HAMILTON NEW ZEALAND

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Newsletter September 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 16 September** 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:

16 September Shakespeare for Everyone

21 October History 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 Bob Wilcock 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 August was 291, comprising 227 paid-up members and 64 pending payment of subscriptions.

Chrissie Williams

Speaker Sarah Munro

Sarah Munro is an artisan and her practice extends from large scale sculptures to her more recent series of small-scale embroideries.

She was born in Kirikiriroa, Aotearoa and received a Doctorate in Fine Arts at Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland. Munro has been the recipient of artist residencies including the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship at the University of Otago. Sarah is represented by Page Galleries.

The title of her talk is:
"Threading the Needle – Embroidered Environmental Advocacy"

Sarah Munro's ongoing art series **Trade Items** has been described as *embroidered environmental advocacy*. In the context of this series her 'traded items' work as symbolic substitutes for historical currency and goods that represent the ecological devastation, colonial legacy, and shifting biodiversity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Rather than denoting simple economic commerce, Munro uses the concept of a trade item to build upon and reframe a historic 1769 drawing by the Tahitian navigator Tupaia—which originally documented the 'first contact' barter of a kōura (crayfish) for a piece of English cloth.

By treating the needle as a tool for critical inquiry rather than domestic decoration, Munro reframes a historically marginalized craft into a site of political and historical commentary. In rendering these items via the highly laborious, time-intensive medium of embroidery, the trade items become tools to thoughtfully critique agricultural practices, habitat loss, and colonisation.

President's Report

President's Report – August

As I write this report it is the first day of Spring but the wind feels more like a wintery cold. Fortunately our August meeting was greeted with a bright, sunny day and we had a large group of people turn out to hear Roger Cox speak about the Fairfield Project.

It seems many of you knew Roger as a teacher and others knew of, but not about the Fairfield Project. They are using surplus College land and aim to restore the gully back to the way it was. As Roger put it, "The green space we are developing is a hidden oasis among suburban Hamilton."

Roger described how Project is governed by the Kukutaaruhe Education Trust and with the guidance of the local hapuu, Ngaati Wairere. Using education as the foundation, together with conservation, culture and community engagement they have worked with over 1,100 students annually, planted 35,000 native plants, established a large community garden, trapped over 700 rats in the gully and hosted an annual BioBlitz and Matariki celebration.

Thank you to Neil for being a very able assistant to Roger when the video would not play.

At the time of going to print our next speaker is still to be confirmed.

Catherine Gurnsey

The Night Sky

The September Night Sky: In the Southern Hemisphere, we are fortunate to see the Milky Way in all its brightness and beauty. Many of the brightest stars are scattered along it or near it. Planets that can be easily seen at 9 pm are Saturn in the east, and Venus the West.

The October Night Sky: Dominant features are the Southern Cross, Scorpius high in the west, and the core of the Milky Way arching overhead as daylight saving shifts evening stargazing to around 8:30 PM or later. Antares is a large red star visible in the west, and Saturn is visible in the northeastern sky.

Bob

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.

Walking Group
We have enjoyed two walks this month. First we explored the expanse of Tauhara Park followed by coffee and scones English style at the home of two members. The second walk took us along the Newstead walkway where we sighted eels, saw a group of pre-schoolers playing among the giant eucalyptus, and enjoyed the regenerating bush. The weather has been perfect this month after heavy rain in June.
Noeline Alcorn

Environment Group
Retired architect Godfrey Larsen led an enthusiastic group of about 20 to check out a street of houses which make up part of Frankton Railway Village, set around Railway Park. In one corner of the park stands the Railway Institute Hall once the scene of regular dances and now used by recreation groups. It was originally located on the corner of Moa and Kea Streets before being moved to its present site. Some of us didn't even know this delightful area existed.

The small weatherboard cottages, many beautifully restored, with their distinctive central porches (two styles it seems) had the same basic floor plan and were built as part of an innovative housing scheme introduced by the Reform Government in 1919 to accommodate railway workers. Some of our group shared memories of growing up in railway houses in Hamilton and Te Kuiti!

These houses were pre-fabricated in an effort to mass produce them as quickly and economically as possible and Frankton was chosen as the site for the factory. Production began in 1921and ended in 1929. The houses supplied not only Frankton but were distributed across the country. The factory, with its distinctive 'saw-tooth' roof, can still be seen in Railside Place where the Classic Car museum and the Jukebox diner are located and where we retired to at the end of our tour.

To read more about Heritage Hamilton including the House factory and Institute Hall there is a book available at the Central library and a couple of branch libraries: "Heritage Hamilton: a celebration of the city's historic buildings", a fascinating record of local historic buildings, including some no longer standing.
Many thanks to Godfrey and members of the group who shared their stories.
Gloria Edwards

Mah Jongg Club
Last week when we played there were four tables of four, many people were away looking after sick grand kids or on holiday.
On my table the hands were hohum so scores were low, but much merriment from the table next door so presumably lots of Kongs.
Regards Freya

Freya Shaw, Convener freya.shaw@hotmail.com

Reading Group 2
This group meets each month to talk about books we have recently read - the range of authors, titles, and genres often leads to interesting discussion and a widening of our reading choices. Recent books include:

Country People (Daniel Mason) 2026
Aotearoa in Bloom (Rachel Clare and Tryphena Cracknell) 2026
Guilt (Keigo Higashino) 2021
Say Nothing (Patrick Keefe) 2018

Godfrey Larsen

Hiking Group
The Hiking Group's August walk was in the Pukemokemoke Reserve at Whitikahu A small group of 6 plus a visitor managed to squeeze a walk to the summit and back between the showers.
For our September walk planned for Thursday 10th September we will walk along the Te Awa river trail from Little Waipa camping ground to the Arapuni dam and back.
Anyone interested in joining our group please contact me.

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

Coffee Companions Group

Our August outing on at Friday 11 September 10.30 am will be at Modita by Mavis & Co, Te Awa, at the Base.

Next month, on 9 October we'll be visiting JAM at Queenwood based in the Queenwood Shopping Centre.

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 and Singalong Group

The annual Raglan Ukulele Festival will take place on the weekend of 5th/6th September. There are workshops of all kinds and members of our group will be attending.

This month we have also been invited to a Ukulele Jam at The Cock 'N Bull on Church Road on Monday 14 September from 5.00pm-7.00 pm September. Groups from around the Waikato will take part. Everyone is welcome, so anyone from U3A even if you're not currently in our group may come along.

We meet on the second and fourth Tuesday each month at Hukanui Reformed Church 159 Rototuna Road

1.00 pm – 2.45 pm.
Koha – usually $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 will 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 8 and 2 September, then 13 and 27 October.
Judith Hickman 027 664 6712
Janet Pope 021 086 77241

Plantaholics
For our monthly gathering we visited the Hamilton Gardens but this time concentrated on only one garden, the ITALIAN RENAISSANCE GARDEN.
A garden of princes and poets that celebrates ancient myths and divine symmetry in a series of unfolding spaces.

Repeated motifs and classical statues accompany your walk through Renaissance Italy, an age of art, literature, and invention.

Renaissance Italy was a time of great creativity when ancient texts were rediscovered alongside new ideas in art and literature. Renaissance gardens were one of the most influential gardens of their age and still inspire today. The garden unfolds almost like a story, with repeated motifs and references to classical myth, through a series of spaces that will take you from wild woods to formal beds.

What you'll find in the Italian Renaissance Garden

- Romantic statues, classic architectural features, and a small amphitheatre, ideal for weddings.
- Reflection of divine and cosmic order through geometric featured gardens.
- Arched trellises and raised terraces overlooking the gardens.

Background of the Italian Renaissance Garden

Imagine a garden inspired by ancient myths, hidden surprises, and geometric perfection. That's the world of Italian Renaissance gardens, bursting with fascinating history and clever design.

Renaissance gardens weren't born overnight. They take inspiration from many places, especially the beautiful gardens of the Arab world, reinterpreted with a Christian twist. Think statues of Roman heroes alongside vibrant flower beds, a unique blend of old and new.

Another big influence was the revival of ancient Greece and Rome. Renaissance designers aimed to outdo their legendary predecessors, even incorporating statues like the famous "Capitoline Wolf" with its twin brothers, Romulus and Remus, raised by a she-wolf after being cast adrift in a basket.

These gardens weren't just ornamental. They evolved from medieval gardens, keeping features such as high walls, plant beds, and flowery meadows. Later Renaissance gardens embraced a grand central line, guiding you through secret compartments bursting with surprises, all connected by one central path.

Geometry was like a code for these designers, reflecting cosmic order and harmony. They saw geometric shapes in nature and recreated them in their gardens, just like architects and artists of the time. Think circles, triangles, and a hidden "grid" forming the perfect foundation, just like the one you'll find in the Italian Renaissance Garden.

With hidden corners and perfect symmetry, learn the fascinating story of Italian Renaissance gardens - a blend of history, myth, and geometry, waiting to be explored.

We uncovered the secrets of the Italian Renaissance Garden. and discussed them over coffee in the cafe.

Neil Curgenven

History Group

An instructive and entertaining August meeting with Janet's Silicon Valley talk and Brent's Protest Songs of the 1960's.

Janet, providing maps and photographs throughout her talk, explained the geological origin of the Santa Clara Valley, a graben formed between the uplifted wet Coastal and the dry Diablo Ranges. The result was deep, fertile and well-watered soil. The first humans in the San Francisco Bay region, of which the valley is a part, were the Ohione and Miwok peoples, arriving about 10,000 BC. The Spanish were the next to arrive, claiming the whole of California in the 16th century AD, but the first exploration was in 1769, establishing the first mission in 1777 and naming it Santa Clara. It fell into Mexican hands in 1828 but taken by the USA in 1848, the same year that gold was discovered, starting the great gold rush. Deliberate massacres reduced the native population by two-thirds, destroying their culture. Cattle ranching was the main economic activity from the arrival of the Spaniards until the 1860's. From the 1860's to the 1960's it was "The Valley of Heart's Delights". Orchards and farms supplied canneries and dried fruit packing houses, whilst fresh fruit and vegetables were trucked across the States. The 1930's Depression, WW II, plus the Cold War, saw an expansion of military bases and defence industries and, in the 1950's, transistor industries were established. It is now covered in roads and buildings and is Silicon Valley.

Brent played songs by Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Aretha Franklin, Donovan, John Lennon, George Harrison and Joan Baez and he also reminded us of: Kennedy assassinations; Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement; LBJ successful in pushing through the Civil Rights Bill and coming to grief with the Vietnam War; Women's Liberation; and Kent State massacre in 1970. It was a nostalgic journey for us all.

September 9 meeting will be Ruth "Shackleton" and Jenny "France".

Paul Etheredge

Play Reading Group
In August the group read act one of Ray Cooney's farce "There Goes the Bride". We've read this author before and again he didn't disappoint. In fact it gave us a theme for the meeting as one of our members had recently, and unexpectedly, enjoyed being mother of the bride in real life. The play however deals with the day of a wedding and all the disasters that occur, something our celebrity reader did not experience. We will be reading act two next month and look forward to the outcome of this witty and laugh out loud story.

On a different note, we have been approached by another potential member but because of issues of space and getting suitable plays, we felt we cannot add any more people. However she is willing to start a second play reading group and hopes others will want to join her. If you are interested in adding play reading to your life, contact Liz Lee, 0272071303. You have a treat in store. Pat Stannard 0272110391

Pat Stannard
0272110391

Recreational Mathematics
Prime numbers showed infrequently on August Fridays so our group met just as infrequently. Not many in September either this year so we might have to nominate one as a notional prime. Be in touch. The group has not quite reached its membership limit so you may still count with us. We took a look at a few card tricks in August that rely almost solely on counting. Perhaps we may share them with the full Hamilton U3A sometime.

More fun with simple numbers: Four 4s can be arranged with a mixture of the usual mathematical symbols [+ - ÷ X] to equal each number from zero to ten. Eg. 4 + 4 + 4 - 4 = 8 can you find the rest?

Contact the Convenor Murray at 07 850 8279 or 027 229 7883 or email mandej@slingshot.co.nz

Murray Belchamber

Shakespeare for Everyone
This has been an interesting month for our members. Two of our group were over in London, being suitably impressed by a provocative reimagining of *Midsummer Night's Dream* at THE GLOBE (!) which was a "haunting, wintry and challenging interpretation" according to the critics.
Another two of us thoroughly enjoyed the collaboration between Hamilton Boys High and Hamilton Girls High presenting a colourful, amusing and well-acted musical version of *Twelfth Night.*

At our monthly meeting we watched Orson Welles' film "Falstaff: Chimes at Midnight". Although it is not very well known, Welles regarded this film as his greatest film ever, directing and acting as Falstaff himself. The plot condenses Shakespeare's history plays, particularly Henry IV and Henry V, into a narrative

centred on the character Falstaff, and his relationship with the young Henry V. The dialogue is lifted directly from Shakespeare's history plays - with dramatic black and white staging and an excellent cast, this provides an interesting "sideview" of the stories presented in the history plays. We enjoyed learning a little bit more about the context of the relevant plays and along the way gleaning some interesting facts about the time. Have you ever wondered for instance about how a fully armoured knight can manage to mount his horse before battle? In this film they are lowered onto their steeds from a tree via a pulley system - but apparently this is a myth! Sources tell us that armour is apparently no heavier that say a modern day fireman's protective suit, and most horseman could get onto the horse by either stirrups or vaulting.

We plan to focus on some of the actual plays in the next few months, both reading and watching them (via a BBC series).

Chrissie Williams

Wine Appreciation Group

We thought we would try some Pinot Noirs as August is world-wide Pinot Noir month.

SURVEYOR THOMSON Pinot Noir, Central Otago (Lowburn}, New Zealand 2023. Flavor of blackberries, dark red plums and subtle minerals, iron earth nuances. Medium bodied with fine chalky tannins and long savoury finish. Hand picked, wild fermentation, and aged in French Oak barriques. Delicious, fine Pinot Noir and will age up to 10 years.

LUNA ESTATE Pinot Noir, Martinborough, Wairarapa, 2023. Flavours of red cherry, strawberry and earth tones. Aromas of Cranberries. Light to medium body with rich fruit forward styles. Fresh and lively. Pinot Noir thrives in cold climates so Wairarapa and Central Otago are ideal for the grape.

PEREGRINE SADDLEBACK Pinot Noir, Central Otago. Luscious fruit concentration and fruit focused with lovely flavour and concentration. A pure expression of Central Otago Pinot Noir. A hot dry summer set up an early harvest. Wild fermentation, and 10 months maturation in older French Oak. Lovely Pinot Noir.

CASA SANTOS AZULEJO LIMA, Portugal 2019. A blend of Castelao, Tinta Roriz (Tempranillo) and Pinot Noir. Intense, heavier than just a Pinot Noir. Complex aromas of raspberries, cherry and wild fruits. Concentrated blackcurrant on the palate. Berry and fruit flavours with oak notes. Long after taste. Rich and juicy.

All wines superior Pinot Noirs and the Portugese blend delicious.
Food matches: Duck, game, red meats and mushrooms.

Gay Main.