U3A Golden Bay Mohua

January 2025, Newsletter One

Our website address is https://u3agoldenbaymohua.org.nz/, so please use it. It might be handy for someone making a tentative enquiry about joining U3A, or someone trying to find out the timing of the next speaker, or the name of that interesting speaker who raved on about courtship rituals of the Yanomami Tribe.

There have been six visiting speakers since March 2024, and many more are planned for 2025. Summaries of those six appear next in this newsletter. But U3A is far, far more than an organisation that arranges visiting speakers. There are well over 100 members in the Golden Bay branch, comprising about 12-13 interest groups, and most of the activity occurs in people's homes.

The trouble with some of these "interest" or "study" groups, is that they are mostly full. In other words, there often isn't enough space in members' living rooms to accept more members. But, even if a group is full, if a topic interests you, please contact the convener anyway. If and when someone drops out, you will be next on the list.

If you don't want to wait a long time (possibly) for a space to come available, you could start your own group! It's not hard, we'll show you how. You'll find that your own group (in your house, or in someone else's) will quickly fill up with members.

One observation: the various interest groups have become something more than just a collective exploration of a certain topic. They have become a *mini community*, and people enjoy attending them just for the social interaction among friendly, interesting people. For example, there have been groups that have switched their focus to a totally different branch of enquiry, but has this resulted in a loss – or even a change – of members? Often not. And there is nothing wrong with that. We all need to keep physically fit, mentally fit, and to surround ourselves with friends.

U3A Public Speakers from March 2024 up to Christmas

Dr James Crampton, 4 April 2024

Dr James Crampton, from Victoria University, gave a talk about palaeontology, entitled ***"Golden Bay, The Red Queen, and the Pulse of Life".***

Palaeontologists use the evidence provided by fossils to uncover stories and secrets about life on earth. Golden Bay is rich in fossils, particularly trilobites and graptolites – small marine creatures that lived alongside the more well-known dinosaurs.

Fossils provide evidence of the rise and decline of species and support what is described as the Red Queen hypothesis, that life and biodiversity is determined by competition. The Red Queen Hypothesis refers to Alice in Wonderland's Red Queen, where she had to run faster and faster just to stay in the same place. Similarly, species must continually evolve new adaptations in response to evolutionary changes in other organisms to avoid extinction.

Life on earth is diverse - more species exist today than ever before in geological history. The existence of life is an important factor in making the earth habitable, creating an earth system which in itself is closely related to celestial cycles that produce inter-planetary pulses that impact on life on our planet, which could be the only life-sustaining body in the universe.

This was a fascinating and erudite talk which was well-received by a large audience. (Diane)

Sasha Borissenko, 21 June 2024

Sasha talked about ***Community Access Radio – 40+ years of content made by, for and about the community***. The twelve Access Media stions across NZ (including Golden Bay's Radio Fresh FM!) provide the only state-funded form of community broadcasting in the country. Its function is vital for democracy and for the communities it champions.

Qualified in law, performing arts, music and journalism, Sasha is Community Access Media's national representative. (Jenny)

Alison Balance, 12 July 2024

Alison Ballance is a well-known award-winning writer and broadcaster who in 2017 received the NZ Order of Merit for her work. Her talk was titled ***All things Big and Beautiful: tales of kakapo, great white sharks and takahe***. She's an excellent communicator as those who have heard her on Radio New Zealand can confirm. She's been personally involved with working on re-establishing the populations of kakapo and takahe and shared with us fascinating and amusing tales of her many adventures over the years.

Her talk was sprinkled with little quizzes which brought home some of the successes – and setbacks - over the years. Kakapo were nearly extinct in the mid-1900s, with a population of only 51 whereas last year 55 chicks were hatched. All the kakapo chicks are given names, and after a population on one island was decimated by feral cats, the new chicks were given the names of cat food! She included great white sharks in her talk as her husband works tagging them and recording their movements. We learned that each shark has distinctive markings under their gills, like a human fingerprint. A memorable talk. (Liz)

Dr Jane Malthus, 23 August 2024

A large number of members braved the wet and stormy weather to hear Dr Jane Malthus speak on the topic: ***Learning from Dress and Textiles, A Life's Work***.

Dr Malthus is a former Clothing and Textile Sciences and Design lecturer, Dress Historian and Honorary Curator of various textile collections, including those in the Otago Museum and Home Science School.

Jane spoke about some key events in her career as an academic and curator and gave an illustrated presentation of some notable pieces in the Otago Museum Collection, including two wedding dresses from the nineteenth century and one from the 1920s, all of which featured meticulous tailoring and handmade decorative elements such as lace or beading. A highlight was a stunning red gown by the noted designer, Balmain, which demonstrated the flair for cut and line that are associated with his work.

Jane also spoke about the Eden Hore Collection that was accumulated by a Central Otago farmer in the 1970's and is now owned by the Central Otago District Council. This collection includes work by key New Zealand designers of the period, such as Vinka Lucas and Kevin Moore, as well as pieces commissioned by the Wool Board to showcase the possibilities of woollen fabric in haute couture. (Diane)

Heather Smith, 20 September 2024

We sometimes go to great trouble to fly speakers down from as far away as Auckland, and yet some of the best speakers live right here in the Bay! And even inside the U3A organisation itself!

Heather is justifiably known as The Shell Lady. Her talk was titled ***An Introduction to Shells***.

Heather was a very knowledgeable and entertaining speaker on her topic of shells and brought with her a fascinating collection of shells from around the world. We were amazed by the variety of beautiful colours and shapes and had a glimpse into the world of the international shell collector. We now know the major classes of shells, that they can be herbivores, omnivores or carnivores. Some are even cannibals - others eat excreta! They have amazing ways of both camouflaging themselves (sticking bits detritus to their shells) and propelling themselves. For us, some are edible, and some are poisonous and unfortunately like the Golden Bay scallops, some are no longer there. It was great having the home schoolers in the audience, learning along with the golden oldies!

Terry Knight, 18 October 2024 - CANCELLED

We were all looking forward to a lively talk by this Golden Bay legend, when we heard the sad news that Terry died just before giving his talk. But he had a great funeral and – in the words of his son – "Terry would have loved to have been there". In fact, he was there in the laughter and good nature of those who came to mourn. He is sadly missed.

Paddy Gillooly, 22 November 2024

Another interesting local! Paddy stepped in at the last moment – as did Heather – to replace someone else who had to pull out at the last moment. (This year has been particularly testing for Marian, the person who organises the speakers). But Paddy turned out to be an ideal choice for an end-of-year speaker. Most of us have been to Farewell Spit, or have at least seen the Big Red Buses of Paddy's Farewell Spit Eco Tours heading out there. We heard about strandings of whales and Giant Squid, rare migratory birds, vehicles getting stuck in the quicksand, and – most interestingly – how this quiet, unassuming local progressively built up his business from a Lighthouse Supply run to a Bucket-List tourism experience.

Christine Wingels, early December 2024

In early December 2024, Jenny Maclaren arranged a Floor Talk with local artist, Christine Wingels, at her recent exhibition "*Between*" which was held in the Art Vault and the new exhibition space in Takaka Museum. A Floor Talk provides an opportunity for a small group of people to view an exhibition with the artist, who discusses their works and answers questions. Christine gave a detailed presentation of the work involved in designing and preparing a particular work for the World of Wearable Arts, before leading our group round other paintings and installations in the exhibition. Christine is a contemporary artist and it was extremely interesting to hear her discuss the ideas, materials and methods used in her works. It was a privilege to be part of this group and those who attended were very grateful to Jenny and Christine for providing this opportunity. (Diane)

The Interest Groups

What are they? They are the essence of U3A. Now that you have retired, you need to exercise your mind as well as your body. Use it or lose it. While listening to others is good, it is still possible to vegetate with words and pictures just washing over you. There is nothing like presenting a subject to force you to think! When you join a group, you will sometimes be expected to volunteer as presenter for a session, perhaps once a year.

We are always seeking new ideas for interest groups. If you are prepared to start a group off, bravo! If you would like to start a group, but don't know how, consult the website and/or our president. If you have a good idea, but don't want to organise it yourself, tell us anyway.

Many of the 12-13 Interest Groups are full, meaning that the homes where the meetings are held cannot accommodate more people. (If you want to join a group that is full, see later).

How do you join a group?

You turn up for the AGM and write your name down on the list of groups. You will then be contacted by email. Alternatively, you can take the initiative yourself and phone or email a convenor directly.

You want to join a Group, but it's FULL?

First, contact the Group Convenor - their email addresses and phone numbers are provided under each group's report later in this newsletter, or on the WEBSITE https://u3agoldenbaymohua.org.nz/. The chances are, there really is a vacancy on a particular date because someone can't be there. In the longer term, there will be resignations from every Group for a variety of reasons, and – by declaring your interest – you will be the first on the waiting list to replace them.

Second, you can form your own Group. Daunting? Sure, it is. But it is achievable. Many have done it and the U3A committee will help you through the process. Note, for example, that there are two Book Discussion groups That is because the first one was full but there was enough demand for another.

Existing Interest Groups February 2025		
Subject	**Convenor**	**Vacancies?**
The Classics	Marian Vlaar 525 8167 marian.vlaar@gmail.com	Yes (2)
Films	Lewis Martin 021 775 359 lews22@yahoo.co.uk	Yes - plenty
Art history 1: 20th Century Favourites	Diane Dacre 525 9422 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz	None
Art history 2: as of 2025, Egypt/Africa	Marian Vlaar 525 8167 marian.vlaar@gmail.com	None
New Democracy	Jan Morgan 525 9273 dejrmorgan@farmside.co.nz	Yes (2)
Poetry Appreciation	Lewis Martin 021 775 359 lews22@yahoo.co.uk	Yes (2-3)
What Does the Science Say?	Mike Delceg 525 9530 m.delceg@xtra.co.nz	Yes (1-2)
Saints and Sinners	Pat Ballard 524 8220 kdpballard@xtra.co.nz	Yes (2)
Astronomy	Helen Bracefield and Warwick Briggs 5259257 helenandwarick@xtra.co.nz	Yes
Architecture People and Cities	Diane Dacre 525 9422 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz	None
Book Discussion Group 1	Jan Morgan 525 9273 dejrmorgan@farmside.co.nz	None
Book Discussion Group 2	Peter Riley 0270273337983 peterrobinriley@gmail.com	None
Early NZ History	Marian Vlaar. 525 8167 marian.vlaar@gmail.com	Yes, see comments

Reports from the Interest Groups

Unless otherwise stated, all groups meet in the private homes of one of the group members, often the group convenor. Groups that may have vacancies for new members are indicated. If interested in joining, check with the convenor, as these places are usually limited, and a waiting list may exist.

Any member is welcome to announce a new interest or study group at any time, and seek support from prospective members, by announcement through the newsletter. Groups set their own basis for participation, which may be by active contribution of all members, or more directed learning from one person with knowledge and expertise in the group's topic. Any costs incurred are again by agreement within the group. Imagination is welcomed!

Current Golden Bay U3A Interest Groups

1. **The Classics**. Convenor Marian Vlaar, 525 8167. A couple of places available.

   This last year we decided to read some comedies, after a few years of tragedies. We realized quickly that humour doesn't travel well across the centuries, so we changed tack and apart from putting the world to rights in our discussion we watched some other videos. This year we are reading, watching and discussing Dante's Divine Comedy.
   We are a small group and meet in Pōhara every second Tuesday morning of the month.

2. **Film Viewing**. A focus on arthouse and old classic movies, but open to any suggestion from members. Convenor Lewis Martin 021 775 359. Plenty more places available.

   We are excited to have found a new, hopefully permanent, venue for our film showings. From October last year, we have been able to use the old Hatu Hone (St John) rooms at the Takaka Rec Centre for our films. This means that we have a large screen and a venue that can accommodate larger numbers, so we look forward to more members coming to our screenings.

3. **Art history 1.** Twentieth Century Favourites is an Art History Group based in the western side of the Bay, led by Diane Dacre (convenor, 525 9422) through videos and teaching. Group full.

   Rather than working through this period chronologically, we are looking at particular artists or movements that had an impact in the twentieth century. Our last session in 2024 looked at The Federal Art Project in the USA during the Depression. We meet in Milnethorpe on the third Tuesday afternoon of the month.

4. **Art History 2.** Video and teaching/discussion led by Marian Vlaar 525 8167 (convenor). Group full.

   The last year we had a varied programme: we watched a Exhibition on Screen DVD re the Vermeer's exhibition in The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam; we had a presentation about Francis Kere the first African to receive the Pritzker Price of Architecture; a presentation about Balkrishna Doshi the first Indian to get the Pritzker Price. We then concentrated on Japan and

looked at art, packaging, textiles, architecture, anime, ceramics and gardens. We use a range of YouTube clips.

This year we are going to look at different aspects of Egypt/Africa. The members are encouraged to take turns in presentations but don't let that put you off.

We meet 3rd Tuesday morning of the month.

5. **New Democracy**. Focus this year on the NZ political scene. Convenor Jan Morgan 525 9273 Up to 2 vacancies.

The group went through a lively period, but interest may have tapered off recently. Not to worry! This is a most exciting time to discuss democracy around the world. How many countries which have "Democratic" in their title are really so? What about the actions and pronouncements of a recently elected leader who claims to uphold the concept? Is democracy more than "rule by the majority" (or "mob rule' as the ancient Greeks would have put it), or should there be built-in checks and balances to ensure minority rights?

6. **Poetry Appreciation.** Free-ranging presentation and discussion of poetry chosen by the group members. Convenor Lewis Martin 021 775 359.

Poetry Group flourished in 2024, and we have now replaced the members who left. We always surprise each other with the poems we find, new and old, local and far away.

7. **What does the Science Say?** A group devoted to presentations and discussions about various science topics. Members usually select an issue which they research and then do a presentation which often involves relevant videos and or literature. Debate is lively and one always learns something new and often unexpected. The group meets on the third Monday of the month at 10.00am, currently in Rangihaeata. There should be room for one or two more in the group. For details contact Mike Delceg at m.delceg@xtra.co.nz.

8. **Saints and Sinners.** Exploration of the lives of notable historical figures and their legacy. Convenor Pat Ballard 524 8220. Up to 2 vacancies.

9. **Astronomy.** Videos, discussion and sky-watching in our exploration of the cosmos and its wonders. Yes, there are vacancies. If you have looked up in the night sky on a clear night in Golden Bay- and marvelled at the sight of stars, galaxies, planets, satellites, asteroids (shooting stars), the flyby of the International Space Station and more – then our group may interest you. We are twelve in number meeting six or more times last year, exploring and explaining to one another the wonders of deep space, the beginnings of life, the James Webb telescope and much, much more.

Here's a taster of four topics we discussed last year: the NZ satellite, methane study, and 50years since landing on the moon; Guest speaker with his Galactic Trust and the local vision for a community telescope and his presentation of "What's out there"; our Astronomy group joined with *What does the Science Say* on extra-terrestrial life; a study on the evolution of Earth's Atmosphere.

Please contact Warwick Briggs or Helen Bracefield at helenandwarwick@xtra.co.nz or 0273887766 if you would like to know more about this group.

10. **Architecture, People and Cities.** An exploration led by Diane Dacre (convenor 525 9422) of the impact of our built environment on our lives as individuals and societies. Group full.

This group uses a thematic approach to examine the relationships between beliefs and aspirations and the buildings and cities built by different human groups. In 2024 we considered architecture as an expression of spirituality. The theme for this year has not yet been finalized. We meet in Onekaka on the afternoon of the fourth Thursday of the month.

11. **Book Group 1.** Joint discussion of books chosen by members and supplied through the Christchurch-based scheme. Convenor Jan Morgan 525 9273. Group full.

12. **Book Group 2.** Joint discussion of books chosen by members and supplied through the Christchurch-based scheme. Convenors Peter Riley 027 3337983. Group full.

Additionally, the following group that functioned for the last two years is awaiting new participants before resuming:

13. **Early NZ History.** Focus this year to be on 20th century events, people and places.
If interested in a topic, convenor Marian Vlaar 525 8167 would like to hear from you.

Current Golden Bay U3A Committee:

Lewis Martin (Chair)

Diane Dacre (Secretary)

Jocelyn Tracey (Treasurer)

Jenny Maclaren (Advertising)

Piers Maclaren (Emails and Newsletter)

Gordon Mather (Coordinator of the Study Groups)

Marian Vlaar (Organiser of Visiting Speakers)

Liz Thomas (Dogsbody)

That's all for this newsletter, folks. We'll keep you informed about visiting speakers as usual. You'll normally get an email about 10 days before the speech, and a reminder the day before.

Piers Maclaren (on behalf of the U3A Committee)