



## January 2022, Newsletter One

Despite Covid disruptions U3A has had a successful 2021 year, with no less than seven visiting speakers. To remind you, they were:

- Nikki Turner**, on vaccines and Covid
- Gill Wratt**, on the Antarctic Treaty
- Euan Mason**, on galaxies
- Bevan Grant**, on getting the most out of life
- Chris Bennett**, on his affordable housing project
- Julian Maclaren**, on artificial intelligence
- Paul Sangster**, on the early history of Golden Bay

But U3A is far, far more than an organisation that arranges visiting speakers. There are well over 100 members in the Golden Bay branch, comprising 14-15 interest groups, and most of the activity occurs in people's homes. They won't all be described in detail here, but please visit the website <https://u3agoldenbaymohua.org.nz/> for more information.

The trouble with some of these "study" or "interest" groups, is that they are full. In other words, there isn't enough space in members' living rooms to take on more. TED talks is an exception, because it is held in the St Johns Rooms, where space has not (so far) been a problem, but the sensitivity of St Johns to Covid infection precludes its use for the time being.

Are you a passive person that likes to have everything delivered to you on a plate? Do you meekly join a group that someone else has started? Or are you a rugged, self-motivated, go getter? If the latter, why don't you 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.

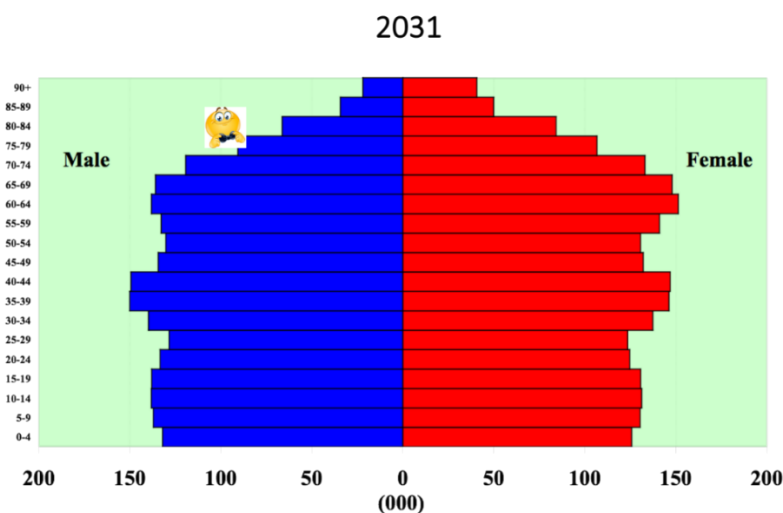
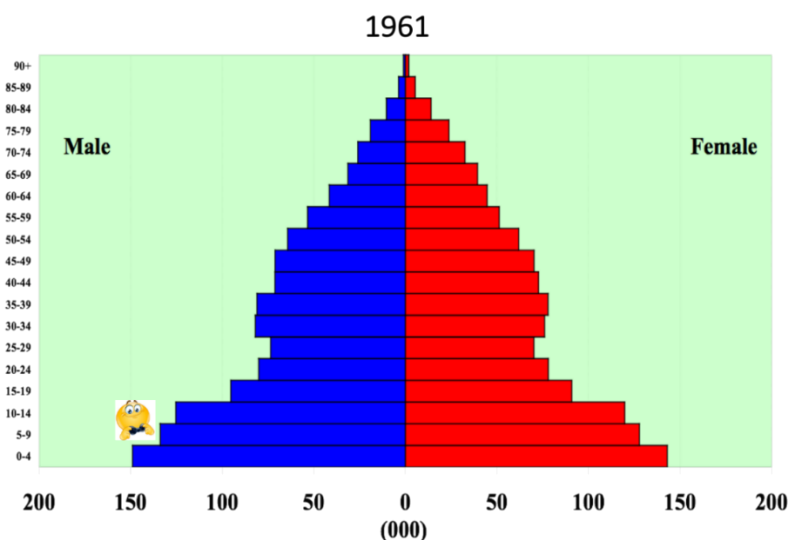
For information that is updated more regularly than the annual 2 or 3 newsletters, go to the website. If you haven't yet figured out how to access the website, find a grandchild or borrow one from a friend.

## Recent Visiting Speakers

- **Professor Bevan Grant, 23<sup>rd</sup> July**

### “Live Forever or Die Trying”

Emeritus Professor Bevan Grant spoke to approximately 80 U3A members on 23 July 2021, providing a personable and entertaining look at aging. Through a series of graphs and illustrations, Bevan emphasized the surprisingly-large demographic change that we’re now experiencing, in which the proportion of elderly individuals in New Zealand is growing fast. He explained the financial and social impacts these changes are having on New Zealand society, and discussed the importance of our staying active through what are now lengthier periods of retirement. Much of the questions and discussions following Bevan’s talk concerned opportunities within Golden Bay for retired people to maintain their fitness, including Pilates, yoga, and “sit-and-be-fit” classes, as well as the “Wednesday Walkers” and “Wednesday Wanderers” walking groups.



- **Chris Bennett, 8 October**

**“Sustainable housing in Golden Bay”**

Chris spoke to us on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020 about his multi-billion-dollar aid mission with the World Bank. Apparently, someone in the audience asked him “if you can do so much for Third World people, what about the homeless people here in Golden Bay?” Being the person he is, Chris mulled over the question, and then early in 2021 (against his partner’s wishes, as he was nursing a mountain-bike injury!) launched the brilliantly successful Golden Bay/Mohua Affordable Housing Project.

The idea was to find the land (and a dozen land-owners have made land available), arrange a long-term rental, and erect houses that were above the specifications required by the building code but still “affordable”. There are plenty of options regarding finance, but you can own a house for less than \$300,000 or rent one for \$350 (or even \$250) a week.

To ensure that the houses are built as cheaply and efficiently as possible, Chris has donned a carpenter’s belt and worked on the buildings himself! At time of writing, two houses have been completed and nine more are in the process. See <https://mygbhousing.info/index.php> for more detail. Wow! That is some project, and some guy!

- **Julian Maclaren, 12<sup>th</sup> November**

**“Artificial Intelligence”**

Julian is a research engineer for Google, has patented and commercialised his own inventions for MRI scanning, and is on the roll at both Stanford University (California) and Canterbury University (New Zealand). This would be enough for most people, but Julian went on to found the Nelson Artificial Intelligence Institute, an offshoot of which now employs 18 staff. So, he was a good choice to tell us about artificial intelligence. What it is, and what it is not. “Intelligence” is a relative term, and even fairly dumb intelligence (e.g. traffic lights that change colour depending on the need) can be extremely useful. In fact, AI opens up a world of possibilities which could otherwise pass New Zealand by.

Nelson AI specialises on environmental issues, but many of the projects they have considered (automatic detection of different species of seaweed, identification of whales traversing Cook Strait) may be interesting environmentally but have limited commercial potential. Meeting all the criteria is “Carbon Crop”, a company specialising in assessing the potential of farm foresters to gain credits from carbon farming. For more, check out <https://www.nai.org.nz/> and <https://www.carboncrop.nz/>.

- **Paul Sangster, 10<sup>th</sup> December**

**“Early history of Golden Bay”**

Starting with humble origins, nobody has “pulled himself up by his bootstraps” more effectively than Paul Sangster. He has been involved in most of the initiatives in Golden Bay for over half a century, including a long stint as councillor. He has even received a QSM for services to the local community.

But it was his creation of his own museum that is relevant to this talk. The museum is truly magnificent. If you haven't seen it, and get the opportunity, jump at the chance!

Paul chose to concentrate on the pre-European history of the Bay. He has collected a large number of artefacts from this time, and has even found various skeletons from the various battles that took place here. Before it was called "Golden Bay" it was "Massacre Bay" and that name was very appropriate! A person has to tread lightly when discussing early contact between Europeans and Māori, but Paul has never been one to shirk from discussing issues that are not politically correct! The talk was therefore fairly gruesome (for those who had not previously been exposed to such matters) but it is a critical part of our history and one which both Māori and Pakeha should know more about.

## Speakers yet to come

- **Geoff Bertram, 11<sup>th</sup> March**

**"Electricity and climate change: two intertwined policy problems"**

New Zealand's electricity market is deeply dysfunctional as a result of poorly-considered reforms since 1986. At the same time the Emissions Trading Scheme is almost equally dysfunctional due to design flaws that have never been fixed. The interaction of two failure-prone markets makes the task of decarbonising the economy far more onerous and less efficient than could have been achieved. A couple of pretty radical law changes, however, might clear the roadblocks. Geoff has been criticising both the electricity industry and the ETS for a long time now. The talk will be bringing both critiques up to date.

Geoff is Senior Associate at the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. He has degrees from Victoria University and Oxford and has spent three and a half decades teaching economics at Victoria, before retiring in 2009. He has published lots on climate change, energy economics, small islands, macroeconomics, economic histories of Peru and New Zealand and (from a generally unfavourable perspective) "Rogernomics".

- **Caroline Orchiston, 22<sup>nd</sup> April**

Caroline is from the Centre of Sustainability at the University of Otago, and is going to talk about the Alpine Fault. When is the Big One going to hit NZ, and how will Golden Bay fare?

- **Tom Sturgess, in May or June.**

Tom, the well-known local philanthropist, will talk about the Golden Bay Community Trust – the fund generated by the mussel farming industry.

- **Claire Dallison, in July or August.**

Claire is from NMIT and is going to talk about elite sportspeople.

## **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 washing over you. There is nothing like presenting a subject to force you to think! When you join a group, you will normally be expected to volunteer as presenter for a session, perhaps once a year.

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 Paul Taylor. If you have a good idea, but don't want to organise it yourself, tell us anyway.

Most of the 15 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 want to join a Group, but it's FULL?**

First, contact the Group convenor (their email addresses and phone numbers are provided on the WEBSITE, see earlier, or under each group's report). The chances are, there really is a vacancy on a particular date because someone can't be there. In the longer term, the odd person resigns from a Group for a variety of reasons and 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.

Existing Study Groups July 2021		
Subject	Convenor	Vacancies?
The Classics	Marian Vlaar 525 8167 <a href="mailto:marian.vlaar@gmail.com">marian.vlaar@gmail.com</a>	Yes (2)
Films	John Pemberton. 525 9125 <a href="mailto:john.pemberton47@gmail.com">john.pemberton47@gmail.com</a>	Yes
New Democracy	Mike Scott <a href="mailto:mikescott@xtra.co.nz">mikescott@xtra.co.nz</a>	None
Prehistoric mysteries	Piers Maclaren. 525 7440 <a href="mailto:piersmaclaren@gmail.com">piersmaclaren@gmail.com</a>	None
Art history: Early 20th C Architecture	Jocelyn Tracey 525 9125 <a href="mailto:jocelyn.tracey@outlook.com">jocelyn.tracey@outlook.com</a> and Margaret Maloney 524 8699 <a href="mailto:m.maloney@xtra.co.nz">m.maloney@xtra.co.nz</a>	None
Art history: 19 <sup>th</sup> C Art Movements	Rosamund Arthur and Don Mead. 524 8130 <a href="mailto:don.mead@gmail.com">don.mead@gmail.com</a>	Yes, 2
Book Discussion Group 1	Liz Lee. 525 8110 <a href="mailto:leejl@xtra.co.nz">leejl@xtra.co.nz</a>	None
Book Discussion Group 2	Peter Riley. <a href="mailto:peterrobinriley@gmail.com">peterrobinriley@gmail.com</a>	None
Saints and Sinners	Robin Riley. 525 7033 or 027-244 7731 <a href="mailto:peterrobinriley@gmail.com">peterrobinriley@gmail.com</a>	None
TED Talks	Richard English. 525 6179 <a href="mailto:rsenglish@xtra.co.nz">rsenglish@xtra.co.nz</a>	Unlimited
Astronomy	Paul Taylor 021-045 7545 <a href="mailto:ptaylor05@gmail.com">ptaylor05@gmail.com</a>	None
Early NZ History	Marian Vlaar. 525 8167 <a href="mailto:marian.vlaar@gmail.com">marian.vlaar@gmail.com</a>	Yes, 2-3
Collecting in Western Culture	Diane Dacre. <a href="mailto:dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz">dianedacre@yahoo.co.nz</a>	Yes, 1-2
Musicals and Operas	Paul Taylor 021-045 7545 <a href="mailto:ptaylor05@gmail.com">ptaylor05@gmail.com</a>	None
What Does the Science Say?	Jocelyn Tracey 424 9125 <a href="mailto:jocelyn.tracey@outlook.com">jocelyn.tracey@outlook.com</a> and Paul Taylor 021 045 7545 <a href="mailto:ptaylor05@gmail.com">ptaylor05@gmail.com</a>	Yes
Poetry Appreciation	Lewis Martin <a href="mailto:lews22@yahoo.co.uk">lews22@yahoo.co.uk</a>	Yes

## Reports from the Interest Groups

### A) *Groups with vacancies*

#### **Art history: 19th C Art Movements**

We are exploring 19th Century art movements in Europe, UK, USA and Japan. There are very interesting movements apart from the Impressionists (which we will be covering). We are using discussions, YouTubes, and introductory presentations for each session. There is a group of 10 and there are two vacancies. It is held in Collingwood at Rosamund and Don's house.

*Rosamund Arthur*

#### **Classics**

Last year we read the Aeneid by Virgil, and this coming year we start with some plays by Aeschylus – the Oresteian Trilogy. Apart from reading the plays, we will access recordings of the plays. We are a small group, with interesting discussion which ranges widely and solves most world problems.

*Marian Vlaar*

#### **Collections**

This group met several times in 2021 and continued to explore the origins of museums, the sources of their collections and the ideas and values inherent in the objects collected and displayed, such as colonial imperialism. We will begin 2022 by considering the role of mega-rich collectors such as JP Getty, and the Sackler family, their impact on art markets and museums and the ethics surrounding their substantial sponsorship of some of the world's most prestigious museums.

*Diane Dacre*

#### **Early NZ Colonial history group**

The group will run again in 2022. Marian Vlaar is taking over as convenor with Jenny as support convenor. Currently there are 10 members (our maximum), but 2 people have yet to confirm they will continue. Another person has expressed interest in joining and is waiting to come in when there is a vacancy. So we may have a space, not sure.

We heard very interesting talks from the members who had researched aspects of the period 1840-1900, each talk showing us all how little we know! Topics covered were:

- History of the Pacific Islands diplomatic relations with New Zealand
- Development of Nelson Port and early shipping in the Nelson region
- The economic history of New Zealand based on Brian Easton's book "Not in Narrow Seas", with a particular focus on Maori economic development.
- Governance arrangements for the colony up to 1853
- Interesting people – Edward Seager; Te Kooti; Kimble Bent

*Christine Pullar on behalf of Marian Vlaar*

**Poetry**

Our poetry group will continue in 2022, and we can accommodate 2 or 3 more people. (one member is not attending until the Covid-19 situation improves.)

We are a small, informal group who meet monthly for the pleasure of enjoying poetry read aloud. We have no set programme and we all take turns choosing and reading our favourite poems.

*Lewis*

**What does the Science Say?**

This group started this year and has covered in depth some very interesting topics, well researched and adroitly presented: water divining, the health benefits of turmeric, left handedness, dark matter, universal basic income, manuka honey and glyphosate.

We are a large group but are happy to start a waiting list.

*Jocelyn Tracey*

**TED talks**

I feel that it is not appropriate to re-start the TED meetings now that Omicron is out and about. We could, subject to St Johns stance, probably meet the legislated Red requirements but with the need to remove masks, albeit one at a time, during discussions and the room being relatively small I would not feel comfortable doing so.

*Richard English*

***B) Groups with no vacancies*****Art history: Early 20th C Architecture**

We have had an interesting year. We finished our study of architecture with Niemeyer, Hadid and Gaudi and then moved on to Indigenous Art: 60,000-year-old cave paintings, Australian Aboriginal, Te Māori and early South East Asian Pottery. This year the topics will be Completion of Early Indigenous Art & Italian Renaissance Painting.

We continue to meet in homes with large TVs, share the facilitation of sessions and combine the results of our research with readily available You Tube clips. We are currently full but happy to start a waiting list.

*Jocelyn Tracey*

**Astronomy Group**

Convened by Paul, the Astronomy Group has turned into a great success, with 16 members. It has covered the following topics so far this year through presentations made by members: the Voyager programme, astronomy & art, Mars, the big bang, and a star party with Prof. Euan Mason. It has also acquired its own large (6" mirror) telescope, on permanent loan from Euan Mason. The group went on to learn about near-earth objects (remember the mysterious and first known inter-stellar object, named "Oumuamua", that flew by us recently?), pulsars, Pluto, and the new James Webb telescope.

*Paul Taylor*



### **Book Discussion Group 1**

Our U3A Book Group will be continuing this year. At present we do not have any vacancies.

At the beginning of our year, (which is May), each member makes suggestions as to what we will read each month. This gives us very diverse books, and therefore encourages us to read more widely. It is always interesting to hear the comments from others, who may have very different opinion of the book.

*Liz Lee*

### **Book Discussion Group 2**

During the 2021 year our group read, and discussed, 10 books, 7 novels and 3 non-fiction. There was normally a fairly wide range of views on the merits of members choices, but we were all certainly exposed to titles we would not normally choose. During the year we lost 2 members, but have filled these vacancies as they occurred. Our group is full, but quite happy to have a waiting list.

*Peter Riley*

### **New Democracy Group**

Our group will continue into 2022. We have no vacancies. Our group activities for the year have been somewhat disrupted by Covid but have included the following subjects.

1. Dividing political power – Plato’s Republic, Diocletian Rome, The Swiss Federal System.
2. Political psychology and Confirmation Bias.
3. Political Publicity and methods of Persuasion.
4. The Death of Democracy.
5. The Swiss system of Democracy.
6. Democracy in NZ, with emphasis on the Treaty of Waitangi, its history and detailed analysis.

*Mike Scott*

### **Prehistoric Mysteries**

Before any recorded history, it’s truly amazing what civilisations existed and what they achieved. Using new tools (such as gene mapping), modern archaeology has uncovered so much – and so recently. A lot of it since the start of the Covid pandemic.

The most recently discussed “mysteries” include the Australian Aborigines. How did they reach Australia across the ocean some 65,000 years ago? Rosamund gave a brilliant presentation on these mysterious people. Sigrid then surprised us by showing us recent work on Saudi Arabia: it was once green, well-watered, and grazed with domestic cattle. Humans could easily have migrated right across the country rather than following the coastline. Finally, Jocelyn looked at the Plain of Jars in Laos (which contains large stone urns) and the pre-Maya stone spheres of Costa Rica. Apparently man-made, what possible use could justify the weeks of work that went into each one?

The group is full but after two years we are running out of ideas to investigate, so may not continue for much longer. Not to worry, it has been a mind-blowing ride!

*Piers Maclaren*