HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND

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Newsletter June 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 17 June** 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:

17 June Hiking Group
15 July Coffee Companions

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 April was 278, comprising 211 paid-up members and 67 pending payment of subscriptions.

Chrissie Williams

Speaker Neil Curgenven – 'Houses of Hamilton'

This month' speaker is our very own Neil Curgenven, sans fluoro jacket. Neil will give a brief description analysis of the different types and styles of housing in Hamilton, covering the period 1865 to 1990 with some reference to today's market. The botanical aspects of his talk can be seen (below) in the Plantaholics Group report. Neil Curgenven went to high school in Taumarunui. Leaving school, he joined the Ministry of Works as a civil draughting cadet and later completed the Certificate in Draughting. He worked in private practice and then joined Carters as their manufacturing manager. After a short career in advertising, Neil attended Victoria University obtaining a Diploma in Business Administration in 1985. In 2011 Neil moved to Hamilton and managed Blue Cross Property Services. He joined Stonewood Homes and in 2017 moved into Health and Safety Consulting with Summit Systems.
His other interests include Jaycees and Rotary. He is President of the Waikato Historical Society and has an interest in gardening.

President's Report

Again, it was great to see so many people attending our May meeting, including a few visitors. We also achieved a first, in that all phones were turned off or on silent. Well done. It really does make a difference to people nearby and to our speakers. Gail Pittaway enthralled us with her talk about how memories of certain occasions associated with eating and the significance of that, together with studies of the Classics led to her completing her doctorate. Most of us would not have thought of good food, good music, good friends and travels coming together in this way. I'm sure she provided many of us with the opportunity to remember our own such occasions.

Our speaker for June will be Neil Curgenven. Yes, he knows much more than just how to exit a building safely in an emergency. Neil's talk, 'Houses of Hamilton' is about the types and styles of housing seen in Hamilton, from 1865 to 1990, some of which are fast disappearing. I'm sure this will provide you with another opportunity to remember a bit of the past and the houses you have lived or stayed in.

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 and 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

June in Hamilton offers some of the crispest, clearest stargazing of the year. Winter nights arrive early, meaning you can start observing from around 5:30 pm. The long nights provide excellent viewing of the Southern Cross (Crux), the brilliant band of the Milky Way, and seasonal constellations like Scorpius (A.I.). The Southern Cross is located high in the southern sky, alongside its two 'pointer' stars (Alpha and Beta Centauri). Scorpius (The Scorpion) can be seen stretching across the eastern and overhead sky as winter progresses and is easily identified by the bright red supergiant star, Antares. Jupiter is visible low in the western evening sky right after sunset. Saturn and Mars may be viewed in the early morning hours in the eastern sky before the sun rises.

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.

Alternatively, you can reply to me (Bob Wilcock) when you receive the newsletter or, if you attend a monthly U3A meeting, approach one of the committee members at the back of the room.

Computer & Technology Group
The Computer & Technology group continues to examine how A.I. is rapidly being integrated into everyday life. Recently we discussed detecting A.I. generated images, ongoing Scams using A.I. generated scripts, and reporting problems to NetSafe and other organisations. We looked at members' latest home security systems, GPS trackers for vehicles, luggage and people. We had an enquiry about International SIM cards for travel: 'Saily' & 'Eskimo' were recommended.
We wondered if an expert on using A.I. tools could speak at a U3A General Meeting?
We also solved some Smartphone problems using the expertise within the group.

The group presently has no vacancies.

Carol

Mah Jongg Club
We played last week; there were four tables of four, much merriment coming from one table, which was good to hear. Newcomers are welcome, we next play on the 10th June at the Contract Bridge Club in Ham East.

Freya Shaw, Convener freya.shaw@hotmail.com

Coffee Companions Group

Our June outing on Friday12 June will be at Sugarbowl Café 150 Maeroa Road.
Our July outing on Friday10 July will be at Café Fresca 78 Alison Street
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

Our May 13 meeting: - Barbara traced the history of Norwich from the earliest times, being named during the 5th-7th centuries by Anglo-Saxons and becoming the major city in Norfolk and East Anglia. At the time of the Norman Conquest, it was one of the largest cities in England and trading with Europe. East Anglia includes Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire with parts of Essex and has been one of the most important regions in the political history of England.

Brent discussed Pamela Churchill (1920-1997). In 1939, Pamela Digby married Randolph Churchill, the son of Winston. A child was born but Randolph was in Cairo 1941-45 during which time his antics led to the breakdown of their marriage. Left alone with their child in London, Pamela was a confidant of Winston, developing relationships with highly placed Americans, such as General Walter Bedell Smith and Averell Harriman. After the war she married again and continued to have several wealthy lovers. Averell Harriman refused to divorce his wife but, in 1971 after her death, married Pamela. Now a US citizen, she established a Democratic party fundraising organisation. In 1973 Bill Clinton appointed her US ambassador to France where she died.

References - Wikipedia - Pamela Digby Harriman. Also, "Reflected Glory: The Life of Pamela Churchill Harriman" by Sally Bedell Smith. Simon and Schuster 1996 ISBN 978-0-684-80950.

Paul spoke on Lady Mary Wortley Montague (nee Pierrepont) 1689-1762. She accompanied her husband (Ambassador at Constantinople 1716-1717) where she had access to the Women's baths and harem. She witnessed inoculation against smallpox and had her son inoculated. In January 1718, her daughter Mary was born, and in October the family left for England. In 1721, during the smallpox epidemic in England, she had Mary inoculated and persuaded Caroline, Princess of Wales, to arrange an experiment on Newgate prisoners who would be freed from their death penalty. The success of the experiment led to Caroline also having her daughters, Amelia and Caroline inoculated. She was an avid and insightful correspondent, including ongoing exchanges with Alexander Pope.

Reference – "Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M–y W–y M–e" can be downloaded cheaply. Wikipedia is also a worthwhile source.

We concluded with a discussion on the travails of Te Pāti Māori, plus Iran and USA. The NZ election and the USA mid-terms will be a staple for the remainder of the year. Margaret will lead our June 10 meeting on the Ottomans AD 1199-1922.

Paul Etheredge

Uke3A - Ukulele and Singalong Group
If you are interested 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 1.00 pm – 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.

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 9 and 23 June, then Tuesdays 14 and 28 July

Judith Hickman 027 664 6712
Janet Pope 021 086 7241

Plantaholics
Last month the Plantaholics met and after the general chit chat of who was doing what in their garden. Neil put up a power point display he has created (and shown to several groups) on three gardens lost in Hamiton. It covered Hockin House when it was resided in by the superintendents in the hospital grounds, Beale Cottage, which sits on the corner of Beale St and Grey St in Hamilton East. The third is an example of what we see nearly every day: the half gallon, quarter acre pavlova paradise being replaced with four units plonked on the section, and there's a little bit of how Neil gets his garden fix today.

Neil Curgenven

Book Discussion Group 2
This is a friendly group that currently 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. We currently have our full complement of eight but from August there will be vacancies, so if you would like to join us, please add your name to the waiting list or contact me (Sheila).

Sheila Emslie 0210778767

Environment Group

The Environment Group visited Rotopiko (Lake Serpentine), 4 km south of Ōhaupō, SH3, on Wednesday 27 May. Rotopiko is a 30-ha Wildlife Management Reserve comprising three small peat lakes, one of which, East Lake, is surrounded by a pest-proof fence. Starting at the sliding double gate, the track around East Lake features a floating pontoon (pictured), interpretation signs, educational activity boxes, ancient kahikatea forest, as well as expansive lake views. There was much interest in searching for evidence of 'Fred the Thread', the larvae of a threatened moth species. 'Fred' is reputedly the world's skinniest caterpillar, and lives inside the stems of its only host plant, cane rush (*Sporadanthus ferrugineus*), creating tracks on the stems that are easily visible. 'Fred' and cane rush were once widespread in the peat bogs that existed on low-lying land throughout the Waikato, now converted to farmland. We also had some good discussion on the challenges and progress in controlling the vast numbers of starlings and other exotic birds that roost in the kahikatea forest every evening. To cap off the morning, we took over the Top Deck café in Ōhaupō for a well-deserved coffee.

Bev Clarkson

Hiking Group

In May a small group of five completed the loop taking in the southern end of the Hakarimata range. It was a quite tough but satisfying day. We started at the Brownlee Avenue carpark in Ngaruawahia, walked along the road towards Waingaro, passing the Christian Youth Camp site before heading up the ridge to the top of the Hakarimata steps where we stopped to take in the view and some lunch before descending the 1379 steps back to the carpark. At the summit we were fortunate to meet a young lady from Houston, Texas who has resigned from her job to spend a year seeing New Zealand and spent time talking with us. She kindly took the accompanying photo.

In June a more leisurely walk is planned around Lake Puketirini in Huntly, an approximately 5km flat walk on well-formed gravel tracks. If we have time and everyone is keen, we will travel across Huntly and walk around Lake Hakanoa. Anyone interested in joining our group please contact me.

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

Recreational Mathematics

Our smiling Recreational Mathematics Group continues with several spaces open for the curiously minded U3A Members. No tests of calculations, no esoteric formula; (unless you seek them).

It may be obvious that our habit of counting in tens came from the number of digits on our hands. But some ancient people used a base of twelve. Which is why there are twelve hours on a clock and why we once had twelve pennies to a shilling. Where did those old folk find a set of twelve handy things to count on? Again, logically they looked at their hands. Each of our fingers has three jointed segments, count them on the four fingers of one hand and we have our twelve. So, we might wonder, did the 360-degree circle evolve from thirty times twelve, or six times sixty, or even four times the ninety degrees in a right angle?

Join this group on Friday mornings when the day on the month is a prime number. In June we meet on the 5th and 19th.

Phone 07 850 8279 or 027 229 7883 for directions or turn up at my place at ten o'clock.

Murray Belchamber, Convenor

Wine Appreciation Group
Wines from the Clare Valley, South Australia

One of the major wine regions in South Australia, the Clare Valley is best known for producing world-class wines, especially Rieslings. However, the valley also produces award winning Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. Situated 130 km north of Adelaide it is one of Australia's premier wine regions. The Clare is an area dotted with historic towns, boutique cellar doors and scenic cycling tracks and it is also one of Australia's oldest wine regions with over 40 wineries producing world class wines. All our wines came from well-established Clare Valley vineyards.

Knappstein Reisling 2024 A benchmark Clare Reisling, pale and dry with notes of lime and citrus and crisp minerality. It opened out to become mouth filling. It can be cellared until 2038. We thought it would be with well mated with cheeses, melon starter, fish. 12% alcohol.

Taylor Reserve Parcel Shiraz (limited release) 2023 A lovely colour with a good bouquet. It was delicious with plum and blackberry notes. Sourced from the Limestone Coast and Clare Valley. Probably our favourite of the night. 14% alcohol. It would go with cheeses, melanzana, or lamb dishes.

Knappstein Shiraz 2022 Not unlike the previous wine with plum and blackberry notes but with tannins. A rich purple colour and 14% alcohol. Food to go with as above.

Jim Barry Lodge Hill Shiraz 2017 A beautifully smooth wine showing its maturity. Full bodied, complex and finishes well. A hint of pepper. 13.9 % alcohol. Our other favourite of the night.

All wines were top quality and typical of the Clare Valley Wine Region.

Julie Shaw and Gay Main

Play Reading Group
In May the play readers returned to a play they had partly read 18 months ago. We had to return the scripts early so never got to read act two of 'A Bunch of Amateurs' by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, both acclaimed playwrights and authors. After a successful run in London it was made into a movie starring Burt Reynolds and Imelda Staunton, and centres on a Hollywood actor who's is past his use by date but eagerly accepts the role of King Lear in Stratford. Unfortunately its not Stratford on Avon, rather it's just Stratford, a small village whose amateur theatre group want to save their theatre from demolition. And all the rest follows…

We discovered it was well worth repeating the first act and trust this time we can finally read act two in June.

Pat Stannard 0272110391

Extras

We received the following request from Kushalata, a graduate student at the University of Waikato.

Kia ora, to the representatives of U3A Hamilton. I am a PhD student at the University of Waikato undertaking a national study titled When to stop driving? An exploration into driving cessation decision-making among people with cognitive impairment. This research started in 2023 and I am currently recruiting families, whānau and carers who are supporting an older person with memory loss or cognitive impairment who is either still driving or has recently stopped driving. Participation involves completing a short online survey, which takes approximately 15–20 minutes.

I would be very grateful if your organisation could support recruitment by sharing the study flyer and survey link through any relevant newsletters, mailing lists, networks, community contacts or social media channels. This is currently being executed through the networks of Dementia New Zealand, Carers New Zealand, New Zealand Association of Gerontology, HOPE Foundation for Research on Ageing and more organisations.

This study aims to better understand how families and carers experience decisions about driving cessation, and how support around this difficult transition could be improved.

I have attached an approved flyer for your reference and looking forward to a wider participation from across New Zealand. Your assistance would be extremely valuable in helping the research reach families and carers who may have relevant experiences to share.

If there are possibilities to support the survey distribution, I will be happy to provide further details including the participant information sheet and survey link for circulation.

Thank you for considering this request.

Ngā mihi nui,

Kushalata Baral

PhD Candidate, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand

Call for Participation

Are you supporting someone with memory loss who is currently driving or who has recently stopped driving?
If so, we invite you to complete this 15-minute survey.

YOUR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT, AS THIS RESEARCH WILL HELP INFORM A BETTER WAY FORWARD.

YOUR RESPONSES ARE ANONYMOUS AND CONFIDENTIAL, AND YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

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