

## June 2025 Newsletter

### From the President

Our May speaker – Professor Alex Tan, University of Canterbury

I expected Professor Tan's presentation to be an enlightening overview of the current problems faced by the USA and the world in general, and was not disappointed. It helped that I agree with many of his views on the current world situation, having followed Trump's political adventures since 2016. Professor Tan's message about the future of America, and its impact on the world (including New Zealand), was very sombre one. I have since received some very positive comments about his lecture, along the lines "I could have listened to him longer". So, if you are interested in reading more of Professor Tan's (and his colleague's) commentaries on regional and global politics, their weekly podcasts are available on:

<https://viewsfromdownunderer.podbean.com/>.

Also at our May meeting, I spoke briefly about "Fitz" (James Edward Fitzgerald), the founder of Lincoln. This was prompted after reading the book "*Fitz – The Colonial Adventures of James Edward Fitzgerald*", authored by his great-great granddaughter Jenifer Roberts. Surprisingly, his role in Lincoln's early history did not feature much in this book, but the revised edition of the Neville Moar's book "*Fitzgerald's Town – Lincoln in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*" is available online (ie, free) at:

<https://livingheritage.lincoln.ac.nz/nodes/view/26704>

For those of you who are interested in our local history, I recommend reading both books, as they complement each other. Both are available through Selwyn Libraries.

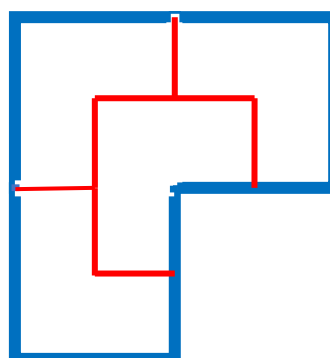
### Dementia Canterbury

We frequently receive email notifications of services or events being offered to the community. One organisation that contacts us regularly is Dementia Canterbury.

Every month, Dementia Canterbury provides a seminar on a topic that will be of major interest to their members. Some of these are face-to-face meetings while others are Zoom meetings. It is likely that the services offered by Dementia Canterbury may also be of interest to some of our members. However, instead of passing on their invitations at our meetings or in the newsletter, below is their website link for anyone who is interested in finding out more about Dementia Canterbury, and the wide range of services they provide:

<https://dementiacanterbury.org.nz/>

Here is the solution to last month's puzzle:



## Our upcoming speakers

### Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June

#### A Lifetime with Kites

Our speaker will be **Peter Lynn**, an Ashburton-based kite maker, engineer and inventor who commenced his professional journey into kite innovation 52 years ago. He is famous for his construction of the world's largest kites, the popularisation of kite buggying and has made notable contributions to the development of power kiting and kite surfing.

### Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July\*

Our speaker will be **Rose Challies**, CEO Terra Nova Foundation. Her topic is *"The Leading Generation - how our community elders can change the world"*

\*NOTE: This meeting will be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday (ie, 30<sup>th</sup> July), not the 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

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## The Last Word(s)

### Terrible Ideas

I recently came across a book in Lincoln Library, *"The Dictionary of Terrible Ideas"* by Dominic Knight (an Australian cynic). Knight criticises the things that deeply irritate him, and he thinks that they should irritate everybody. Here is a selection of his prejudices:

**Bagpipes** – *a source of loud, unpleasant droning noises, believed by some – mainly those with severe hearing problems – to be a musical instrument.*

**Brexit** – *the cute abbreviation for the act of profound self-harm that was Britain's departure from the European Union.*

**Budget airlines** – *carriers who charge slightly less money than regular airlines, in return for a vastly inferior experience.*

**Canberra** – *what happens when a negotiation over the location of a nation's capital ends with a victory for nobody.*

**Cigarettes** – *sticks of tobacco rolled in paper, with a filter at the end so that when lit, the smoker inhales fewer carcinogens than others nearby.*

**Gerontocracy** – *government by the extremely aged, as was common in ancient Greece and is common in the modern United States.*

**Gun** – *a device, notionally for shooting other people, which in practice makes it far more likely that the gun owner, or others who live in their homes, will themselves be shot dead.*

**Imperial measures** – *a traditional and highly idiosyncratic system that pre-dates the metric system, and is still used in some backward parts of the world such as the UK and USA.*

**Las Vegas** – *it is said "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas". This is largely because what happens in Vegas is that people lose a lot of money and/or their dignity, and don't want to talk about it.*

**Male chauvinism** – *the belief that men are superior to women, which has survived for millennia despite being untrue, based upon conducting an extremely superficial examination of any man.*

**Mini-golf** – *a version of golf where the only fun part – whacking the ball a great distance – is removed.*

**Podcast** – an internet communication platform that makes it easy to publish and share recordings of themselves talking without any of the media industry’s traditional gate-keepers telling them that it’s not a good idea.

**PowerPoint** – a presentation graphics programme that has given the masses the ability to quickly and easily create ugly slides for boring talks.

**Private schools** – educational institutions which allow the children of rich people to be insulated from people who have less money than them – except of course the ones who come to their homes to clean, garden, and service the pool, tennis court and croquet lawn.

**Rock fishing** – a method of fishing which adds the prospect of a sudden, violent death to what is notionally a tranquil, recreational activity.

**Selfie** – a photo featuring the photographer – that is just about every photograph taken these days.

**Ties** – expensive pieces of silk, wool, or increasingly, polyester that men who wear business suits tie around their necks so that at least one part of their outfit doesn’t look dull.

**Trickle-down economics** – the belief that the vast profits earned by a society’s wealthiest members can be justified because they will pass on some of their income to the poorer members of society.

**WORDLE** This popular internet word-guessing game is also targeted by Dominic Knight. It took the world by storm in 2020, thanks to the happy coincidence of the Covid-19 pandemic. People were looking for something to while away their time during lock-down. The coincidence was happiest for the developer Josh Wardle, as he sold the game to the New York Times for a seven-figure sum in 2022.

But Knight says:

*...Wordle wasn’t especially original, resembling several prior quiz games, but the notion of every user solving the same word puzzle was a brilliant innovation. The website’s ability to generate a visual summary of guesses made up of green and yellow boxes was also hugely clever, as it allowed successful solvers to brag about guesses that were often dumb luck.”*

I contend that Dominic Knight’s dismissal of Wordle is very weak. NYT provides a new Wordle puzzle every day, and solving it has become part of the Wood morning routine. I find that the challenges of Wordle, and “The Chase” TV quiz programme, provide regular checks of my aging cognitive abilities.

“The Dictionary of Terrible Ideas” is just about one man’s prejudices – how about compiling your own opinionated list of terrible ideas? Maybe, start with the MAGA movement?

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## Committee responsibilities for 2025/26 :

**President** – Errol Wood,   **Vice-President** – John Prendergast,   **Secretary** – Murray Allison,

**Treasurer** – Neal Borrie   **Interest Groups Coordinator** - Lyn Minchington

**Constitution Revision** – Nancy Borrie   **Membership Coordinator** – Dorothy Jordan

**Morning Tea Team Leader** – Nola Sutherland (not a committee member)

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