HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND

www.u3ahamilton.org.nz

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Newsletter July 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 15 July** 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:

15 July	Coffee Companions
19 August	Plantaholics

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 either at judyb4573@live.com or in person, at a monthly meeting.

Membership

Our membership at the end of June was 280, comprising 215 paid-up members and 65 pending payment of subscriptions.

Chrissie Williams

Speaker Michael Gurnsey – The use of AI as a research tool

Michael will discuss the use of AI, particularly Copilot, as a research assistant. He will describe its use in family and military history research to answer specific questions. He will discuss research strategies, the sources AI is using, rabbit holes, opportunities for further research and the variety of outputs AI can produce. Examples of problems and outputs will be discussed.

Michael started his career as a technician in the Applied Biochemistry Division of DSIR in Palmerston North in 1970, working on bloat in cattle. As a mature student he completed a PhD at Massey University in the Physiology and Anatomy Department of the Veterinary School. He returned to a position as a scientist with ABD working on a variety of diverse subjects such as fibre growth in goats, controlled release of drugs and predetermination of sex by sperm sorting. During much of his time he also ran the surgery facilities at ABD including carrying out surgery for his own research as well as for other scientists. After redundancy, he became a health and safety consultant and auditor working as a contactor for ACC. Since retirement, Michael has pursued his interests in music, the arts, Wedgwood, family history and military history.

President's Report

Our speaker for June was Neil Curgenven. Neil's talk, 'Houses of Hamilton' was about the types and styles of housing seen in Hamilton, from 1865 to 1990, some of which are fast disappearing to be replaced by in–fill and social housing, the style of which harks back to the song about little boxes, though I suspect they have much less colour these days. I wonder how many of the houses shown you knew of. It was interesting to hear of the changes in style and the contexts in which they developed. From the discussions taking place afterwards it seems many memories were stirred about houses and locations lived in. There was also the occasional mention of public buildings which had disappeared. Our speaker for 15 July will be Michael Gurnsey. He will be talking about working with AI as a research tool from the perspective of a new user, so get your twists and turns and rabbit holes here.

Catherine Gurnsey

Committee Notes

THE CUSHION IS NO MORE!!
Have you ever gone into the monthly U3A meeting and wondered about the number of name badges on a cushion at the entrance? I have. There are currently thirty of them, and it seems that the majority of these have been there quite a while - enjoying a nice car ride to and from the monthly meeting. So here is what will now happen. If you don't have your name badge and would like one. Come, see me at the membership desk at the next meeting or email me. I will check through the batch and do my best to produce yours by the next meeting. Any of the thirty unclaimed by the end of the year will happily be recycled. You don't have to wear a name badge of course, but it is quite handy for other members to identify who they are talking to if you remember to bring and wear your badge.

Chrissie Williams TreasurerU3AHamilton@gmail.com

We currently have six people on our committee and would dearly like at least one more. Specifically, we would like someone to be the groups coordinator. This is not a difficult task and entails keeping up with the status of membership in each group – i.e. whether they are full or are accepting new members. The coordinator would also help with the start-up of new interest groups. If this sounds like you, please reply either to our President, *Catherine Gurnsey*, or to me *Bob Wilcock*.

The Night Sky

On crisp frosty nights in July, the Milky Way is a spectacular sight stretching from northeast to southwest. The Southern Cross (Crux) can be seen in the southwestern sky. Mercury makes its best evening sky appearance of the year. At the beginning of the month, it appears as a bright star toward the northwest, setting two hours after the sun. It holds that position till mid-month, slowly fading as more of its sunlit side is turned away from us. It then sinks into the twilight in the third week as it begins to pass between us and the sun. Mars is visible in the northwest as a distinct, medium-bright red star. Prominent stars are Sirius and Canopus, which both set in the southwest in late twilight. (Royal astronomical Society of NZ)

Bob Wilcock

Interest Groups

You may wish to join one of our special interest groups but not know how. On our web page we have a list of the groups and details of how they can be contacted, viz. https://u3ahamilton.org.nz/new-interest-groups/
Click on 'more information' to get contact names and details.

Potential Music Group 2

Are you interested in joining a group which would meet, play and listen to CDs on a great hi-fi setup? Warren Lee is willing to host and manage a second music group if there is sufficient interest.

Give him a call on 027 2223 2298

Computer & Technology Group

The Computer & Technology group continues to look at the use of A.I. in a variety of contexts. We share examples we've encountered or read about, and they are not all negative. A member shared that AI has creatively solved Maths problems producing new solutions not yet managed by mathematicians. In comparison, research on AI Assistants such as ChatGPT used by university students found that their essays used more diverse & colourful language but lacked creative ideas: human written essays contained eight times more new ideas than AI.

There are now reports that young people are negatively reacting against 'smart' technology and AI, viewing the latter as making their work futures bleak. Concern is expressed by the British AI Security Institute (created by Rishi Sunak, former British P.M) 'the largest and best funded government organisation dedicated to probing the technology's potentially catastrophic risks.'

We looked at evolving scams including 'Quishing' involving QR codes which are increasing used by agencies as links. The landing website is swapped for another where some sort of payment is sought, scammers aim to get credit card details. We also noted that banks are adding more security steps when processing payments, such as sending codes to confirm identity.

The group currently has no vacancies.

Carol

Mah Jongg Club
I wasn't there this last week as I was having my hip op. However, I have been told there were 11 members present, the week before about 15 members and we had some good games. A number of people are away on holiday and there will be some that are looking after grandkids.

Freya Shaw, Convener freya.shaw@hotmail.com

Coffee Companions Group
Our July outing on Friday17 July will be at Café Fresca 78 Alison Street, Hamilton Lake. Next month, on Friday 14 August we'll be visiting Café Inc 12/11 Thomas Road, Rototuna. 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

History Group
At our June meeting Margaret guided us through the rise of the House of Osman from a small Anatolian Bayelik in 1299 to the creation of an empire that. in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, stretched from the borders of Persia through Asia Minor, around the Black Sea, conquered the Balkan Peninsula and exercised dominion over North Africa to the Straits of Gibraltar. The world's great powers in those centuries were the empires of the Ottomans, Savavid Persia, Mughal India and Ming and Qing China. It wasn't until the 18th century when the squabbling European states took their rivalries onto the world stage that the decline of these powers began and the remnants disappeared in the aftermath of WWI.

On 8 July our topic will be Constitutions, Legislatures, Elections and Power. We will be comparing New Zealand, USA, Israel and the United Kingdom. The first three have elections this year and the UK 2024 election result is an example for critics of First Past the Post voting.

Paul Etheredge

Uke3A - Ukulele and Singalong Group

The highlight for this group in June was an outing to Ngaruawahia. Sixteen of us played and sang for a large group of retired folk who enjoyed our brand of singalong music. We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday each month at Hukanui Reformed Church 159 Rototuna Road, 1:00 – 2:45 pm. Koha - $2 at each session for the use of the hall.

Singalong

If you don't want, or are not able, to strum a ukulele, but just like to sing, you are welcome to come along to sing with us, or just come to listen.

There is no limit to the membership of this group, we welcome all singers and players, and can provide tuition for those who want to learn to play ukulele. 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 14 and 28 July, then 11 and 25 August.

Judith Hickman 027 664 6712
Janet Pope 021 086 7241

Plantaholics

We had our monthly get together at the home of one of our group members. There were three apologies. Settling down with a cuppa and nibbles we were taken, via Youtube, for a descriptive walk around the 2026 Chelsea Flower Show. The TV was stopped from time to time for discussion in the room. At the completion of the programme each member gave a short presentation on an aspect of gardening or what improvements they had made to their own back yard. Our departure was via a walk around, with comments, on the host's garden.

Neil Curgenven

Book Discussion Group 2

This group meets at 1.30pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The format is to discuss any book or books that we have read recently – any genre, any topic. It is a relaxed meeting of book discussion and matters arising from that. We generally finish about 3pm. The group is limited to eight members and currently we have a vacancy as one of the original members is relocating. If you are interested in joining us, please let me know on 0210778767.

Sheila Emslie 0210778767

Hiking Group
For our June walk we walked around Lake Puketirini west of Huntly. Starting off in fog, the day cleared and we had a great view of the lake most of the way around. Following that walk we drove across to east Huntly and walked around Lake Hakanoa. This is a nice walk passing various styles of home garden a bit of farmland and some public park. Some of us even detoured to Main Street Bakery in Huntly to buy some award-winning rhubarb and raspberry pies before we all met at Hopin Stopin Café in Taupiri for lunch, then home. Our July walk will again be on flat, solid paths around Lake Ngaroto between Ohaupo and Te Awamutu.

Anyone interested in joining our group please contact me.

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

Recreational Mathematics
Why are we so often, nervous of/ disenchanted by/ bored by/ frustrated by – 'mathematics' and the numbers that cling to the art? Everyone can count the fruit in a bowl of apples and pears. No problem, no stress. We can all determine how many omelettes we can make with three trays of eggs when there is a dozen in each tray. We 'apply' maths repeatedly though our day with no thought about the process; without 'liking' or 'disliking' the practice. Consider the numbers on their own, with the apples, pears, eggs, omelettes and egg-trays back in the cupboard, and we enter the mysterious realm of 'pure maths'. Recreational Mathematics seldom ventures below the very surface of that abyss. Instead, we might look at the patterns in numbers and the patterns caused by numbers. [What did Zero say to Eight? --- Nice belt]. For those in the Group who want to go way deeper, there might be something like these four improbable numbers.

$166^3 + 500^3 + 333^3 = 166,500,333$
$296^3 + 584^3 + 415^3 = 296,584,415$
$710^3 + 656^3 + 413^3 = 710,656,413$
$828^3 + 538^3 + 472^3 = 828,538,472$

The Hamilton U3A Special Interest Group – Recreational Mathematics meets on Friday mornings. In July the three days are: Friday 3rd, Friday 17th and Friday 31st. In August join us on Friday 7th.
Contact Murray on 07 850 8279 or 027 229 7883 for details.

Murray Belchamber, Convenor

Walking Group
The Walking group has had a disappointing June with two consecutive walks needing to be cancelled because of heavy rain. Some of us met for coffee and chat on the second cancelled walk day. We are hopeful to all get together and walk in July.

Noeline Alcorn

Wine Appreciation Group

This month was a different type of tasting. Often referred to as a blind tasting, we tasted wines in opaque black glasses. This is designed to challenge your senses by completely obscuring the colour of the wines and to focus on aroma, flavour and texture.

We had sent a 'husband' to choose the four wines and pour each glass in another room to where we were, so we couldn't see even the shape of the bottle or label. He then served each one several minutes apart, after we had discussed and decided on our decision. He then informed us of what it actually was!!!. It was fascinating what we all came up with. It was a lot of fun and you will see by the list below we did different countries, different colours and different varieties. We didn't do too badly but what a great experience as you don't know the colour of the wine of course, let alone what country the wine is from. However, we did quite well in the long run getting two of them spot on and close on others (France is next door to Spain anyway) So close on the Tempranillo!!!!

1. Tempranillo Tartana 2021. Spain.
Vines planted using the trellis system from Castilla Y Leon in Northern Spain
When revealed, bright cherry red in colour. Picked up the spice and soft luscious fruit. Bit of tobacco. It was delicious. Someone picked as French (not far away).

2. Pegasus Bay Riesling 2025. Waipara, New Zealand.
From a well-known north Canterbury vineyard. We were close on this one, but some picked as a Gewurztraminer. But it was a sweet Reisling! Lots of discussion and one of us picked Reisling! This was the one we discussed at length because of the sweetness and fruit flavours.

3. St Margau Lascombes Crand Cru Classe 1984 Margaux (Mis en bouteille au chateau No. 62302)
A Bordeau wine predominately Cabernet Sauvignon. Medoc, France.
Picked by one of us as French, someone chose a Shiraz, someone a Cabernet Franc so all quite close. A magnificent 40 year old wine, lovingly cared for and cellared properly. What a treat. We sipped in silence and felt it could even have gone on and on and on.....

4. Saddleback Pinot Noir 2023. New Zealand
From the Peregrine Estate in Central Otago. Picked immediately by one of us as a Central Otago Pinot Noir. All the characteristics. But of course, we had to discuss and suggest other options.

We had beautiful cheeses with the wines and so was a memorable evening. We were quite pleased with ourselves and lots of laughter and enjoyment of a 'blind' tasting.
Big thanks to 'the husband' who went to a lot of trouble to buy different varietals to give us lots to talk, laugh and think about a different way to taste wine

Gay Main

Shakespeare for Everyone

We are enjoying getting to know some of the lesser-known plays, along with interesting facts about Shakespeare's life and times. In our June meeting we watched Love's Labour's Lost - one of perhaps the sillier comedies where Shakespeare uses one of his common tropes of mis-delivered letters, along with many characters falling in love willy nilly. And unsurprisingly the use of a fool to add to the fun. All the characters use 'clever' language, but you can definitely detect the bawdier references.

We are looking forward to our trip to Auckland Theatre Company's production of Macbeth next month. Definitely one of Shakespeare's best-known plays, it will be interesting to see how this production brings forth the various themes - ambition, guilt, retribution. Shakespeare famously explores the human condition, inviting us to examine ourselves. Two of our members will soon be in the UK and will get to attend two productions at The Globe.

Alison Ringer Convenor

Extras
You will need to register to attend this by contacting events@waikato.ac.nz

The University of Waikato presents

'Nursing as critical practice: Challenges in transforming mental health legislation'

with Professor Anthony O'Brien

Tēnā koe U3A Hamilton

The University of Waikato invites you to attend a Professorial Lecture.

Date
14 July 2026
Add event to calendar

Time
Refreshments from 5.00pm
Lecture starts at 5.45pm

Venue
Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts
Free parking after 4.30pm at Gate 1 or 2b,
Knighton Road, Hamilton (map)