

# Vision

Published by the School of Philosophy Auck. Inc. for enjoyment and communication

Issue 14, Jul 2005

## *Family of School*

An enlightening and satisfying residential week was hosted by the Auckland School at its West Tamaki Road property in July.

About 100 students from the Auckland and Wellington Schools enjoyed each other's company and meetings taken by overseas and local tutors. With the addition of School Leaders from Australasia and Ireland, total numbers were 120. As always, the event ran smoothly, with a real sense of "family".

Themes explored during meetings with Mr Donald Lambie, Leader of the international body of Schools, included the evolution of civilisation, and Truth, Justice and Freedom for all. In a lecture delivered at 27 Esplanade Road to an invited audience of students not attending the residential, Mr Lambie spoke of the world-wide "School family", giving lucid descriptions of the nature of each School and its work. This was of great interest, isolated geographically as we are.

The Leader of the School in Ireland, Mr Shane Mulhall, gave a talk to those in residence on the role of the family as a source of happiness and stability for everyone. It was based on a very successful public course run by the Irish School, and the presentation was illustrated with practical examples from

Mr Mulhall's own experience as a family man, laced with a fine sense of humour.

A talk on a seemingly unpromising subject, philosophically speaking – agricultural subsidies! – was given by the Leader of the Wellington School, Mr Bruce Dean. Far from being soporific, the talk was interesting and very topical, particularly in light of the recent "G8" Conference at Gleneagles, African poverty, and debates in the European Common Market. In moving away from heavily subsidised farming practices, New Zealand had shown great courage and ingenuity and provided a model for other countries to follow.

Group study sessions considered the practical application in life of passages from the "Vivekachudamani" and the words of His Holiness Sri Shantananda Saraswati on The Three Ways. A practice pursued by all present at the event was to "receive and treat everyone as your own Self".

The week concluded with a fine concert of items ranging from the music of Mozart, Flamenco music, several duets, stories from the "Ramayana" set to dance, to lively recitations from "Yoga Vasishtha" and the Upanishads. It was a superb finale to the whole event.

# *In the Footsteps of the Prophets* by Marilyn Marshall

Standing on Mt Nebo in Jordan on a clear day, it is possible to see all the way to Jerusalem in Israel: even the houses are visible from this distant vantage point.

It was on this mountain that Moses stood when shown the Promised Land, which he himself would not enter. When we visited in May of this year, a shimmering haze obscured much of the landscape but it was still possible to sense the stupendous nature of it.

Mt Nebo is approached from the road through a grove of trees leading to the Moses Memorial Church built on one of its peaks. The prophet died on this mountain, though his tomb has never been found.

Jordan is a very ancient land. Evidence of human habitation dates back about 500,000 years, traversing the Neolithic, Copper, Bronze, Iron, Nabatean, Greek, Roman and Byzantine Ages, the later rule of the Ottoman Turks, right through to the present Hashemite Kingdom founded in the 20th century.

You sense these cultures at every step. Their remains are also clearly visible in well preserved sites such as the ancient Roman city at Jerash, and the Citadel and theatre overlooking Amman. Most famous is the rose-red city of Petra cut into sandstone cliffs in southern Jordan. The astonishing facades at Petra were created by the Nabateans, originally a nomadic Arabian tribe, over two thousand years ago. There are approximately 400,000 archaeological sites scattered throughout the country.

The subtle atmosphere of Jordan is perhaps less easy to define. Despite the arid nature of much of the landscape (the water shortage in Jordan is critical), it has its own unique beauty. The earth is worn, almost crumbly;



*Wadi Rum*

sand-coloured, imbued with a quality that is benign. This is particularly noticeable in Tayyibeh, near Petra, where we stayed an extra day. The word 'Tayyibeh' roughly translates as 'kindness'.

The Jordanians also reflect this quality. They are a courteous, hospitable people, with a fine sense of humour: the Bedouin in particular, we discovered, love a good joke!

We toured towards the end of spring, with temperatures in the mid to high 30's – a pleasant, dry heat – and even 40 degrees in the true desert of Wadi Rum was perfectly bearable. Standing in the silent majesty of this place, which featured prominently in the film "Lawrence of Arabia, and gazing at an infinity of red sand, the temperature faded into insignificance, as did anything small or petty. This desert, with its beautiful multi-coloured rocks and cliffs, stretches all the way down to Saudi Arabia.

The local guide who drove us through the sands said he loved the desert because of its freedom. He spoke of the brightness of the moon at night - so brilliant he could read "the Book" by it.

## Jordan in Brief

Our tour was very short, only a few days, but covered a lot of ground. Jordan is a small country - you can drive to any place in a day - but has something for everyone. For those of religious inclination, there are the important Christian churches, and sites where Old Testament figures such as Moses, Jacob, and Aaron dwelled for a time or are said to be buried, and of course there are constant reminders that Jordan is an Islamic country.

For the history lover, there are the fascinating Greek and Roman remains; and for the fit and adventurous, rock climbing at Petra and Wadi Rum, and hiking tours.

Unexpected moments of delight include driving through the hills of Gilaad - yes, the Gilead of the Bible; the simple architecture of Arab houses clustered in valleys and on hillsides; the beauty of a line of trees on an arid slope; the grace of Muslim women in flowing black, and the look of purity about them. There is also the fun of searching for seashell fossils along the roadside at Al Hasa, between Wadi Rum and Amman.

The town of Ma'daba (dating back to the biblical Moabites) is home to the sizeable remains of a 6th century mosaic depicting the Holy Land, visible on the floor of the Church of St George. In a shop across the road there are beautiful mosaics for sale, made locally. The workmanship in these is very fine.

A visit to Kerak, dominated by a mighty 12th century Crusader Castle, is a memorable experience. Wandering among the extensive ruins, you cannot help but appreciate the strategic importance of this place. It stands 900 metres above sea level at the meeting point of several valleys and was very difficult for the armies of Saladin to conquer. It affords extraordinary views in every direction.



*The Treasury – Petra*

Jordan even has a Grand Canyon of its own - Wadi Mujib - which stretches from the Desert Highway to the Dead Sea. The sheer size of the canyon, about 1 kilometre deep, over 4 across and more than 70 long, almost beggars description. You can but gaze at the heights and depths of it while passing through on your way from Kerak to Petra.

An essential part of Islam we came to appreciate very much was the daily call to prayer from mosques everywhere. In Tayyibeh the deep, sonorous voice of the Mu'ezzin echoed across the valley from an attractive little mosque on the hill above our hotel. As the times for prayer approached, we looked forward to this reminder of the presence of Allah, or God.

The faith of the people also permeates their everyday speech. If a journey is proposed, or an event arranged for a future time, the discussion always concludes with the word *In sha'Allah* - 'If God wills it'. This of course is common in Muslim countries.

It is not possible to do justice to this land in such a short article; one can only try to convey something of its essence. There were many places we did not see. To appreciate Jordan more fully, you need to be there for about two weeks. It is truly worth a visit.

# Auckland Museum Exhibition

Vaka Moana – Voyages of the Ancestors.

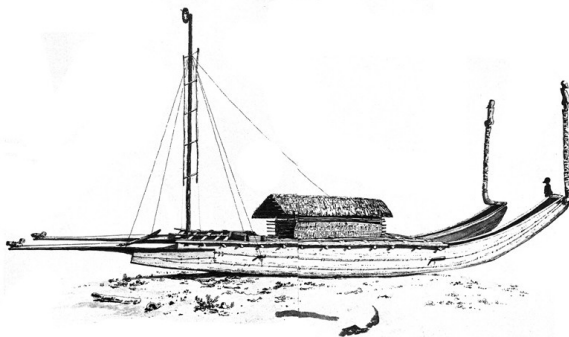
The untold story of the world's greatest migration

"The Navigator" is the central hero figure in an exhibition being prepared by the Auckland Museum about early Polynesian voyaging and migration in the Pacific.

Museum Director Dr Rodney Wilson, Professor Roger Neich, in-house Curator and one of New Zealand's leading Pacific experts, and Graham Soughtton, a member of the Auckland School with considerable experience in mounting exhibitions, are responsible for the development of this large project. A stellar cast of scholars has also been assembled, who are writing the related book.

"Vaka Moana", planned to open in the renovated museum at the end of next year, aims to bring to the world the story of the last and greatest migration in history: the discovery and population of the Pacific by the ancestors of the Polynesian people.

To have migrated across this vast stretch of



*A small voyaging canoe*

water, which is larger than all the collective land masses of the world, and populated tiny spots of earth, is an amazing feat of courage, endurance and sailing prowess. It is an untold story.

After its showing at the museum, "Vaka Moana" will tour Taiwan, Japan, North America and Europe before coming home nearly four years later.

It is the most ambitious exhibition project ever undertaken by Auckland Museum.



# The Navigator

by Graham Soughtton

**A**cross thousands of miles of nothing but the vastest ocean, the largest on the planet, sails the waka.\*

Centuries of tradition are in her construction, lashings, hull design, sail weave. The hand picked crew, the provisions on board, and the manner of her sailing come from deep experience of the physical and psychological requirements of long ocean voyaging.

But all of this comes to naught; is directionless; and ends in grief without the foremost actor, the primary protagonist, "the Chief of the Heavenly Fires"; the true warrior of far voyaging.....the Navigator.

On the deck he stands, unmoving, 20 hours out of every 24. His vigil is a prodigious sustained feat of meticulous attention. On his every word, or slightest gesture, depends the fate of the waka and her crew. He is the living law.

He knows the stars as intimately as a modern urbanite knows the streets of his home town. Without compass, sextant, charts, and without concepts of latitude and longitude, his mind is an intricate instrument trained over 20 years to calculate the constantly shifting permutations of star movement, swells, wind, wave pattern, boat- speed, land forms, rock formations, birdlife, changing sounds and smells.

Riding the rise and fall of the obvious swell he detects the presence of two subtle swells, one hardly perceptible, but these deep and gentle movements day after day have a disaster potential.....the destination 3000 miles away is missed, and badly missed.

In his mind a straight line from Tahiti to Hawaii. In the physical world a lusty easterly with accompanying strong currents force the waka continuously westwards off its northerly course. How far off? ....and then

the storm comes in, clouds obscure the stars. The navigator must compute the speed and direction of the drift so he can set new courses to compensate..... And it is now that his incredible learning is tested.

From seven years of age..... night after night the endless commitment to memory of every known navigational factor of wind, current, stars, islands.

And now with every sense on high alert hour after hour, day after day, .....and with a resolve so fixed no shadow of doubt enters.....he guides the waka to certain landfall; to where they have arrived before... and will arrive again.

This is the essence of the Navigator.....he makes the miraculous seem ordinary.

\* canoe

## The Call of the Sea

"He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names"

(Psalms, CXLVII, 4)

"Wouldst thou" –  
so the helmsman answered –  
"Learn the secret of the sea?  
Only those who brave its dangers  
Comprehend its mystery!"

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,  
*'The Secret of the Sea'*)

"Unpathed waters, undreamed shores"  
(Shakespeare, *'The Winters Tale'*)

"The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators"  
(Edward Gibbon,  
*'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire'*)

# *An Invitation*

*to members of the School of Philosophy*

**Celebrate at a special Open Morning at Ficino School**

**on Saturday, 27 August 2005, from 9am to 11am  
at 27 Esplanade Road, Mt Eden**

The staff and pupils wish to invite members of the School of Philosophy to join them for the launch of a new prospectus, crest and advertising, and to celebrate and give thanks. Everyone's moral and spiritual support, unstinting service and generous donations throughout our early years has helped Ficino School to find its feet and become a respected identity on the Auckland educational scene.

Despite this intimate association, many Philosophy students have not had the opportunity to meet the Ficino School in action. We would like to offer all students the chance to see and experience the reality behind the words; to meet the children, their teachers, parents and helpers; spend time as a guest of the school, and share with the children their work, dance, song, art and drama.

## **A brief background.**

Ficino School was established in 1997 by the School of Philosophy to provide a spiritually-based and traditional education for children. The sound of the school's philosophy-centred education attracted keen families from all over greater Auckland. A real return to the basics of language, mathematics, fine handwriting, nature study, good music, drama, and fine art, as well as practical philosophy, combined with the example of dedicated staff and volunteers, has made the school a happy place. In this environment children can learn about being true to themselves whilst developing a genuine love of learning. Though only in our eighth year, we already have 51 graduates contributing to a host of Auckland's secondary schools and colleges. Currently the roll is 106 children and rising.

## **PROGRAMME**

Welcoming address, presentation by the children, classroom visits, morning tea in the Villa, panel discussion in the school hall.

### **The Panel will consist of**

The Headmaster, a teacher, the Head Boy and Head Girl, a parent, and a Board member – to answer questions about the school. Come prepared.

# Flashes of Joy

It was in Martinpuich, the skeleton of a village on the Somme, that Jack Glubb experienced one of those glimmers of light which was to remain with him for the rest of his life. It was early in 1917 on a cold, wet and desperately depressing day that he found himself in what was left of Martinpuich. 'The village was merely an area of vast mounds of debris of earth and broken brick... The whole countryside was a vast sea of grey mud, over which trailed low grey clouds, discharging a persistent drizzle. No words of mine can describe the dreariness and hopeless desolation of the scene, wrapped in mist and rain. I sat down on a heap of broken brick and rubbish for a few minutes rest. A cold gusty wind blows the driving rain in my face. Just behind me, a torn strip of old curtain, caught between two splintered roof-beams, flaps wearily in the icy wind.' ...

'Suddenly I feel my whole self overwhelmed by waves of deep and intense joy, which it is impossible to describe. Never before had I experienced such a feeling of deep interior joy, so that I could hardly contain myself. I sat for what must have been several minutes, filled with the passionate joy of Heaven itself – then the feeling slowly faded away. I remembered how St Francis of Assisi once said that perfect joy lay in being cold, hungry, exhausted and repulsed from the doors of every house at which one knocked. It was the depth of cold, misery, weariness and exhaustion of that day in Martinpuich, which had produced in me those waves of spiritual joy. I had given everything to do my duty and had held nothing back.'

*from 'Glubb Pasha, a Biography'*  
*by James Lunt*

One morning when I was in the wood something happened which was nothing less than a transformation of myself and the world, although I "believed" nothing new. I was looking at a great, spreading, bursting oak. The first tinge of the greenish-yellow buds was just visible. It seemed to be no longer a tree away from me and apart from me. The enclosing barriers of consciousness were removed and the text came into my mind, "Thou in me and I in thee". The distinction of self and not-self was not an illusion. I could feel the rising sap; in me also sprang the fountain of life up-rushing from its roots, and the joy of its outbreak at the extremity of each twig right up to the summit was my own; that which kept me apart was nothing. I do not argue; I cannot explain; it will be easy to prove me absurd, but nothing can shake me. "Thou in me and I in thee". Death! what is death? There is no death: "in thee" it is impossible, absurd.

*Mark Rutherford (1829 -1913) British writer*

## Rain

O sweet sound  
Of gentle rain  
Freshly, falling  
Falling, flowing  
Life giving  
Sinking, softly  
into parched earth  
Cool, refreshing, nourishing.

O sweet sound  
Of Speech untainted  
Reaching, calling  
Calling, piercing  
The hidden corners of separateness  
Sinking, deeply  
Deeply, sharply  
Through layers of forgetfulness  
Freeing, enlivening, Truth

*by Elizabeth Crompton*

# *Helen Amelia Latimer*

(1907-2005)

**H**elen Latimer was a much loved member of the School for over 40 years, joining soon after it was established in Auckland. She continued to attend weekly meetings until shortly before her death at the age of 98.

Helen was a devoted member, who said that the teaching had made a great difference to her life. She served the School in many ways – in her nineties she took home ironing from 27 Esplanade Road and returned it the following week when she came to group. She said she wanted to give something back to the School which had given her so much.

Helen had an interesting life. Born in 1907, she was the daughter of a prominent London businessman. She met and married John Freeman Latimer in London in 1927. John had had an exciting life as an army officer, including taking part in undercover work in Russia.

Sometime before he met Helen, John had spent time in New Zealand and liked it so much that after the birth of their first child in 1928 they moved here, to a small and primitive bach at Onetangi beach on Waiheke Island – a daunting experience for a girl from London. After a short time they moved on to Palmerston North and later experienced the Napier earthquake in 1931. This shook their faith in New Zealand as a safe place to live, so they went back to England.

In 1937 they returned to the Southern Hemisphere, this time to Sydney, where they bought a small business which failed, and left them penniless, so husband John went alone to New Zealand to find accommodation and work. Helen and their growing family joined him just prior to the Second World War.



Because of his previous military service, John was called up and sent to Tonga to organise and train the Islanders. Their fourth child was born there. Later, Helen helped out at the island school until the family returned to New Zealand late in the war. Their last child was born here in 1944.

Helen joined the School whilst living in Mount Albert, after hearing about it from her son Peter and daughter-in-law Marguerite. Helen and John moved to Takapuna in 1977 after some 35 years in the Mt Albert house and John died there in 1982. Helen lived on in the same house for another 22 years and it was only in the last 18 months of her life that she moved into care.

Helen has been described as like an old oak tree: strong, steady and unshakeable, and her catchword was 'Acceptance'. She was a fine lady, and the steadfast way in which she lived her life, and her faith in the teaching was – indeed is – an example to us all.



# Howard Godfrey Russell

(1944 – 2005)

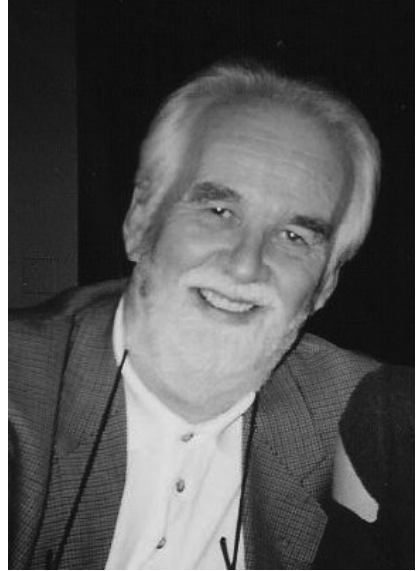
Another long-term member of the School, Howard Russell, passed away peacefully at his home on 3 June, attended by his wife Lynda and daughter Anna, after being diagnosed with cancer towards the end of last year.

Born in Liverpool in 1944, at the age of 21 Howard emigrated to Canada and later to New Zealand, arriving in 1972 to settle, where he met Lynda. Sometime around 1974 he began attending the School of Philosophy, where he became a valued friend and colleague to many.

After working in sales and marketing in the agricultural and food industries, in 1981 Howard started his own business consultancy which came to be known as Strategic Insight .

Until shortly before his passing, he continued to attend his philosophy group and worked tirelessly to blend his natural business acumen with practical philosophy for the benefit of his varied clientele, many of whom became friends. As those who knew him can attest, Howard had the insight and wit, indeed the capacity, to put the deeper questions which are often only half formulated, or formulated but not asked. Strategic Insight was built on this approach.

For a number of years Howard donated his time and talents to a variety of charities and schools, including Ficino School, which was a grateful beneficiary of his advice and assistance



on many occasions. He did all this without show or desire for recognition, and despite the fact that he described himself as “private, a loner” he not only served his fellow man but was good company also.

It is fitting to reproduce here the words of the philosopher Marcus Aurelius quoted on the front of the Order of Service:

*It is not the body, nor the personality that is the true self, the true self is eternal. Even on the point of death we can say to ourselves, ‘My true self is free, I cannot be contained.’*

Nevertheless, Howard will be missed by many.

---

The outward man is the swinging door;  
the inner man is the still hinge.

- Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)  
German Dominican theologian and teacher

The School is indebted to family members who kindly provided material and photographs for these tributes to Helen and Howard.

# Service

## Bondage, or a Means to Liberation?

What is Service?

The dictionary tells us that service is the act of helping or doing work for another or the community. If we go back further to the Sanskrit, we discover the root "sev", "to serve, wait or attend upon, honour, obey, worship".

This raises the questions "What do we serve?", "What do we wait or attend upon?" We can work for others or the community, or the other option is to work for ME.

What then are the effects of our actions: Bondage or Liberation? At any time, have a look at actions which "I want to do" and notice the sense of dissatisfaction, disappointment and waste which can arise as a result of them. Alternatively, what are

the effects of performing actions which we know should be done? Satisfaction and being pleased we have done the job.

What is the real difference? The actions for ME lead to bondage; the other is Service and leads to liberation. It takes courage to go against the current tide of opinion that service is bondage and "servitude". Yet we find this courage as we discover the hardness and coldness to which these opinions condemn people, and experience the freedom and fulfilment which is there waiting for those who truly serve.

What is fortunate, and quite beautiful to see, is that people do recognise true service when they see it. It opens their hearts, and becomes a good example to follow. In this way, the ripples of good actions move out through humanity.

In the "Supreme Yoga" the Sage Agastya was asked:

"Which one of the two is conducive to liberation, work or knowledge?" Agastya answered, "Birds are able to fly with two wings: even so both work and knowledge together lead to the supreme goal of liberation. Not indeed work alone nor indeed knowledge alone can lead to liberation: but, both of them together form the means of liberation."

The Bhagavad Gita, one of the great Eastern teachings, describes service thus:

*"Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform the action which should be done; for performing action without attachment, man reaches the supreme." (Ch. 3:19)*

***"To give real service  
you must add something  
which cannot be bought or  
measured with money,  
and that is sincerity  
and integrity."***

(Donald A. Adams,  
Tax legislator, 1938).

When we are "connected", self-confidence can be found to take an opportunity or rise to a challenge. We may find ourselves acting with a strength or exhibiting qualities that we did not know were there and it can be like moving into a larger world. If, on the other hand, when faced with a need our mind is overcome with fear, doubt or agitation, that potential cannot manifest.

So we play the part as it is presented to us by the creation. The parts may change very rapidly, e.g. in one day we may be called upon to be partner, husband, father, son, employer, teacher, friend, etc. so we need to be attentive in order to play the correct part at the right time!

*(Condensed from a talk given by Roy Holmes on the Cultural Day)*



# Bookshop News

## New Books

Several new titles have recently been added to the Bookshop.

*"Cascade of Stars"* – poems by Mira Mehta, Pub. by Shephard-Walwyn

From *New Frontier Publishing* –

*"Domestic Wisdom"* – Things a Lady Knew in 1862; *"Education and the Ideal"* (although this book deals with education in Australia, the issues raised are relevant here).

## Children's Books –

*"Zen Tails"* and *"Taming Butterflies"*. Both these books are illustrated.

## Lecture CDs

Students may not be aware that five new titles were added this year to the "Philosophy and ...." series of lectures from the Irish School put out on CD. These are: *"Philosophy and the Need to Lighten Up"*; *".....Communication"*; *".....Government"*; *".....The Heart"*; and *".....Devotion"*.

There are currently 31 CDs in the collection, with a further title to be released in August.

## Music CD

There are several copies of *"Let Not Your Heart be Troubled"* ... *"And Thomas Wrote"* – Settings of texts from the Gospels of St John and St Thomas, sung by the London School's Discantus Choir.

## A Humorous view of Punctuation...

Punctuation thus becomes the signature of cultures. The hot-blooded Spaniard seems to be revealed in the passion and urgency of his doubled exclamation points and question marks ("a Caramba!! Quien sabe?"), while the impassive Chinese traditionally added to his so-called inscrutability by omitting directions from his ideograms. The anarchy and commotion of the '60s were given voice in the exploding exclamation marks, riotous capital letters and Day-Glo italics of Tom Wolfe's spray-paint prose; and in Communist societies, where the State is absolute, the dignity and divinity of capital letters is reserved for Ministries, Sub-Committees and Secretariats.

## Auckland School Cultural Groups

Wednesday	Vedic Chants	9.00am	Lilian Beanland	521-5054
	Plato Group	10.00am	"	"
Friday	Choir	7.00pm	Frances Gore	817 5060
Sunday	Vedic Dance	8.30am	Rosemary Auld	412-8782
	Art Group	1.00pm	Ngaire Bennett	445 3827
	Shakespeare Study Group	6.00pm	Hamish Hudson	638 9667

New members to these groups are welcome. For enquiries, please phone the group tutors listed.

# Philosophy

An introductory course of twelve weekly lectures

## RECOMMENCING IN SEPTEMBER

The course is offered for the interest and enjoyment of thoughtful men and women who seek an understanding of the nature of human existence and the world in which we live.

The lectures show how great philosophic ideas of past and present, put into practice, lead to clear thought, reduction of stress, and effective action in work, study and every aspect of daily life.

The course, which includes the opportunity for discussion, is given on Tuesday and Thursday (7.45 to 10pm) and Tuesday morning (9.30 to 11.45am) and you may vary your day of attendance.

The fee for this course is \$120 for adults, \$60 for non-earning students. Enrol now by phone, or in person from 30 minutes prior to your first attendance, or visit our website:

**[www.philosophy.school.nz](http://www.philosophy.school.nz)**

Course commences:

**Auckland:** 6 and 8 September 2005

27 Esplanade Road, Mt Eden

For Enquiries Phone: 09-630-2703

or 09-638-7577 (during week prior to enrolment)

**Hamilton:**

For Enquiries Phone: 07-856-7174

**School of Philosophy (Auckland) Inc**

A registered charitable organisation established 1960

## *Contributions Welcome*

Thanks are extended to all those who provided items for this newsletter. Would you like to contribute to future issues? If so, please contact the editor. The deadline for articles is the end of week 6 of each term.

**Marilyn Marshall**

Ph 579 8646 Fax 579 7854 Email [marilyn.marshall@xtra.co.nz](mailto:marilyn.marshall@xtra.co.nz)