

Special newsletter for RGSQ members



Member Connect

Issue 2

Patron: H.E. Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland
President: Dr Iraphne Childs

President's message

Dear Fellow Members

I hope you are all keeping safe and well as we cope with the COVID-19 virus. The pandemic is redefining our relationship with physical space: distance, proximity, spread, hot spots, scale - in a word *Geography* – everyone is concerned with *where*. We're thinking about it on personal and local scales, navigating supermarket aisles and converting rooms into home offices. We are dealing with it at the regional scale, moving medical equipment from places with surplus to places in need. We listen to reports from epidemiologists working at national and global scales, as they work to understand how a virus could travel so far so fast and cause such devastation. Australia does seem to be coping well compared to some other parts of the world.

If there are any positive outcomes of this pandemic, one, surely, has to be the reduction in air pollution around the world, which has dropped as countries scale back economic activity and drastically reduce travel by road and air.

An important and encouraging lesson is that when we remove the sources of pollution, unhealthy air clears up almost overnight. As far as the environment and our health are concerned, this is an excellent thing. However, the lockdown in economic activity cannot continue and scientists warn that, unfortunately, the reprieve in air quality will only be short term.

A surge in emissions as economies recover is likely to leave the environment again worse off. Achieving the inevitable transition to a low-carbon-low-polluting future is a major challenge. A weak global economy may threaten investment in renewable energy sources and associated long-term jobs, particularly given the present availability of cheap oil and lobbying to develop more new coal mines for profits in the short-term.

Could governments and economies view this clean-air episode as an opportunity to begin to realign policies towards a sustainable future? Our cities may again breathe clean air hopefully sooner rather than later.

With best wishes,
Dr. Iraphne Childs
RGSQ President

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Letters From the Home Front

Giselle Pickering, Young Geographer

As a recent graduate I'm quickly learning that it's an interesting time to be joining the workforce. Two months ago, I started a new job as a spatial information officer with the Queensland Government and have honestly been amazed at how quickly and flexibly business has been able to transition to 'working from home' arrangements.

For my family, working from home has come with its own unique set of challenges. I can't remember a time when we've ever been forced to spend so much uninterrupted time together and occasionally tensions can run high. Usually that's when the same person has won Catan three times in a row and everyone else gets a little sick of the game.



It's been important to separate our work lives and home lives as much as possible too. Downstairs has been converted to a three-person home office and my sister works out on the back deck from her laptop. Our dog isn't quite sure what to make of it all but has been pleased nonetheless with the extra attention.

Although I never imagined there would be a time when I hadn't left the house for over two weeks, having access and skills to use digital technology has made it easy to adapt. "Happy Birthday" is now sung to family over video calls, Friday night trivia and drinks happen online through Zoom and my friends and I share bedroom workout routines and craft activities with each other to keep our minds and bodies active and healthy. The bonus is that without the daily commute I can finally get stuck into those geography-themed books on my bookshelf.

We'll have to wait and see where the future takes us but until then, keep safe all!

A day in my life during the pandemic

Barbara Odgers

I am fairing very well with this isolation and have been able to spend time on 'other things' in life. As I am a very organised person, I have organised my day around six activities, none of which I really did successfully in my pre-pandemic life.

My day starts with reading the paper and doing the easy crosswords puzzle on my iPad. I then go for a small walk (1.6km) around the block, which includes a very steep hill. The aim of this activity is to be fitter coming out of isolation than I was before the pandemic, hopefully to then continue my bushwalking activities. On the walk I exchange greetings with and/or have a brief chat with neighbours and other walkers, at a distance, of course.

After returning home and having another cup of coffee I spend half an hour trying to play the piano. I am learning to read and play the notes again after many, many years of not playing. Fortunately there are beginner's books in the piano stool that my children used when they were learning. Feel sad for the neighbours.

I also have a small daily art activity to complete. I do not have an artistic bone in my body but am enjoying the daily activity.

A group of friends have organised this and when I am game enough I put some photos of my work up on a specially designated site. Here we all have the chance to say nice things about each other's art and encourage each other to continue.

My other daily activities include working in the garden and the house, one small or very small job each day. For example I planted grass seeds two weeks ago and to my amazement they have germinated. I am now watching grass grow.

In between these activities I connect with family and friends by mobile, Facebook, Messenger, emails, Skype etc. Next week a friend has organised a game of Trivia Pursuit via Skype. My knowledge of trivia is abysmal but we are sure to have a lot of laughs.

I must add I am having my groceries delivered to my door. Every delivery day is like Christmas, it is an exciting time, namely to see what I ordered a week ago and what is delivered.

My aim throughout this isolation is to learn and grow in deeds and friendships. Goodness knows how long I can continue to pursue these aims, but at present I am enjoying the extra time I have to try.

However, I feel what I am doing is frivolous when I hear COVID-19 news from around the world.

Keep well and stay safe.

Earthquake crossword

Down

- 2. The earth's crust is cracked into different pieces called (8,6)
- 3. A natural hazard becomes a disaster when there is significant damage to property and/or loss of life.
- 5. The zone of activity surrounding the Pacific Ocean and the Pacific plate. (4,2,4)
- 6. A collapse of a mass of earth or rock from a mountain.
- 8. The size of an earthquake as measured by the energy released.
- 10. A phenomenon where the shaking of the earth by an earthquake reduces the strength and stiffness of the soil and forces the liquid in the soil to rise to the surface.

Across

- 1. The outermost, solid layer of the earth.
- 4. A danger or risk.
- 7. A long high sea wave caused by an earthquake or other event.
- 9. A fracture in a rock formation along which there has been movement of the rocks on either side of the fracture.
- 11. A sudden violent shaking of the ground, typically causing great destruction, as a result of movements within the earth's crust.
- 13. The point on the earth's surface vertically above the focus of an earthquake.
- 14. The place of origin of an earthquake.
- 15. A smaller earthquake following the main shock of a large earthquake.
- 16. An instrument designed to measure earthquakes.
- 17. Where two tectonic plates meet. (5,8)

6 down

16 across



STILL KEEN ON VOLCANOES

Ken Granger, RGSQ member and former President

My fascination with volcanoes and their influence on life on earth has certainly not diminished in the ten years since I wrote the "From the President" piece that was reproduced in the first issue of the MemberConnect. If anything I have become even more absorbed, even planning some of our travel to take us to places such as Iceland where volcanoes are a major feature of the landscape.

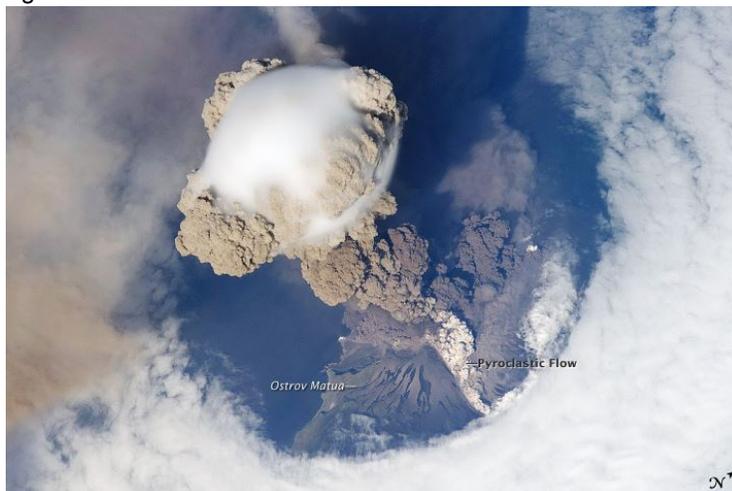
I recently put together a lecture for U3A groups here on the Sunshine Coast that I titled "Some volcanoes I have met". In it I cover some basic volcanology, talk about

five volcanoes that I had some encounters with in PNG in the 60s and 70s, then talk about some of the volcanoes visited as a tourist. In the process of compiling this lecture, an old colleague put me on to the photo taken from the International Space Station of the Sarychev Peak volcano in the Russian Kuril Islands in the early stage of an eruption on 22 June 2009.

Details of the image and an analysis can be found at the following address:

<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/38985/sarychev-peak-eruption-kuril-islands>

This is a textbook example of the type of eruption now known as a Plinian eruption from the description by Pliny the Younger of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The ash cloud billows upwards by convection and can reach elevations in excess of 18 km. The white cap at the top of the column is known as a pileus cloud and is probably condensation as the ash cloud cools at altitude.



The ash cloud is yet to be dispersed by upper atmosphere winds. It was subsequently carried well into the North Pacific causing airlines to be diverted. The image also shows a pyroclastic flow running down from the crater. This is the most dangerous part of the eruption as it contains toxic

gasses and material at temperatures of more than 300° C travelling at speeds of more than 200 m/s. Pyroclastic flows produced Australia's worst natural disaster – the death of over 3000 people in the 1951 eruption of Mt Lamington in what was then the Australian Territory of Papua.

On the eight point Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) the Sarychev eruption is rated at VEI 3 indicating that more than 10 million cubic metres of material was ejected - about 100 times smaller than Vesuvius (VEI 5) and 10,000 times smaller than the 1815 eruption of Indonesia's Tambora (VEI 7). Tambora remains the largest eruption in the past 2000 years and had a significant impact on the global climate for at least two years.

GEOFACT of the week

AUSTRALIA MAY BE SURROUNDED BY WATER, BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE THE WORLD'S LONGEST COASTLINE

Being its own continent and completely surrounded by water, you'd think Australia would easily have the honour of being the country with the longest coastline. However, that title goes to Canada (includes mainland coast and offshore islands). Canada has 243,042km (151,019) miles of coastline, compared to Australia's 25,760km (16,000 miles). In fact, Australia ranks seventh on the list of the world's longest coastlines, coming in behind Indonesia, Greenland, Russia, Philippines, and Japan.

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