HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND

www.u3ahamilton.org.nz

Email hamiltonnzu3a@gmail.com

Newsletter May 2026

Life is for learning…….learn for life

Next Meeting

Regular meetings of U3A Hamilton are held on the third Wednesday of each month from February to November. Our next meeting will be on **Wednesday 20 May** at 10 am at the Church Hall of Chartwell Co-operating Church located on the corner of Comries Road and Bellmont Avenue (opposite and near Chartwell Mall). Following the guest speaker's presentation, we have morning tea/coffee and a chance to chat. Meet and greet at 9:45 am will be from the following groups:

20 May	Play Reading Group
17 June	Hiking Group

It would be helpful if we had a panel of members who would volunteer to introduce or thank the speakers. If you would like to do this get in touch with either Catherine Gurnsey at catherineg@hnpl.net or me (Bob) at wilcock@xtra.co.nz

Morning tea

If anyone is interested in helping out with the morning teas once or twice a year, please contact Judy Bougher at judyb4573@live.com or in person, at a monthly meeting.

Membership

Our membership at the end of April was 271.

Chrissie Williams

Speaker Gail Pittaway – "Food memoir as historical record and nostalgia"

Now retired from fulltime teaching, Dr Gail Pittaway was a Senior Lecturer in the School of Media Arts at Wintec, teaching writing, media history, storytelling, myth and ritual. She is a co-editor of Meniscus online literary journal, has had poetry and short stories published, and has been a regular book reviewer on Radio New Zealand's Nine-to-Noon programme, since 2006.

In her presentation, Gail will share some of the findings and challenges of writing her PhD thesis. Gail's doctoral project was a personal memoir embedded within a discussion about food memoir as a genre. The memoir explores a personal history of food styling, preparation and consumption from her beginnings in a working-class family, through flatting from university days, then working as a secondary schoolteacher, and overseas travel. Both the memoir and discussion consider colonial and post-colonial food, changes in food fashions, the influence of Māori practices, early cookbooks, and the rise of media stars from Aunt Daisy on radio through to the rise of the celebrity television chefs.

President's Report

It was so good to see our April meeting so well attended, given the inclement weather. It also proved to be a very interesting morning. We coped well with a change of programming, successfully negotiating our AGM and break for refreshments before being well entertained and informed by our speaker.

Rod Harley, writer, former broadcaster and raconteur spoke to us about people who have really impressed him, people who have seen or experienced an event leaving them deciding that something's not right and setting out to make a change. These were the people Rob chose to write about in his books and actively encourages and supports others to do likewise. He talked about some of the effects his work has had on him and on other friends and colleagues. He also spoke of the situations he found himself as a speaker, such as the happy hour(s) at a retirement village. At the end of the meeting Rob was able to sell some of his books, the profits of which go to two charities.

I would like to thank those people who worked behind the scenes to make this all happen and Keith and Margot who stayed behind the end of the meeting to show me what my duties are, even if I did walk off with the sign for the speaker's car parking space. I'm looking forward to next month when our speaker, Gail Pittaway, will share her memories of when new foods/ingredients were being introduced to us all.

Catherine Gurnsey

Committee Notes

President	Catherine Gurnsey
Secretary	Mary Arvidson
Treasurer:	Christine Williams
Committee:	Bob Wilcock, Mike Forret, Michael Gurnsey

After a flurry of last-minute nominations, we were finally able to form a committee with Catherine as our new President and Mary returning to be our secretary again. This is not an ideal way to create a new committee and again, we ask all members to consider joining our committee and even better, standing for one of the executive positions. Most of our members have been on committees and held office in other organisations before so please, give it a go. The work is not onerous and can be a lot of fun.

Are your details on our membership database up to date? Perhaps the details you gave when you joined have changed? For example, have you moved in the last few years, or changed your email or phone number - perhaps you have added a mobile phone? If this might be you, please contact Chrissie at TreasurerU3AHamilton@gmail.com or see me at the meeting. Thanks for your help.

The Night Sky

You may be outside on a clear night and wonder what stars are shining above. Here is a new feature of the newsletter to help answer that question. In May 2026, Hamilton's night sky features early evening views of Venus and Jupiter in the west, while Mars and Saturn are visible before sunrise. Sirius (the brightest star) is visible in Hamilton. and is high in the sky after sunset, generally located towards the east/northeast. A rare comet (C/2025 R3) is crossing New Zealand skies and astronomers say you have about two weeks to see it before it disappears for another 170,000 years. The comet appears in the western sky about an hour after sunset and will be best viewed from an elevated, unobstructed spot (NZ Herald).

Interest Groups

Shakespeare for Everyone

On 1 May we met and continued our group reading of Loves Labours Lost, and had many laughs over the silly ploys, and lyrical (sometimes very bawdy) language. We still have one act to go, so we decided to read that for 'homework', because at our June meeting we are looking forward to watching a good, well-acted production on DVD. Now we are familiar with the story it will be great to see the actors and settings come alive.

Chrissie Williams

Mah Jongg Club

Our group is thriving, with new members every week. To make the times clear, we play on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month from February to November. The subscriptions are due in the beginning of June, as we pay our rent to the Contract Bridge Club biannually. The first game day is free, thereafter the payment will be $3. So, come and join us on the 13th for an exciting Wednesday afternoon where the beginning of every game is thrilling as you look at the tiles dealt to you or think 'Oh No what am I going to do with this lot'! Who knows where the game will end? You might win with a hand of stunning Fans - Dragons and Winds.

Freya Shaw, Convener freya.shaw@hotmail.com

Coffee Companions Group

On Friday 8 May, at 10.30 am, our venue will be Robert Harris Cafe Rototuna., (on the site of the previous Impresso Cafe which recently closed) at the main Rototuna Shopping Centre. Our June outing will be on Friday12 June at the Sugarbowl Cafe on Maeroa Road. Our group is open to all members, so if you'd like to join a friendly group and chat over coffee (or tea) please contact me. You can be assured of a warm welcome and the chance to get to know a few people if you are new to U3A.

Judith Hickman 027 664 6712

Uke3A - Ukulele and Singalong Group

If you are interested in playing and/or singing good old-fashioned songs we all know and love, this is the group for you. If you can't yet play or wish to improve on the few chords you already know, bring along your ukulele and we'll provide some individual assistance. If you play a guitar and wish to come along and join us, please do.

We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at Hukanui Reformed Church 159 Rototuna Road from 1.00–2.45 pm. Koha - $2 at each session for the use of the hall.

Singalong:

If you don't want to strum a ukulele, but just like to sing, you are welcome to come along to sing with us, or just come to listen. Anyone is welcome any time. Following each session, many of us choose to have a coffee and a chat together at the cafe at Palmers Garden Centre. Our next sessions will be on Tuesdays 26 May, then Tuesdays 9 and 23 June.

Judith Hickman 027 664 6712
Janet Pope 824 8079

Environment Group

The Environment group went out to Newstead Walkway which runs between Vaile Road and Morrinsville Road/SH26. We started at the Vaile Road end. This lovely short 2.3km walk follows a stream which has a population of well-fed eels at the first bridge before we entered the eucalyptus grove containing some towering giants. The tallest is estimated to be about 68.50m (measured in 1969) after the 1968 Wahine storm damaged the crown and took a few metres off. Some large pine trees can also be found along the walkway, planted over the years with native plants and trees. A side exit goes up to Newstead Model School about halfway along (ignore the signposted exit to the school by the second bridge)! At that bridge a right-hand trail leads up to Newstead Park Cemetery whilst the left leads to Morrinsville Road/SH26 where there is a sign giving a short history of the Newstead area. Much of this area was part of Scott Farm, now DairyNZ and we discovered one of our group was a Scott and knew the area where the old homestead and gardens were (long gone) and who used to visit the grove as a child!

Gloria Edwards

Plantaholics

Our Plantaholics monthly meeting was held at a fascinating venue, Weave Café in Innovation Park; a quiet and airy venue where you could hear each other speaking. Our topic was 'An individual informative talk from a learning experience, that could be on the history or establishment of any garden you choose'. Colleen opened with details on the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – the greatest flower show on earth. This was established in 1913 at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, with royal involvement that continues today. In 1987 a cap on attendance was introduced, limiting ticket sales to 157,000. Standard ticket price are £137 ($NZ315), and it is sold out. On the 100th anniversary in 2013, they banned garden gnomes and in 2024 a new sustainability audit was introduced banning artificial grass. It will be held during 18-22 May 2027, should you want to go.

Marilyn was next with her computer presentation showing how she had transformed her lot at Village Gardens since moving in in September 2025. Improvements included a pergola with side screen, replenished front garden, succulent garden and pots to finish areas off with colour.

Lesley took us to Rangimarie (Peace, in Māori), the memorial garden in Le Quesnoy, France that was liberated by New Zealand soldiers during WW1. The garden was designed by Xanthe White and her studio in collaboration with Uru Whakaaro providing a cultural context in 2018, marking the centenary of liberation. Many of the plants were sourced from NZ as koha to the town for looking after our soldiers. Le Quesnoy has a sister city relationship with Cambridge, and a N.Z. Museum was recently created.

Cath kept us overseas with her presentation on The Castle of Mey, which was bought by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother around 1952. "When I was staying with friends up in Caithness, I passed a dear little castle down by the sea and when I visited it I discovered it was going to be sold for just the value of the lead on the roof. The old man who has lived there was anxious to give it to me, but I resisted the kind gesture, and he offered it to me for 100 pounds". Restoration started on the castle and Her Majesty turned her attention to the 30 acres of gardens and grounds. Today the gardens are open for three days each year for Scotland's Gardens Scheme, a tradition continued by the trustees.

Alison took us to New Plymouth where, when she lived there in 2016, she and husband Neil entered their property into the Taranaki Garden Festival. Alison explained the entry conditions, then the work they went to in preparing it for presentation (the festival is over 10 days), daily ritual of tidying up after the gates closed and preparations early before they opened next day. Also, the theme of her garden and the guidance she received from both entering it and having knowledgeable people walking though.

Plantaholics continued

Jackie kept us at home with her photographic presentation on their previous property in Hillcrest, what it was like on purchasing, what opportunities it offered, what they then did to get it into the shape they wanted, how they went about that and the end result. Jackie shared with us this poem by Victorian scholar Thomas Edward Brown (1830-1897) entitled My Garden:

A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

Neil concluded with his allotment, having moved into Village Gardens with little opportunity for a vegetable garden, Neil located the Fairfield Project, community gardens within the gully restoration development behind Fairfield College. There are 62 plots and his (like others) is 5m square; he has divided it into a series of boxed areas, with a metre square foot garden complex. He has a diary where monthly recordings are made on progress and crop rotation.

Neil Curgenven

Hiking Group

In April a small group including some grandchildren of a member completed the Kauri Loop Track on the Northern end of the Hakarimata range. The plan is to cover the southern Hakarimata loop for our May hike. Anyone interested in joining our group please contact me.

Des Johnston Phone: 027 702 0247 Email: desnviv@xtra.co.nz

History Group

In our April meeting Maureen, concluding our survey of Spanish history, guided us through the late medieval and modern period. In our 13 May meeting we return to cities and people, featuring the history of Norwich, Barbara Churchill and Lady Mary Wortley Montague. The latter and our previous look at Byzantium/Constantinople/Istanbul, will serve as an introduction to the Ottomans in June.

Paul Etheredge, Convenor

Wine Appreciation

The U3A Wine Appreciation Group meets once a month and we taste four wines. We decide what we will be tasting the month before, either wine from a country, a region or type of grape. We take turns at bringing the wines or cheese. We discuss the geography of the regions, the types of soil and factors like closeness to the sea or the altitude of the vineyards in the particular area. History plays a big part in wine areas and grape growing, so we talk about this and if we have visited the regions and tasted the wines there - and the adventures we have had on our trips. We also discuss food matchings with each wine.

It is all very light-hearted and of course we end up discussing the world's problems - and solving them!

April 2026 Tasting – South American Reds

Panul Cabernet Sauvignon, 2022 Chile. DOC Region Valle de Colchagua. This valley is a premier wine producing region in central Chile about 150kms from Santiago, bordered by the Andes and Coastal mountains. Organic and fruit-forward. Warm, Maraschino Cherry and chocolate flavours. Hints of spice (pepper), vanilla and tobacco. Soft tannins, Classic Cab Sav profile. Delicious and enjoyable for change of season drinking. 13% alc. vol.

Trivento Reserve Malbec 2024. Mendoza Region, Argentina. This is the most famous Region in the world for Malbec. at the foot of the Andes. Ripe red and white fruits, plum, slight liquorice. Smokey, sweet tannins. Toasty and warm. Beautiful example of an Argentinian Malbec. Elegant drinking. 13.5% alc. vol.

Pichilemu Reserve Carmenere, 2022 Chile. A Bordeaux Region (France) grape (Carmeniere) that is now a popular Chilean-grown grape. Pichelimu is a coastal area with the Andes to the East. Rich red with violet reflections, Aromas of ripe figs, tobacco, fruits with fine spices, On the palate, balanced, velvety with ripe tannins. Long finish. Delicious wine and excellent drinking. 13.5% alc. vol.

Alta Cimo 4.090 CHILE, Valle de Lontue, 2021 Carmenere. From the foot of the Andes (The 4.090 is the height of the nearby volcano where the grapes are grown). Deep ruby colour, rich, spicy, fruity and hints of black pepper and tobacco. Well-structured and long finish. Benefits from significant day/night temperature changes in the soil. 13.5 alc. vol.

Pairings: We immediately thought of mushrooms (Mushroom Risotto). Red meat stews, steak and tomato based recipes, hard blue cheeses and smoky flavoured food, but.....Mushrooms, mushrooms, mushrooms!

All wines were delicious, top quality and memorable. A welcome break from the many whites and rosés of the summer. Another plus they were all under $22. So, some bargains around for South American wines.

Gay Main

Recreational Mathematics

The Recreational Mathematics group missed the latest prime-numbered-Friday. It happened also to be Poppy Day so instead of calculating I was at the other end of town handing out poppies to the great Hamiltonians who gave so kindly to the RSA annual appeal. To catch up we are again affording the status of Prime Number to "1" so we will meet on the 1st of May. Then on the 29th. Why is the number one not a prime? It seems to hold the characteristics of a prime: can only be evenly divided by itself or 1. The strange answer is "Because it is Defined out of the list". Its inclusion could pose anomalies so, a prime number is "any number greater than one that can be divided evenly only by itself and one". The things that are done to numbers. Our friendly group has vacancies; contact the convenor for directions.

Proposal for a new U3A Interest Group - Men's Mah-Jongg. We will play the game with the usual tiles and/or cards.

Murray Belchamber, Convenor 07 850 8279, 027 229 7883

Play Reading Group

In April we read a one act play 'Dress Rehearsal'. Generally we attempt two-act plays as they tend to give us a fuller experience. However, this time we had a guest appearance by a daughter of one of our thespians and we didn't want to leave her on tenterhooks about the story, hence the one act play. It was a good decision and we all enjoyed the light hearted dialogue and the company and expertise of our guest, her first experience of play reading.

Pat Stannard 0272110391