jordan still has water). Twenty of our group, wearing bathers under the hired white robes, formed a circle in the water, with less confident swimmers nearest the steps. Pastor Peter made his way around and baptised each one of us by name – until he came to a lady and said "I'm sorry I don't know your name?" and her reply was "I am Maria from Meccico". To our delight, Maria, George and Mary from Mexico had joined our circle to be baptised by Pastor Peter. They waved to their friends and encouraged more of them to come in for baptism – perhaps 8 in total. Peter did not miss a beat – he baptised them too.

Saturday 7th October: This morning, at our 6am bible time, Dale from South Australia shared something of his life story. Dale is a big guy and could always find icecream for sale at every tour stop! Dale did not remember his baptism. Like many, he was baptised as a child – although for him born 2 months premature he was baptised the day he was born because he was not expected to live. He became emotional expressing the significance for him of yesterday's baptism.

Still in Tiberius, we sailed in "The Faith Boat" on the Sea of Galilee – owned and skippered by Daniel, a Messianic Jew. Daniel is a big personality and entertained us singing some of the hymns he has written and recorded.

Next stop was Magdala, where Mary lived. It seems Mary Magdalene means Mary from Magdala. The Vatican commenced excavations for a hotel and unearthed the foundations of another synagogue, where Jesus would have taught.

A new modern church built here is Ecumenical and dedicated to women. The central foyer has pink marble columns bearing the names of women from the bible under a circular domed ceiling. Graeme directed our group to spread ourselves around the columns – and walk towards the centre singing a hymn, The Doxology "Praise God from whom all blessings flow...." that ends with "Amen" and the sound was amazing. This was a wow moment, and Graeme forgot to press record on his phone, and asked us to do it again!

A very spritely, very Irish Father then met us in one of the four side Chapels – each with its own recessed mosaic,

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

Vikki, Arianne and Olivia are Graeme's daughter-in-law and two granddaughters. Father Amin asked them up to the mosaic to place their hands in Jesus's hand as Mary has, and Father blessed them as mother and daughters.

Father Amin also challenged us! It's all very well to tour the Holy Land and be amazed and blessed by the experience BUT have you taken time to spend with the Lord. Have you taken time out to be quietly alone with the Lord? And prayed?



After dinner we learned of air strikes in Gaza and Tel Aviv and that Israel had declared war on Hamas. Graeme and I went out to use a local ATM and there were 2 young Israeli soldiers there using the machine before us. Graeme enquired and they confirmed that they were responding to being called to duty, and I wonder if they have survived? They were in their mid-twenties. (I have wept as I write this and will take a break.)

On our return to the hotel, Graeme called a group meeting and asked for our corporate permission to lodge with Canberra our individual personal information and emergency contact information, for the Australian Government to use as it deemed necessary. Agreement was unanimous. He advised us that even though we may be choosing not to view news reports, by tomorrow our families back home will be graphically informed, concerned and possibly panicking! We should expect to receive many emails.

Sunday 8th October: Mindful of Father Amin's suggestion that we take time out to spend quietly with the Lord, I started the day sitting alone on a small jetty landing down at the waters' edge of the Sea of Galilee. I thought of and prayed for the people of Israel today. The two young soldiers we encountered at the ATM, two of our tour guide Gale's five sons had been called up to their units. One of these is in Special Ops which could mean hostage extraction? Reports from home had come in overnight on the numbers of people dead and injured, and the hostages held.

At breakfast, I noticed the wait staff through different eyes. Israel enforces fixed-term military service for all Israeli Jew, Druze and Circassian citizens. Watching the waiters as they walk and work, the military bearing in their gait and actions became apparent.

Our coach departed the Tiberius hotel at 8am, a Kibbutz on our itinerary was closed, so we drove on to Beit She'an National Park. Extensive ruins, 6000 years old, with remains from Canaanite, Egyptian and Roman times have been excavated over an enormous area. Many hectares. We entered this site through the back row of a Roman amphitheatre. Pastor Peter had gone ahead to the stage area below us and stood in one of the oracles' alcoves. He delivered Caesar's lines: "Friends, Romans, countrymen..." to demonstrate how the acoustics still work with perfect clarity and volume!

Top photos are taken from top seating level of the amphitheatre, lower left is the colonnaded street leading into the theatre. Lower right is the area in the steam room where steam is produced for baths – a feature common to all Roman ruins.



A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

I think I have seen more Roman ruins in Israel than in Italy.

Leaving Beit She'an we drove 2 hours, stopping at 3 different lunch locations – all of which were closed. We were unsure if this was due to the Yom Kippur holiday weekend, or the conflict? So, we drove on to Hotel Vert at the Dead Sea. Climate change was evident in large areas of the Dead Sea with low water levels, exposing the sea bed.

Due to reduced staff numbers at Hotel Vert, we were responsible for moving our own luggage. After, which we made our way to a local Aroma Café for food, meeting back at 3.30pm for our 30 minute immersion in the Dead Sea. Warm water with 34% salt, we floated on our backs. Front facing floating is unstable and people have drowned trying it. Face and eyes must not be wet. Armin urged me to dab my wet finger on my tongue. Reluctantly, I did and it burnt. No taste, just a burn. A fine layer of salt is visible on the seabed and some of the round stones are actually balls of salt crystals.

Leaving the water, there are freshwater showers close by, and a freshwater swimming pool in the shade of the hotel. Both of these are vital aspects of achieving desalination. Oh and the beer was also refreshing!

Monday 9th October: Breakfast and another immersion in the Dead Sea. This time I decided to apply mud – thick, dark brown goo smeared over exposed skin which you allow to dry for 20 minutes before entering the salty water. Well, that mud certainly dried because it required a lot of rubbing to get it off again. Judith and Armin had applied it to their faces and went out to the freshwater showers to remove it as the mud had become uncomfortable. Can this really be good for you?? On the upside, I suffered no ill effects.

We left the Hotel Vert and the Dead Sea at 11am for Masada. Fortunately, the cable car was operating and we were taken up to the top. King Herod had a winter palace built on three levels, with the largest building on the top plateau. Standing up there, it was easy to see its superior position for defence, a steep sided mountain with a huge plateau top giving clear views for 360 degrees into the distance. A safe haven from enemies, the castle contained storerooms, cisterns and a strong defensive wall. Keep in mind that the only access back then was steps cut into the sides of the mountain going up like a spiral staircase.

Later, during the rule of the Roman Empire, after Jerusalem fell in 70AD, there was still one group of Jewish rebels who took refuge at Masada. Rome sent a legion of 8,000 soldiers to subdue these rebels. The siege lasted 16 months, until the Romans built a tower on the rampart and damaged the defensive wall.

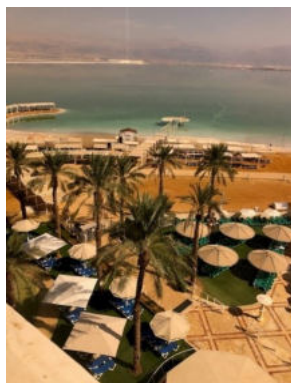
Before leaving Perth, I had never heard of Masada. A friend loaned me her very old tourist book on Israel, so I had pre-read a summary of this siege originally written by Josephus Flavius. When the rebels realised that the Romans would be able to break through the

wall the next day, the rebel leader Ben Yair called a meeting to plan a mass suicide. Rather than death or slavery by the Romans, each man would kill the members of his family. 10 men were elected to kill the other men. One man to kill the 9 remaining and finally himself. Two women and five children survived by hiding in the cisterns. They told the final chapter of the story for Josephus Flavius to record it.

Looking into the valley below this mountain top and imagining 8,000 soldiers working on the demise of the people in their safe haven which had become a prison with no means of escape I found it a solemn experience. What would I choose in their position??

From Masada the drive to Jerusalem was uneventful. We stopped at a viewing point in Jerusalem looking across to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.

Driving to our hotel we watched other tourists walking in to view the Western Wall, anticipating that would be one of the many things we would be seeing tomorrow and for the next 3 days in Jerusalem. E.g. Mount of Olives, Gethsemane, Dead Sea Scrolls, Bethlehem, "the Shepherds Fields", Western Wall and Temple Mount, Garden Tomb!



A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

At Den Boutique Jerusalem Hotel we were asked to manage our luggage again, due to staff shortages, and kitchen wait staff were also noticeably reduced.

There was a meeting to inform us that the Israeli Government had declared a "State of Emergency" and our tour group cannot leave the hotel. In case of Air Siren Warnings, we were instructed to keep a carry bag with essentials of passports/tickets and a set of clothes with shoes near our door. In the event of the air siren activating, we were instructed: Do not wait to dress – grab the exit bag and leave! Stay away from windows, people on floors 1 and 2 should make their way down to the bunker. Floors 3 and 4 gather in the centre well of the building – it was easy to find, the red hallway carpet has a huge yellow Star of David to mark this area. When I located this area, there were 3 people, not from our tour, entering rooms on either side of the star. They were journalists and had just arrived from their previous assignments in Ukraine.

And so ended our tour – we were now in evacuation mode.



Evacuation day one, Tuesday 10th October: We had a debrief on our evacuation plans directly after breakfast:

We are in voluntary lockdown in this hotel until transport by land to Jordan can be arranged. (Our original tour departure from Israel was scheduled on Emirates flights, from Tel Aviv airport.) Instead, we were now going to leave Israel by road,

through Jordan. We all need new visas to return to Jordan.

Emirates fly to Jordan, so our flights from Jordan to Dubai may or may not be honoured. (They were not.)

We may have to stay in Jordan for a few days – the tour operator is working on it for us.

It was also made clear that we were under no obligation to stay with the tour group – we were given the option of leaving the tour group and making our own way out of Israel.

At this point, I realised that I had insufficient money with me, which was quite stressful until solved. The tour, including accommodation, transport, meals, visas and entrance tickets, was all prepaid. I had a travel card (which did NOT work in all foreign ATM machines) with less than \$1000 left on it. I had chosen not to travel with my credit card. If now I became delayed for a week or more, paying for accommodation, meals and new flights, I was in difficulty, especially as costs really escalate during times of crisis and short notice booking. Unable to access my accounts away from home, after breakfast I contacted my daughter Elizabeth and guided her to transfer funds onto my travel card.

With my financial situation resolved, I returned to the ground floor lobby area to learn that a salesman had come to the hotel portico offering merchandise from Jerusalem. Planning to buy a few scarves with my remaining Shekels, the salesman was determined to sell them in bundles of 12 – and it appeared to him that I needed some of the higher quality ones too. I came back inside with 16 scarves and gave away the first one to Rosemary who was lamenting that she did not consider one of the palest pink ones for her elderly Aunt. Returning home, I have gifted all but 3 of them to family and friends.

The rest of Tuesday day and evening was quite pleasant for our group. We spent it in the hotel lobby playing cards and pool and enjoying afternoon cocktail hour. Our tour guide joined us for the evening. Graeme, our tour organiser/ liaison person with tour operators in Australia came and went due to phone calls relating to booking land transport, visas, new hotel accommodation and flights.

At the afternoon update, we were informed that transport by land to Jordan has been arranged for Wednesday morning and overnight accommodation in Amann.

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

We must leave very early to ensure early arrival at the Yitzhak Rabin Crossing, from Eilat to Jordan. There is a quota for the number of people allowed through each day – I'm not sure which side sets it but it can change daily and once the day's quota is reached, everyone else will be turned back regardless of the time of day.

No photos are allowed. In fact, do not have your mobile phone or camera visible at any time.

Each passenger requires their own 196 Shekels to leave Israel and US\$60 to pay for their visa into Jordan. And both amounts must be in cash. Well, meeting that requirement filled in a bit of time, with everyone tallying up the cash they still held. I had US\$40 – but it was all in single dollar bills – and 300 Shekels.

Someone covered my US \$20 shortfall and we organised a repay option via my connection to Judith and Armin. I gave away 100 Shekels and refused the repay option as it would be too much trouble setting it up. Seriously, if one person on the bus does not have the exit fee, we all stay in Israel. In that situation the value of money is relative to what will happen if we haven't got it or failed to use it where needed.

Evacuation day two, Wednesday 11th October: We have land transport booked to Jordan, accommodation arranged in Amann, and our tour operators are working on booking flights from Amann to Dubai.

5.30am wake up, 6am breakfast, 7.10am departed Jerusalem Hotel in Israeli tour coach

7.40am arrived at the Israeli border checkpoint. At 8am when it did opened our coach is directed to wait at the side until our Jordan based coach arrives at the Jordan border exit point.

9.30am Hooray our Jordan coach has arrived on the Jordan side BUT the queue at the Israeli checkpoint has lengthened with vehicles, including cars, vans, local transport buses taking workers across the border. Thus, although still close to the front, we still wait.

As the length of delay was an unknown, our guide offered a toilet break with safety rules. We must be in pairs with a sentry. Ladies go in pairs with our tour guide standing sentry. There is an area in the open desert with a barricade to squat behind. (Report on this from one of our group: The barricade was about the size of a shipping container but there was a group of people in the distance in full view watching them. One of our ladies waved at these people until they looked away!)

10.30am Israeli soldiers stepped onto our bus and asked if we had any weapons. Then the coach was allowed through the security checkpoint to the Israeli Immigration Office for passport check and payment of exit fee. Oh.... and toilet facilities. Then a slow drive to the Jordan checkpoint – again the eerie feeling of being in a dry, rugged no man's land with security fencing.

Our luggage had been unloaded from the Israeli coach and we had to identify our own case before it was loaded into the Jordanian coach. At the Jordan Immigration Office there was further delay as the regular tour coach bay was closed and all coaches were going through a "special" security area. This involved some fancy backing up and manoeuvring by our driver.

Our new, cheerful Jordan tour guide collected our visa fees and passports for immigration processing. Luggage is obviously a different security concern. Our cases were again unloaded, and each passenger was required to present their own case and hand luggage for screening in the security area.

12.30pm We cleared the Jordan border crossing and stopped at McDonald's for lunch. By 1.30pm even McDonald's tasted good, sigh! 2.45pm In my very beautiful room with city/valley views on the ninth floor. Room 922. On the upside, it is right by the lift. I face chatted my children and other family at home. A shower and a cup of coffee. That was a very tense day.

Tonight is our last evening as a group of 28. Some passengers will exit via Doha, some are going on to additional destinations via Europe. The remainder will be going home to various locations in Australia, via Dubai. As Judith and Armin are going to Frankfurt and then on to Ireland to visit relatives and friends, I agreed to take Judith's souvenirs home for her. I emptied my suitcase to place Judith's and my souvenirs in the base and sides, leaving the centre ready for clothes etc. Our flight is not until mid-afternoon tomorrow, so plenty of time to finish packing after breakfast.

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

At dinner, some of our group have already received their e-tickets for new flights, out of Jordan. Being our last night together we played cards and remained together until ready for goodbyes and bed.

Evacuation day three, Thursday 12th October: 2.20am – my mobile pings. I have an email from Trish at Olive Tree Travel in Melbourne, 7 hours ahead. (9:20am is a perfectly reasonable time for businesses to email people, and 2:20am in a war zone is a perfectly reasonable time to respond to email!) Trish informed me that my flight from Dubai to Perth on Saturday has been cancelled by Emirates, possibly because it was a connecting flight from Tel Aviv, which was cancelled?

More alarming, I do not have a flight from Jordan to Dubai, to leave with the tour group that afternoon. Instead, I am on a wait list. Trish is working hard to book a confirmed flight for me.

Needless to say, I did not sleep soundly after receiving that news. I gave up at 4.30am and decided to shower before re-packing my suitcase.

Still wet from the shower, and Graeme Lienert is at my door enquiring if I would approve payment for a flight to and accommodation in Dubai. Yeeesss! Yes I would, thank you.

Graeme made calls to Australia while I dressed, then came in to take card details for payment. At 5.30am Graeme advised there was a flight from Amman to Dubai at 8am – can I be down in the lobby at 6am for a 30 minute taxi transfer to Amann airport?

Speed packing took place, then I shared the taxi with Helen and Wayne. Queen Alia is a small airport. We cleared check-in and security with 30 minutes to spare before boarding. Checking my phone while waiting, I saw that Judith had posted “Why didn’t you tell us you were leaving??” (Honestly, I told you as soon as I could, Judith!)

The plane arrived Dubai at 12noon. I managed a “thank you, we made it” message to Trish and Graeme. A taxi to a Hilton Garden Inn Hotel – we were admitted to our hotel rooms 1 ½ hours before the official check-in time. Wayne and Helen invited me to join them for a visit to Burj Khalifa (the world’s tallest building). I declined due to my 2.20am stressful start to the day, instead I had lunch in the hotel café and an early night.

Evacuation day four, Friday 13th October, Dubai: I awoke to an email from Trish with a new e-ticket from Dubai to Perth on Saturday, on the same plane as the rest of our group. Hotel Reception have printed two copies of it for me.

After breakfast we organised a 4-hour City Tour using 2 taxis – 7 in each taxi made getting out and back in at each stop tedious. It took so long that all interior air-con advantage was lost. And the heat in Dubai is pea soup thick. Hot and heavy with a grey/pink haze over the city. I was relieved when the tour ended and we returned to the air-conditioned hotel. However, I did experience Dubai.

The sprawl of opulence in 50 years is massive. First stop was a mosque, for photos, then a Persian carpet/tapestry showroom. Tapestries on rich velvet: royal blue, burgundy, red, or emerald green with threads of gold and silver with semi-precious stones set into the picture, most of the themes shown to us were religious. The largest take a year to complete for \$15,000 going down to the A2 size which take 2-3 months priced \$1,000 including shipping. However, if you take it with you today, only \$800. One lady caved and said “it is so beautiful, I know if I don’t buy it I will forever regret it when I’m home”. The salesman replied that “for you, because you are on the tour today, it will be \$700.” Thus, he sold five to people in our group at \$700 each.

In case you are still wondering? No....I did not buy one, it wasn’t the cost, it was the exotic impact which would clash with my home. Then a second showroom, displaying the Persian carpets made from camel wool – very fine weaving and so soft.

The rest of the tour, there were some sites we stopped at for photos, others we simply viewed on a drive by from the taxi windows. I did take some reasonable photos. The ones at the beach with the pink haze in the distance turned out better than expected.

A Pilgrim's Tale (cont.)

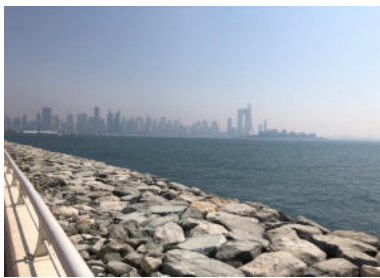
In the evening we gathered in the lobby as agreed, and I experienced why people pay for a tour with a Tour Organiser and a Tour Guide. Without Graeme and Gale, embarrassing chaos prevailed. We needed to arrange transport to the Dubai Mall for dinner, shopping and seeing the Dancing Fountains. One couple, not joining us for dinner, were leaving early next morning so were making their way among the group to say their farewells. Three people were late coming down and others refused to make a decision and a booking without them. Getting louder by the minute, our group were standing in the middle of the hotel lobby while mini bus loads of construction workers were having to deviate around us as they made their way to the lifts. We eventually made a booking and then had another half hour wait until transport arrived for us.

Once in the Dubai Mall Food Hall it became obvious that attempting to dine together was impractical. So we split up according to our food preference. I was in a group of like-minded ladies and we found a small restaurant set in an alcove off the Food Hall which provided a haven from the bustle of the Mall. My meal of Prawn Chow Mein was awesome.

Shopping at the Mall was all upper market retail which I could easily bypass. The Dancing Fountains were just finished as we reached them. They repeat every 30 minutes which seemed an age, but we were able to secure a place by the railing, giving us a spectacular uninterrupted view.

The show began with Burj Khalifa lighting up, with a fluid light display up the entire height of the outer walls. Occasionally interspersed with EMAAR in light up the side and accompanied with music. Then the fountains began in the huge water pool. There were 5 small boats each ferrying 6-8 tourists in this pool during intermission. It really was a Dance and worth the wait to see it.

Returning to the hotel, we found that a taxi from the taxi ramp to our hotel was cheaper and faster than a taxi booked from the tour desk at the hotel.



Evacuation day five, Saturday 14th October: I spent a quiet day in the hotel. Some of the hardest members of our group went out in the morning to view the Miracle Garden. Usually gardens are my thing – however, from the brochure they appeared to be too contrived, plus one day in oppressive heat is my limit. One lady was very unwell and the hotel staff wanted to put her in an ambulance. Pastor Peter declined and protected her in her room until it was time to leave for the airport.

9pm a small bus took us to the airport. By this time, our original tour group of 28 had reduced to 17. We were glad to check-in our luggage. Clearing security, we had quite a lot of time before our flight at 2.45am Sunday 15th October. A meal, some tourist shopping, boarding and, finally, lift off to home.

PS: No, my memory is not this good. I had kept a journal throughout. Unlike other overseas adventures I had taken, I wanted my journal to make sense when I re-read it 5 years later! *Denise*

CLUB NOTICES

Club Library

To keep our great club library in order, could members please :

1. Keep donating books and jigsaw puzzles.
2. Fill in the Borrowing Book and remember to return items you may have borrowed within a reasonable amount of time.



Raffles



Many thanks to those who contribute to our Raffle Baskets.

Just a friendly reminder to everyone that the raffle monies help provide your Friday wine, cheese and nibbles, Saturday BBQ's and all the meals for events



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