



SAARP SOCIAL SERVICES - PINELANDS

(Reg No 2006/003084/08)

Email Address : ruthbuckland3638@gmail.com

Monthly Meetings: 3rd Thursday @ Pinelands Bowling Club,
St Stephen's Road

Doors closed due to Covid-19

NEWSLETTER : OCTOBER 2020

Hello, All

We're now into the fourth quarter of the year and, usually, Mums and Grand-ma's are getting busy with preparations for Christmas; but, at this stage, who knows how we'll be celebrating Christmas this year? It's certainly not going to be 'traditional' as we used to know it! As I write we've just passed day 190 of lockdown and while we've sadly recorded 16 866 deaths nationally, our current recovery rate of confirmed positive cases is 90%! That is phenomenal and something of which we should all be very proud. Our medical teams have obviously learned very quickly how to keep the lid on Covid-19, and they deserve our sincere gratitude. Let's not fall into complacency, though – it's going to be essential for us to keep washing hands, wearing masks correctly and abiding by social distancing in the interests of every single one of us.

Clive and I have been following the series '*Italy's Invisible Cities*' and I was delighted to see the episode on Venice. I subsequently read further on Google and have tried to abbreviate but still give a coherent account of **VENICE'S BLACK DEATH AND THE DAWN OF QUARANTINE**. Current archaeological research is unearthing the city's quarantine history to illuminate how it created a vast public health response 700 years ago which helped lay the modern foundation for coping with pandemics.

Venice is comprised of dozens of islands, among which are two uninhabited isles with a rich history, Lazzaretto Vecchio and Lazzaretto Nuovo. Research is now yielding fascinating insights into Venice's response to one of the most famous pandemics in history, the Black Death. In the mid-14th century, Venice was struck by the bubonic plague that may have killed up to 25 million people, or one-third of the population in Europe at the time. This spread was just one of several waves of the plague to strike Northern Italy in the centuries that followed.

As a vibrant trading centre, Venice was especially vulnerable. The ruling families realised the only solution was to separate sick and ailing people from the working community to protect everyone's health and allow the economy to continue.

In the early 15th century, Lazzaretto Vecchio was designated for isolating and treating plague-stricken Venetians. Later, Lazzaretto Nuovo became a spot where ships coming from places experiencing the plague, or those with suspected sick passengers or crew, anchored. There, people and goods spent a period of quarantine before being allowed into the heart of the city. (We owe the English word "quarantine" to the Italian term for 40 days, *quaranta giorni*.) The Venetian govern-

ment thus became the first in the Mediterranean region to systematically use large-scale methods of isolation and information-collecting to monitor and fight infectious diseases. Even more impressive is the fact that science at that time couldn't explain how diseases spread - a germ theory of disease didn't exist for another 400 years.

Today, as much of the world finds itself under various quarantine, isolation, and stay-at-home orders and facing uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Venice's quarantine history and the archaeology of isolation hospitals is especially relevant. Researchers' findings echo many modern experiences — particularly where public health, policy, and economics intersect.

Venice's municipal records have long preserved the story of the Lazzaretto islands. In 1423, the government established Lazzaretto Vecchio to house people who had the plague, and in 1468, a government decree dedicated a second island — then home to a monastery — to a new isolation hospital, literally, "Lazzaretto Nuovo."



Vecchio offers archaeologists a handful of buildings to study. They reveal that the island was a treatment base for infected patients. There, doctors wearing the elaborate beak-like plague masks of the period, did their best to treat the disease. *(Thank goodness I wasn't around then – our little cloth masks make me sweat enough!)*

Historical records, however, suggest Nuovo consisted of warehouses for goods, and more than 100 rooms to quarantine sailors and crews before allowing them into Venice. The largest warehouse (Tezon Grande) still stands: a long rectangular brick building lined with arched doorways and topped by a vaulted roof. According to historical records, a team of armed guards and porters worked to unload ships' cargo into this space. This team followed specific protocols for airing out and clearing goods with smoke from aromatic herbs and saltwater. They used vinegar to wash their hands after handling potentially contaminated items.

The Venetian system involved hundreds of city officials. Previously, community care for the sick was relegated to charity efforts and religious orders. Not a temporary response to disaster but rather a permanent, government-run, continuous monitoring effort that endured until Napoleon Bonaparte's conquest of the region in 1797. And that approach was necessary: The bubonic plague swept Europe repeatedly over the centuries.

Hope you find all this as interesting as I did. There's a lot more but I'm running out of space!

Some funnies from a book called 'Disorder in the American Courts' - things people actually said in Court and taken down, word for word, then published by Court reporters who had the torment of having to stay calm while these exchanges were actually taking place!

Attorney: Now, doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

Witness: Did you actually pass the law exam?

Attorney: The youngest son, the 20-year old, how old is he?

Witness: He's 20, much like your IQ.

Attorney: Were you present when your picture was taken?

Witness: Are you serious?

Attorney: She had 3 children, right?

Witness: Yes

Attorney: How many were boys?

Witness: None.

Attorney: Were there any girls?

Witness: Your Honour, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

Attorney: How was your first marriage terminated?

Witness: By death.

Attorney: And by whose death was it terminated?

Witness: Take a guess.

Attorney: Can you describe the individual?

Witness: He was about medium height and had a beard.

Attorney: Was this a male or a female?

Witness: Unless the Circus was in town, I'm going with male.

Attorney: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

Witness: All of them. The live ones put up too much of a fight.

Attorney: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

Witness: The autopsy started around 8:30 pm.

Attorney: And Mr Denton was dead at the time?

Witness: If not, he was by the time I had finished.

Attorney: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

Witness: No.

Attorney: Did you check for blood pressure?

Witness: No.

Attorney: Did you check for breathing?

Witness: No.

Attorney: So, then it is possible the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

Witness: No.

Attorney: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

Witness: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

Attorney: But could the patient have still been alive?

Witness: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practising law.

The following poem, submitted by 90-year old Mrs F Winesan, was published in the September 1972 edition of *The Psychotherapist*:

How do I know that my youth is all spent? Well, my get-up-&-go has got up and went.
But in spite of it all I am able to grin when I think where my get-up-&-go has been.
Old age is golden as I have heard it said, But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed,

With my ears in a drawer and my teeth in a cup, My eyes on the table until I wake up.
 Ere sleep dims my eyes I say to myself – Is there anything else to be laid on the shelf?
 I'm happy to say as I then close the door My friends are the same, or perhaps even more.

When I was young and my slippers were red I could kick up my heels right over my head.
 When I grew older my slippers were blue, But still I could dance the whole night through.
 Now I am old and my slippers are black, I walk to the store and I puff my way back.
 The reason I know my youth is all spent Is my get-up-&-go has got up and went.
 But I really don't mind when I think with a grin Of all the grand places my get-up has been.
 Since I've retired from life's competition I busy myself with feigned repetition.
 I get up each morning, dust off my wits; Pick up my paper and read the 'obits' –
 If my name is missing, I know I'm not dead, So I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Makes us realise how important our memories are (while we still have them!!).

Here's hoping that we'll be able to have a meeting again soon. Meanwhile, look after yourselves and all those around you – together we'll outlive Covid-19!

Cheers for now
 Ruth

COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS				
NAME	POSITION	LANDLINE	CELLULAR	E-MAIL
Mark Binedell	Chairman/Outings	021 4653355	082 8877488	mjbinedell@telkomsa.net
Merle Byworth	Vice-Chairperson	021 4341230	083 4543775	mbyworth@telkomsa.net
Alison Tame	Treasurer		083 3078278	alison.tame@gmail.com
Ruth Buckland	Newsletter	021 5300146	083 5118237	ruthbuckland3638@gmail.com
Mary Whitelaw	Minutes Secretary		083 4535585	whitelaw@mweb.co.za
Fay Woodhead	Outings	021 5312702	072 1110552	deswoodhead69@gmail.com
Rita Scott	Knitting		083 3920611	scottritaj@gmail.com
Jackie Pittman			072 7695015	jpittman@telkomsa.net / jpittmandsj@gmail.com