U3A Golden Bay Mohua

August 2025, Newsletter Two

Welcome to new members! It is wonderful that so many new faces have recently joined our organisation, and we hope you are happy with what you discover. Here are their names:

Rosie Callaghan
Carl Christiansen
Paul Christoffel
Mike Cunliffe
Kate Heal
Liz Jerram
Jonathan Pace
Cathy Rooney
Trevor Polglase
Lorraine Polglase

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 the love life of the huhu beetle.

There have been five visiting speakers since January 2025, and several more are planned for 2025 – including some famous names! Summaries of those five appear next in this newsletter. But U3A is far, far more than an organisation that arranges visiting speakers. There are 116 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 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 January 2025 thus far

We are grateful to the Community Grant that we have received each year from Tasman district Council for their financial assistance towards the cost of bringing out-of-town visitors here.

Axel Downard-Wilke, 14 March 2025

Axel Downard-Wilke gave a very lively and entertaining talk about why Collingwood was not chosen as New Zealand's capital. A resident of Parapara in Golden Bay, Axel has many interests, including cycleways, rowing, Wikipedia, political history, and early New Zealand history.

The first capital city of New Zealand was Old Russell (known as Okiato), located in the Bay of Islands. It shifted to Auckland in 1841, being more central and with a safer harbour. But an Auckland capital meant it took up to three months for a southern MP to travel there! Clearly, not satisfactory! In 1864 a commission of three Australians was appointed – tasked with finding a location on the shores of Cook's Strait. Wellington was chosen. Collingwood was rejected because its harbour was too small and exposed. In fact, the visiting commissioner had to anchor their vessel a considerable distance out and needed to be rowed ashore! It seems that the various attractions of Collingwood (proximity to coal, gold, limestone, iron, forests, and well-watered farmland) were overshadowed by the more important consideration of the inferior harbour. (Piers)

Dr James Crampton, 17 April 2025

Dr James Crampton, from Victoria University, gave an interesting talk last year about palaeontology, entitled ***"Golden Bay, The Red Queen, and the Pulse of Life".*** In view of the fact that that he visits Golden Bay most years on a geology field trip, he kindly agreed to repeat the act. This time his title was provocatively titled ***"To a first approximation, all life on earth is extinct"***.

His fascinating talk opened by reflecting on the statement that since life first appeared, more than 99% of all species have gone extinct, and then expanded on the large-scale evolution of biodiversity on earth, and the relatively recent acceptance and understanding of the reality of extinctions, their timeframes and the abruptness of major extinctions.

Focusing on the two principal examples of the Cretaceous/Paleogene mass extinction, and the Quaternary megafaunal extinction, he developed the theme of the central role that extinction has played in creating opportunity and impulse for development of new species and thereby increasing biodiversity. He highlighted that given the unpredictability of extinction we can only really understand and know about an extinction event after it has happened. Hopefully with our present knowledge of critical factors that can contribute to pressure on species, driving them toward extinction, we can strive to avert the loss of some of the more critically endangered endemic species that call our country home and make our biota so special.

The flow of questions testified to the engagement of James with our good audience and the real appeal of his presentation on a wet and wild evening. (Gordon).

Gerard Hindmarsh, 9 May 2025

The Senior Citizens Hall was crowded on Friday, 9th May, when over 100 members turned up to hear from Gerard Hindmarsh, an award-winning travel writer and journalist, who lives locally, in Golden Bay.

Gerard is the author of seven published books, all featuring stories with strong historical and social themes. Currently, he is working on a collection of stories about interesting characters associated with the Abel Tasman National Park area, providing us with some enlightening glimpses of some of the strong types who brought European culture to this area.

The second half of his talk focussed on his years as Asian correspondent on Kim Hill's Nine to Noon show, and he recounted several interesting and humorous anecdotes about some of his unique cultural experiences in various countries before reporting on an arduous journey into Tibet. This account was well-illustrated with slides of rough roads, mechanical mishaps and crowded streets in ancient mountain-side villages.

Gerard's talk was wide-ranging and informative. Many of Gerard's journeys took place at a time when life in countries like China and Tibet was not well-known in the west and it was extremely interesting to listen to Gerard's impressions of the people and places he has explored. (Diane).

Hamish Hills, 13 June 2025

A large audience came to hear Hamish Hills, a local dairy farmer, tell us about his experience of setting up Golden Bay's first solar farm, with strong support from his parents. Because it was a new concept in the district, he had many bureaucratic obstacles to overcome, unhelpful gentailers (companies that both generate and retail electricity) to cope with, and then Covid arrived! This meant critical delays in the delivery of equipment, which of course added to the cost and the worry. Fortunately, although Hamish knew nothing about solar farms at the beginning, he has a real "can do" attitude, which combined with the experience he'd acquired in large construction sites in Australia and the Philippines, meant he was not going to give up. The result: the just under 3000 panels produce 1.43 MW, enough for the energy needs of about 310 homes.

The talk, although short, elicited a great many thoughtful questions from the audience. (Jenny).

Alan McDermott, 25 July 2025

Collingwood local identity and entrepreneur Alan McDermott has an impressive background and track record as a leader in agricultural research and management of developing production and processing systems in NZ. He gave a fascinating account of his recent Nuffield scholarship world tour, visiting a number of countries in both hemispheres with exciting and innovative agricultural systems, from which we can learn much in providing quality, healthy food for a demanding and hungry world. His passion for ethical and humane treatment of farmed animals has led to his founding of NZ Pearl Veal, a start-up company that produces premium NZ grown rose veal from milk and pasture-raised calves that otherwise are seen as an unwanted byproduct of the dairy industry. Not only did he describe this promising and expanding venture, but he also served up cooked-on-site samples of this delicious meat and pate. A gastronomic and mentally stimulating treat! (Gordon)

Proposed Speakers for the remainder of 2025

We have invited two household names to speak later this year. Amazingly, they have both accepted.

19 September: Dame Fiona Kidman

Fiona Kidman is a well-known name to anyone who likes books. She has has written eleven novels, seven short-story collections, two volumes of her memoirs and six collections of poetry. Her works explore women's lives and issues of social justice, and often feature historical settings. Even though, at the age of 85, you would think she would choose a quiet life, she said she liked visiting and speaking to rural communities. Let's not disappoint her.

17 October: Neil Wallace

Neil has been teaching art to those in Corrections Institutions. Yet to be confirmed.

20 November: Professor Robert Patman

Anyone who watches TV News would have seen Robert Patman and heard his sage words. His teaching and research interests include US foreign policy, international relations and global security. Pretty topical! It's a wonder he has the time to visit a small place like Golden Bay.

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 15 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.

Active Interest Groups and Convenors

Subject	Convenor	Vacancies?	Location and Time
The Classics: Greek Comedies - reading and watching plays	Marian Vlaar. 525 8167 021 / 02102349486 marian.vlaar@gmail.com	Yes, 2	Pohara second Tuesday monthly morning 10am
Films	Lewis Martin. 21775359 lews22@yahoo.co.uk	Yes, plenty	The old Hatu Hone (St. John) rooms at the Rec Park. 2nd Monday monthly evening 7or 7.30
Democracy: Reflecting on where we are at	Jan Morgan. 5259273 dejrmorgan@farmside.co.nz	None	Various member's homes 4th Friday monthly morning 10am
Art history: 20th Century Favourites	Diane Dacre 525 9422 / 21155678 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz	None	Milnthorpe 3rd Tuesday monthly afternoon 1.30pm
Art history - a varied programme selected by participants	Marian Vlaar 5258167 / 02102349486 marian.vlaar@gmail.com	None	Various member's homes 3rd Tuesday monthly morning10am
Book Discussion Group 1	Jan Morgan. 525 9273 dejrmorgan@farmside.co.nz	None	Various member's homes 1st Tuesday monthly morning 10am
Book Discussion Group 2	Peter Riley. peterrobinriley@gmail.com	None	Various members' homes 2nd Friday monthly morning 10am
Saints and Sinners: Notable figures - this year politicians	Pat Ballard and Robin Riley. 524 8220 kdpballard@xtra.co.nz	Yes, 2	Various member's homes 2nd Tuesday monthly morning 10am

Subject	Convenor	Vacancies?	Location and Time
Astronomy - videos, discussion and sky watching. Wide ranging.	Helen Bracefield and Warwick Briggs helenandwarwick@xtra.co.nz	Yes	Various member's homes 4th Tuesday monthly afternoon 3pm, stargaze nights 7pm
What Does the Science Say?	Mike Delceg 525 9530 m.delceg@xtra.co.nz	Yes, 1 or 2	Rangihaeata 3rd Monday monthly morning 10am
Poetry Appreciation	Lewis Martin 21775359 lews22@yahoo.co.uk	None	Various member's homes 2nd Thursday monthly morning 10am
Architecture People and Cities	Diane Dacre 525 9422 / 021155678 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz	None	Onekaka 4th Thursday monthly afternoon 1pm
Mohua history Wiki group	Axel Downard-Wilke 027 2929 810 axel@viastrada.nz	Please ring or email Axel	Various member's homes 2nd Monday monthly 1.30pm
Study of AC Grayling	Gordon Mather gordon.mather@gmail.com gordon.mather@gmail.com	None	3rd Thursday monthly 2pm
Esperanto	Jonathan Pace 021-060-0909 waikiwa@gmail.com waikiwa@gmail.com	Please ring or email Jonathan	To Be Decided

Farewell Spit Excursion

After Paddy Gillooly's talk at the end of last year, several members expressed interest in organizing a U3A booking on a Farewell Spit Eco Tour to Farewell Spit. This has been discussed with EcoTours, who are prepared to offer us a generous discount if we have a group of 12 people or over. This will cost $150.00 per person, rather than the usual $200.00.

The trip takes 7 hours. Departure times are organized around the tides. We are looking at departures from Collingwood at 10.00 am, which will occur on September 18 and 19, October 5, 16 or 17.

If you are interested, please email dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz before 11 August. Indicate your preferred date, as well as any of the above dates that would be impossible for you. I will then finalize arrangements with EcoTours on the basis of these replies and email you with the final date and a bank account number for payment.

Contact Diane Dacre 525 9422 / 21155678 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz

Monthly Schedule of Interest Groups

Week of Month	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
First		10 am Book Group 1			
Second	1.30 pm Mohua history Wiki group 7.30 pm Film group	10 am Saints and Sinners 10 am The Classics		10 am: Poetry Appreciation	10am Book Group 2
Third	10 am: What Does the Science Say?	1.30 pm Art history (2 groups) 7 pm Astronomy		2.00 pm Grayling	
Fourth		3pm/7pm Astronomy discussion / stargazing		1.30 pm Architecture, People and Cities	10am Democracy

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 Milnthorpe on the third Tuesday afternoon of the month.

- **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. Full. 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, but we lost a couple of members, so we are looking for two or three more people. 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.

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. Convenor 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.

14. **Grayling Interest Group.** This group is now underway, meeting at 2 pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. The group is now full with 10 members. Using A.C. Grayling's recent book 'For the Good of the World', we are focussing our discussion on the challenges of three existential crises facing humankind; climate change, the technology revolution, and social justice.

15. **Esperanto.** Jonathan Pace is keen to start this group. For those who have failed to get onto any U3A Group, now is your chance! Doesn't matter if you cannot speak a work of this language, Jonathan will help you learn. Jonathan Pace 021-060-0909 or waikiwa@gmail.com

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 Interest Groups)

Liz Thomas (Website)

Marian Vlaar (Organiser of Visiting Speakers)

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)