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# Visions of Vienna

by Bob Tissot

Arrived in the land of schnitzel and coffee, and even though we really speak no more Austrian than we do Turkish, for some reason it all seems so much more familiar. Maybe all those formative years watching *Hogan's Heroes* and Sgt Schultz weren't wasted after all.

Our tiny attic is within the old town and more bloody culture than you can poke a stick at, such as Stefankirche, one of Vienna's oldest churches. After ascending its unnervingly swaying North Tower, we plunged deep into the catacombs beneath, where we encountered the first human remains of our journey (excluding Buddha's Bicuspid and John the B's Golden Forearm).

Most of the bits belonged to plague victims who were tossed into mass graves the last time the Black Death visited this fair city. They say that after a bit, the stench of putrefaction was so strong that nobody could use the church, and so they sent prisoners from the dungeons down to clean all the bones for re-stacking. Some crypts had rotting coffins and shrouds, smashed skulls and bones strewn everywhere while others had bones cleaned, polished and stacked.

The church itself dripped statuary from every possible nook, and the wondrous stained glass brought tears to the eyes, although that may have been vapours from the crypt, because immediately below our feet lay 600 years-worth of archbishops. And next to their fancy gold-encrusted coffins were shelves of large, hopefully well-sealed copper pots that held all the archbishops' offal. Too good to throw away, I guess. We were told that their hearts were stored at another church but I think we all know that



Archbishops don't have hearts, so this was probably just a ruse.

Later, we went to Karlskirche (pictured) for a performance of the *Four Seasons* by a nine-piece orchestra called 1756, complete with a contra-tenor that I never anticipated. They comprised five violins, one viola, one cello, one 5-string bass fiddle and a harpsichord, with all instruments made between 1750 and 1800. And how was it you ask? Fucking amazing! I sat transfixed with tears streaming down my face for nearly 90 minutes. The lead violinist was transcendent and horse-hair flew as he lived every single note, the singer's crystal-shattering notes ricocheted off the vaulted ceiling, bringing smiles to the alabaster cherubs and the *basso* was bloody *profundo* indeed! Bravo!

Day three dawned grey with sad news from home; the death of yet another good friend, Ian. Unable to do much in the way of constructive thinking,

we fell back on a pre-planned excursion to the Abbey of Melk. However, in our current state of heightened awareness of the human condition, this gigantic monument to ecclesiastical avarice was the straw that broke this particular camel's back. Stuffed to bursting with priceless treasures of every description, walls adorned with massive portraits of royal succubi and leeches, and a church so filled with golden *everything*, it just made me want to vomit! We left pretty quickly, vowing that there would be no more excursions to places like that.

Finished off our day breaking into a cemetery to find the lost graves of Diana's great grandparents, Mayer and Chana. Because so few Jews returned to Vienna after the Holocaust, their section of the cemetery was in serious disrepair and locked.

We broke in through the evangelical section which was open, and then through a gap in the separation wall, which had collapsed. Grave stones stretched into the distance, making it an impossible task on our own.

However, in that section of the cemetery there was a house, within which lived an old woman, the 'keeper of the book'. She had a handwritten book with names, rows and grave numbers. We knocked on her door and she never even asked how we'd got in. She just put on her shoes, picked up the book and we headed down into the oldest section.

It was a jungle; totally overgrown with headstones fallen and half buried and rows incorrectly numbered but between us we tracked them down. It was only after she'd opened the gates to let us out and we were on our way home, that we realised that we didn't even ask her name.

## Matriarchy set to rise in the new decade

They say hindsight is 20/20, but in the year of 2020 there is no time for doing it the wrong way.

These old white men should not be able to get away with their negligence and denial of climate change and other necessary changes regarding energy and how we interact with Mother Earth.

Why aren't these self-serving, power-hungry narcissists being held accountable for their lack of action that is affecting the health of the planet and all life-forms that inhabit it?

It's good news about Finland's new prime

minister, 34-year old social democrat, and female, Sanna Marin. And the fact that all her leadership team are women. Can't wait to see what they come up with.

New Zealand got it right with Jacinda Ardern who manages to balance political strength and being a feminine breast-feeding mother. How are we feeling about our world political face currently? I'm afraid we've become a laughing stock.

Last Saturday, some Seventh Day Adventists knocked on my door. I have recently moved and have not had time to put up all my Buddhas which normally

repels them.

After I told them I found it rude that strangers knocked on my door in my private time to try and persuade me to believe in what they believe in, they replied that they were telling people: "There's a change coming!"

I said, "That's obvious and the change that is coming is matriarchal rule. Women are smarter, can see the bigger picture, are not afraid of change and really care about the future generations."

In this new decade, with much of the world being held back by conservative politicians only interested in money, money, money, it




**The world according to Magenta Appel-Pye**

is up to the people to make change.

In the meantime, what can you do? Plant trees! Green is the new black.

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# Ho, ho, ho – Santa comes to Nimbin



## Nimbin Bushwalkers Club

by I Paddlalot

A very well-attended AGM has fired up the Nimbin Bushwalkers Club to venture out into the wonderful and scenic walks and camping that our amazing area has to offer. We have struggled with walks due to the dry conditions, but hopefully we can get out into the forests soon. To get our nature hit, we have been doing some

paddling adventures and popular they are. This year, there are some new places to visit and some old favourites that are great to go back to. As in the last couple of years, we have two walks a month, one a Sunday day walk and the other a weekend away with two day walks in conjunction. Relaxing for two to three days is popular, but remember you can come for

just a day walk. Finally our thoughts go out to those incredibly overworked and unpaid firefighters. Where would we be without those men and women fighting one of the most lethal elements on our planet? In the new year, hopefully the governments will get their acts together and work for us and the environment and not just big business. Stay safe.

## Walks programme

### Sunday 12th January Brunswick Heads paddle

**Leader:** Steve Johnson 0421-953-814  
**Grade:** 2-3. **Meet:** 9.30am on the river bank 200 metres on the town side of the Bowling Club as you come into Brunswick from the south. Bring your canoe, kayak or paddle board. If you don't have one we have some spare seats, so ring Steve to get a spot. We will be going with the tide both ways, so an enjoyable few hours on Simpsons Creek, the south arm of the Brunswick River. Bring a hat, sunscreen, water and something to eat. Last time we went to town for coffee and lunch, so this is an option for those interested.

### Sunday 9th February Goanna Headland, Evans Head

**Leader:** Megan 0415-063-302  
**Grade:** 2-3. **Meet:** 9am at Chinaman's Beach car park. Two beautiful coastal walks: each year we come here, and we never tire of this wonderful spot and a nice coffee afterwards. Goanna Headland walk will be followed – after lunch at the beach – by a walk through Dirrawong reserve. Each walk is about 1.5 hours. Bring water, lunch and a hat.

<http://nimbinbushwalkers.com>



Auntie Maj and Uncle Norm

## She says

I sympathise with you. For some reason Uncle Norm also feels compelled to announce that he is going to drop the kids off at the pool. Occasionally he even adds "I'll be back soon." Where the fuck does he think he's going? I say, "Tell someone who cares," but to no avail. When he does remember, he says that he's not going to make an announcement about what he's off to do. Gotta give him points for trying. Maybe it's because he was the youngest, and a fuss was made when he broadcast what he was going to do on the potty. In my large family no-one gave a shit. Once I went into the bathroom to get some washing and found him sitting on the throne like a king with his fag, mag and dag, thoroughly enjoying the experience. I can't imagine a woman announcing that she was going to the toilet. She sneaks in there, trying to get away from the toddlers and the dog who would follow her. And she certainly doesn't stay in there longer than necessary, reading *Women's Weekly* and doing her nails. No, she shits, and gets off the pot. Maybe he doesn't want to be disturbed, in which case he should install a vacant/engaged lock on the dunny door.

*Why couldn't the toilet paper cross the road? It got stuck in a crack!*

## HE says

What a polite and considerate husband you have, Ms. Brown. He's well aware that you like to know where he is at any given moment of the day. So, when he's off to the log cabin for another exciting sit-down-toilet adventure, he doesn't want you to fret and worry that he's gone and left you for some super model,

## Dump announcement

Dear SSHS,

My husband always tells me when he is going to do "number 2s". Why is this?

– Ms Enid Brown, Dunoon

or been kidnapped by aliens.

For a lot of people, dropping off the shopping is something to be done quietly, discreetly, and as efficiently as possible, as if it is something to be ashamed of. These people can't stand the smell of their own shit, let alone anyone else's.

For others it's an opportunity to have a bit of 'me' time. They like to snap one off in a calm relaxed atmosphere and enjoy a bit of entertainment to take their minds off the job.

I remember, as a youngster, I'd sit there waiting and waiting for a breakthrough. Then I'd read the labels on the shampoo bottles, and it would be 'bombs away!' These days I keep a comprehensive library of trashy magazines, with ash tray, lighter, and spectacles close at hand.

I have a friend who takes his morning coffee and newspaper on the bumsink religiously every day. Now that's commitment.

Recently a young friend confessed that he takes his mobile phone in with him for a dump. I'd find that difficult. I can't crap, text, and smoke at the same time. It must be evolution of the species.

Archaeologists have discovered that the ancient Romans built communal toilets and regarded the whole thing as a social activity. Perhaps that's a step (or seat) too far today.

Ms. B, by announcing to you that he's off to the turd tube, your husband is telling you that, for the next half hour, he's unavailable. He doesn't want to see you or hear your whiny voice. He just wants to enjoy one of life's simple pleasures in peace and quiet, without interruption.

Is that too much to ask?

*Why did the toilet paper roll down the hill? To get to the bottom.*

Send your relationship problems to:  
[normanappel@westnet.com.au](mailto:normanappel@westnet.com.au)



# Charity supports Indian girls to achieve literacy

by Aniko Papp

While travelling in Bodgaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree, I checked out WEIV (Women's Empowerment in Indian Villages). As a long-time supporter of this charity, established 15 years ago by fellow Northern Rivers residents, Graeme Batterbury and Wendy Royston, I wanted to see for myself what WEIV does in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India.

The villages are near Guraru, populated by a mixture of castes including the Dalit (untouchable) caste.

In Mahuian, at the Literacy Centre for adolescent Dalit girls, I met 15 girls from 12 to 18 years old, dressed neatly in their best set of clothes, sat cross-legged in rows on a mat carefully placed on a pressed floor with no glass in the windows. Their ambitions ranged from teachers to police women.

The owner of my guest house, who I'd roped in as a translator, mentioned how impressed he was that the Dalit girls could read, and that most men in the villages were illiterate. The women then could write letters of complaint to the police.



Their teacher, a local woman, Minta, proudly showed her pupils' math skills on the solitary blackboard. The local WEIV staff member, Sarika, said that due to the three-year literacy program, the girls could now read and write, so now their parents saw the value of them progressing to a government school and not be married off at 13.

I cannot help but think of my own children, as these girls walk the dusty 1.5 km track to the Literacy Centre each day.

Anil, a local Brahmin man who



has been working for the charity since its inception, introduced me to the 12-21 years men's group, being educated in family planning and health in the village of Mahimapur. I was told that the men learned how not to have so many children, and were telling others about what they had learned.

In Mirradapur, the young married women's group sang a welcome song, and Indu, their local educator, fed us biscuits, nuts and chai. Sarika had already made me a wonderful meal, so after a token

nibble, I gave my plate to a nearby child. His mother carefully stashed every morsel into her sari pockets.

Rhika told me that the women there were having one or two children, not seven or eight. They now waited until 18 to have them and that before WEIV, they didn't know they could attend schools or go to the bank.

One child had slightly bulging eyes, and I was told that now that they knew to go to the clinic, he and other children would recover with iodine tablets. They invited me to stay the

night, look after and feast me. Puja in her bright red sari, invited me to her home with its outside walls decorated with drying cow dung patties (used as fuel). Puja revealed her ambition to be a doctor, and showed off her one slat bed shared with her sisters. Clothing was neatly piled in a small stack. Red and gold fabric hung on the pressed mud walls.

A metal stove, grain containers, and a handful of steel pots, comprised the kitchen, opening onto the other small space, her parents' bedroom (shared with her brothers).

Unlike some girls in her village, Puja had been taught about the value of education, family planning and health by WEIV in one of their adolescent girls' groups and as a result, her parents allowed her to go to school.

The average wage in these villages is 400 INR a week, whereas my room in Bodhgaya cost 1,000 INR/\$20 AUS per night.

WEIV provides its programs through its 21 local staff to about 5,000 people per month in 115 villages. It's amazing what my monthly \$50 can achieve, paying a fortnight's salary for a literacy centre teacher.

I leave the final words to Priya, a WEIV participant: "I want to be a teacher now, return to my village and teach other girls to read and write too."

## Saffin calls for launch of regional seniors transport card

Lismore MP Janelle Saffin has called on the Berejiklian Government to deliver its regional seniors transport card for eligible North Coast and Northern Tablelands pensioners by its promised launch date of this January.

Ms Saffin said local pensioners have been contacting her in recent weeks, keen to find out details of when and how they can apply for the \$250 voucher, which was a Coalition election pledge from the March 2019 State election.

"When they read that the card's launch was slated for January, they fully expected that this would mean from Wednesday, January 1, 2020," Ms Saffin said.

"I have also contacted the office of NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Paul Toole, to ask for the launch as soon as possible."

The regional seniors transport card provides eligible seniors living in the Lismore Electorate with a \$250 prepaid card to help with the cost of everyday travel.

The card can be used to pay for NSW TrainLink Regional train and coach services, fuel and taxi trips.

To be eligible, you must be an age pensioner with a valid Pensioner Concession Card or a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holder.

While Service NSW's website references the card, Ms Saffin confirmed with its management that more information, including application details, were not yet available.

"Pensioners I have spoken to tell me how difficult they are finding it to keep their cars on the road as they are hit with so many other bills," Ms Saffin said.

"Any extra concession which helps to reduce the costs of personal travel or public transport will be welcomed by pensioners with open arms.

"It's been nine months since voters were promised this card by the Liberal-Nationals Government and I think they have been quite patient waiting for it to materialise."



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