U3A Golden Bay Mohua

January 2026, Newsletter One

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:

Karen Savage	Katrina Jensen	Keith Patchett
Paul Rooney	Paul Candlish	Celia Butler
Anita Peters	Wendy Parr	

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 courtship ritual of the elephant seal.

There were nine visiting speakers in 2025. But U3A is far, far more than an organisation that arranges visiting speakers. There are over a hundred members in the Golden Bay branch, comprising about 14 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 in 2025

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.

Al nine speakers in 2025 were excellent. They were Axel Downard-Wilke talking about why Collingwood did NOT become the capital of New Zealand; James Crampton on the geological evidence for, and implications of, global Extinction Events; Gerard Hindmarsh on his life as a travel journalist; Hamish Hills on Golden Bay's first solar farm; Alan McDermott on his Nuffield scholarship world tour; Fiona Kidman on her literary career; Neil Wallace on using Art as a rehabilitation tool in prisons; Robert Patman on why, when America has shot itself in the foot, smaller nations like NZ could become critically important ; and Chris Bennett on his round-the-world cycling record. Whew! 2026 promises to be just as interesting.

The first five talks were described in the July 2025 newsletter, and the four most recent ones are summarised in detail here:

19 September: Dame Fiona Kidman

Dame Fiona Kidman spoke to a packed house at the Senior Citizen rooms on 26th September. Dame Fiona is one of our most important living writers, and it was a privilege to hear about her early life and her transition from various forms of journalism to novelist and poet, as well as the struggle to balance child-rearing and career. It was fascinating to hear her talk about the blurred boundary between fact and fiction. She encouraged us all to put our own stories down on paper, if only for our immediate whanau, and talked about the tricky question of how much to tell. A really inspiring talk. (Lewis)

17 October: Neil Wallace

Neil talked about "Art in Corrections", in other words art facilities (carving, sculpture, painting, quilt-making, etc) for those in prison. Right-wing people see this as a pleasurable activity and a sort of reward for committing crimes against society. They are therefore totally against the concept, so Neil is grossly underfunded and has to handle all our prisons mostly by himself. But Neil sees Art as a way that prisoners – sometimes for the first time in their lives – can concentrate fully at a task, reach a sense of achievement, and feel pride in themselves. They then can use this lever, weak though it may be at first, to discover new areas of interest. For example, Māori inmates can learn wood-carving, which can go on to provide some sort of earned income and social respect. The end result is one way to truly rehabilitate inter-generational offenders. Discipline is essential to mastering a new skill, and this word can be used to create a positive response to the whole concept among conservative officials. (Piers)

20 November: Professor Robert Patman

Robert gave us a fascinating and well- reasoned explanation for how 9/11 had come about and how it has affected the world since. He explained how while the USA is weakening it is still a major world power and while China is rising as a world power a new Cold War is unlikely. He postulated that given these factors and the proliferation of transboundary challenges that cannot be solved by one country (global warming, pandemics, transnational terrorism and financial contagion) small and middle powers will play a much large role in solving the problems facing the world today. His clear explanations of these complex issues stretched our understanding of international affairs.

Having a speaker of this calibre with such an in depth understanding of the geopolitical world was a real treat. (Jocelyn)

12 December: Chris Bennett

Another inspiring speaker to end a very successful year of public meetings. This year Chris Bennett, a member of U3A Mohua, achieved the monumental feat of cycling around the world, arriving back in New Zealand in October. He is one of the oldest people to do this, and certainly the oldest to do it with a disability. In December, he spoke to us at the Senior Citizen's Hall, with an excellent Power Point show and many alarming and wonderful stories of his adventure. He is an inspiration to all of us. (Lewis)

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, but that depends on the particular group.

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 14 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: Dante's Inferno	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
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

Subject	Convenor	Vacancies?	Location and Time
Poetry Appreciation	Lewis Martin 21775359 lews22@yahoo.co.uk	None	Various member's homes 2nd Thursday monthly morning 10am
The Baroque Period – People, politics and culture.	Diane Dacre 525 9422 / 021155678 dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz	1 or 2	Onekaka 4th Thursday monthly afternoon 1pm
21st Century challenges	Gordon Mather gordon.mather@gmail.com gordon.mather@gmail.com	None	3rd Thursday monthly 2pm
Accessible Mathematics	Leigh Roberts leighroberts745@gmail.com	Yes	Parapara 3rd Friday of the months, 2pm

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 21C Challenges	2.00 pm Maths
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. One or two vacancies.

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.

13. **Twenty-first Century challenges.**
This small discussion -group spent 2025 looking at the existential threats of climate change, the technology revolution and social justice based on AC Grayling's book presenting these challenges, and will start this year with Sir Geoffrey Palmer's latest book on saving democracy in Aotearoa/NZ to guide and prompt us. The group collectively chooses books and authors to focus our attention on. There is room for a couple more members.

14. **Accessible Mathematics.**
Starting in the latter half of 2025, this group was set up to foster interest in mathematics, and to encourage people to regard mathematics as a challenging and rewarding hobby in its own right. While the intended audience is primarily those with limited mathematical background, the group caters for people of varied mathematical skills. New members are always welcome. Meetings are usually held on the third Friday afternoon of the month, at 2 pm at Parapara.

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)