

U3A MANAWATŪ NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF U3A MANAWATŪ

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

As at the time of going to print, we would like to welcome the following new members:

Susan Berry, Bill and Leslie Clague, David and Jan Harding, Cushla Lynch, Marjory Marks, Jill Martin, Sam McIver, Glenn and Lee Pendergrast



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We are surviving despite COVID's best efforts!

ON-LINE ENABLED GROUPS

by Stuart Birks

Conversation Pieces (on-line enabled) is a new, small discussion group that considers a short article each month. The particular point of interest is that some of the people are meeting together in a home and others are joining the meeting using Google Meet. Google Meet is similar to Zoom and it has a particular feature: captions. When captions are turned on by a participant, the software converts people's speech into text for that person. Someone who is hard of hearing can then also read the things that people are saying. As always, voice to text is not completely accurate, but it seems to be good enough to be a significant help.

The structure we have is that the people can sit around in a room with a computer plugged into the television to give a large screen image. The computer camera is then pointing towards all or most of the people in the room. Those joining remotely then sit in front of their computer, tablet, phone, or TV screen and participate. We find that, if people have a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit with them when we start the meeting, there's a general relaxed feel and as close as possible we are simulating the situation of everyone being together in the room. We're just learning the structure with this, but we do find that groups of six to eight people can work quite well and allow everyone to have a say. One of the benefits is that people who are either temporarily or permanently less mobile can still participate. There

is potential to do this for many of the smaller groups in U3A. As we learn more about it I'm sure that we will be able to improve the way we handle this. It's also useful because people who are mobile now can experience the situation where others can participate remotely. It leaves options open as they become more restricted in their lives.

Google Meet is a particularly simple form of online communication. While similar to Zoom in that we can have several participants each with their own small area on the screen, all that is required is one meeting URL (web page address). The host can open the meeting and admit people. Others just click on the link and ask to join the meeting. There is, at least theoretically, a one hour limit on Google Meet meetings. However, we have found that this doesn't seem to apply and we have gone much longer than that. It's also possible simply to restart a meeting if it is closed down. Once one meeting has been organized, the same link can be used repeatedly for additional meetings. We hope some of you try out this method at some stage. It's a useful way of helping others to participate and you may find it useful yourselves if you are for some reason isolating or unable to get to a meeting in person.



We ask participants in our activities to maintain the current social distancing and mask wearing requirements.

We do, however, suggest that this person not be allowed out of the house!



FROM THE CHAIR

Graham Slater

I hope this finds you all well.

It was my hope that by now we would be over the worst impact of COVID and things

would be getting back to normal (whatever that is today).

However, I think we are about to face another peak and I urge everyone to be cautious and take care of yourselves. The second booster is available and it would be wise to take advantage of that as soon as possible. It is good to see members attending learning groups masked and practising distancing whenever possible.

Our membership numbers are down a bit, although those attending group activities appear to be close to what we have had in the past. The plan is to run a membership drive once 'normal' gets here again.

Sadly we have lost one of our foundation members, John Garner, since the last newsletter. John was part of the dedicated group who formed U3A Manawātū in 2000. He served on the initial committee and went on to take up the position of Chair from 2005 to 2007.

The U3A Autumn seminar series which we ran at the Crossroads Church was well received, but the number of people attending in person was still down on previous series. Luckily, we were again able to make YouTube versions available on the website which brought the number who 'saw' the seminars up to a healthy level. These are still there for anyone wanting to catch them.

Planning is well underway for the next series which will be entitled 'Social Trends' and is looking really interesting as well.

We will be having our AGM in September and it would be great to see a good turnout. Your committee needs to have an injection of new blood every now and then! Take care and stay safe.

NOTICE of AGM (U3A Manawātū)

The 2022 AGM will be held at 2 pm on
Wednesday 21st September
at the Quaker Meeting House in College Street

SPRING SEMINAR SERIES

'Social Trends'

4 Wednesdays 2.15 - 4 pm
in October/November - dates to be advised
Crossroads Church, 220 Church Street, PN

You will receive a flyer with more details several weeks prior.
Details will also be available on the [website](#).

REMEMBERING JOHN GARNER

by Gloria Slater

John Garner, who died recently at the age of 93, was a stalwart of the U3A in Manawatu.

He was a member of the original Establishment Committee and the first U3A Committee that followed on. At various stages he fulfilled the role of Treasurer (2002) and Chair (2005-2007) and he organised the first seminar series, entitled 'All you ever wanted to know about the Manawātū but were afraid to ask' (2007).

Of course, he participated fully in the life of learning groups: for example, writing a play for the early *Play Reading* group (2005-2014) as well as performing in its several public performances. He had earlier coordinated the group, *Shakespeare on Toast* (2008-2009), which sought to understand and appreciate Shakespeare as well as exploring the social, political and religious times in which he lived. However, he is perhaps best remembered for his ten year coordination of the *Bookbinding* group (2008-2018) in which he was also the tutor. He wrote several articles for the Newsletter arising from this interest.

He may very well have participated as a member of other groups of which I am unaware. However, up until a year ago he was a much valued member of our *Poetry for Pleasure* group, choosing an interesting selection of poetry to be read around a designated theme each month. I will always remember him as a truly gentle-man, quietly spoken, who read the Shakespeare verse he often chose, with dignity and sensitive meaning. We have all missed him.



The *Bookbinding* group at work in 2011

John is second from the left

Contributions to this quarterly newsletter
are very welcome!

Please contact the Editor (Rosemary at 326 9598 or
rkrsinich@gmail.com)

FRED SYMES

by Chris Phillips

Former U3A Manawatū stalwart **Fred Symes** passed away on 27th April at Carter Court Rest Home in Carterton. He was 89. Fred moved there some years ago to be closer to his daughter Shelley, who lives in Greytown.



Fred grew up in Palmerston North and, destined for a career as a journalist, editor and publicist, he began as a 16-year old on the Manawatū Standard in 1951. One of his early experiences was reporting on the 1953 Tangiwai disaster, which he said profoundly affected him. One of his career highlights was his engagement as public relations and marketing specialist for a pioneering travel company, Trans Tours (NZ) Ltd, which made him 'happy to go to work in the mornings'. He also ran his own public relations consultancy in Sydney before returning to Palmerston North in 1999.

Fred was a member of the U3A committee for several years, and edited the newsletter from 2007 until 2010. His journalistic experience proved invaluable and he produced lively newsletters with catchy headlines and much humour. He was coordinator of the *Creative Writing* group from 2009 until 2016, and he participated in other groups, including *Philosophy*. His later contribution to U3A was as 'the man on the desk' at seminars.

Fred was an immensely likeable and colourful character with a wealth of stories to tell, and was always very good company.

inform applied science, in particular in regard to papatuanuku (our earthly environment) and kaitiakitanga (stewardship of the environment). There were significant differences between the māori and scientific world views, but each could inform the other. This could offer a pathway to revitalisation and reconnection for all New Zealanders to our whenua at a time of global ecological concerns, and could secure environmental benefits. Jonathan drew on case studies in the areas of aquaculture, GIS systems and vulcanology.

In the second seminar, Dr Murray Potter, Professor in Zoology at Massey, described how exponential growth in the human population during the 20th century and massive growth in consumerism have combined to create a global biodiversity crisis and an existential threat. Our existence depends on ecological services which we get 'for free'. The food we eat has a massive impact on the health of the planet. We need to change our habits, putting people and the planet before profits, shifting to renewable energy, farming smarter, and embracing a sustainable lifestyle. Raising people out of poverty would help slow population growth. The world needs to respond to these challenges.

Associate Professor Philip Steer, School of Humanities, Media and Creative Communication at Massey, then described how New Zealand settlers wrote poetry about nature even as colonisation devastated the environment. He explored the idea that poetry was an important form of settler environmental knowledge alongside science and economics. Philip cited examples from *Papers Past* from a variety of locations around New Zealand which showed that 19th Century poetry was published on a much larger scale than we might realise through periodicals and newspapers. This poetry was important to early European settlers, demonstrating a wide variety of responses to their new environment.

In the final seminar, Dr Jeff McNeill, Senior Lecturer in Resource & Environmental Planning at Massey, reviewed the changing meanings of 'the environment' in New Zealand. Early colonists brought with them a European perspective. Legislation over the last century has taken account of changes in our understanding. The New Zealand environment has been described as an 'uncontrolled experiment' involving a unique mix of native and exotic plants and animals. How we see the environment determines how we manage it, and is now codified in our laws. Jeff finished by reviewing the current Resource Management Act and examining the implications of its replacement, together with the drivers of these changes.



Murray Potter

IMPRESSIONS ON NATURE

by Chris Phillips

The U3A Autumn Seminar Series took place at Crossroads Church on four Wednesdays in May/June.

The seminars were diverse in their

content, the over-arching theme being 'Impressions on Nature'. It was the fifth series designed and coordinated by Stuart Birks over the past three years, was funded by Eastern & Central Community Trust, and was screened live on YouTube. Between 50 and 60 people attended each seminar and as many again viewed online.

Dr Jonathan Proctor, Professor in Natural Hazards at Massey, launched the series. He looked at how mātaranga māori (indigenous knowledge) could

AROUND THE GROUPS...

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

by Bruce Thomson

Harvard University: Whole-body biological un-aging science is becoming available

Recent genetics studies and experiments at Harvard, Oxford and other universities are revealing that the aging process can be slowed and even, in some cases, stopped or reversed. Apparently our bodies, naturally replace our cells all the time, using poorer 'photocopies of photocopies' until the cells are so degraded they don't function well.

But there are now interventions that access the 'original pristine copy' of genes, to resume creation of 'brand new' cells instead. The interventions include new drugs, lifestyle changes such as fasting, and special exercise. This means not just maintaining and restoring comfortable younger health - both mental and physical abilities - but also the strange consequent options. They can include returning to re-energized engagement with the world - including projects and earning and social life.

Medical measurement of a person's 'biological age' is now offered by various companies like Span Health and SRW Labs, to compare with chronological age, for a few hundred dollars, when people want to quantitatively monitor their status - and act to increase 'health span'.

Obviously there are big implications in 'un-aging' people. Global population, ecology for a start. Also, fewer rest homes and hospices. Inheritance issues.

Faith & philosophical understandings. Less government budget for pensions and elderly care. More GDP if people want to do work activities.

In Palmerston North, there are people discussing this. If you are interested in the subject, please contact Bruce Thomson palmytomo@gmail.com. If there is sufficient interest, a U3A discussion group may be formed.

NEW GROUPS

Book Discussion Group 2 (on-line enabled)

This group will discuss a chapter a month from Yuval Harari's '21 Lessons for the 21st Century'. This is an opportunity for relaxed, small group, speculative conversation. Meets first Friday of each month, 2pm, both in person and by Google Meet. Contact: Stuart Birks, 021 204 7903 or kstuartbirks@gmail.com

Conversation Pieces (on-line enabled)

Small group discussions based around selected short articles from <https://theconversation.com/nz> or similar website. Attendance is a mix of in-person and via Google Meet. Meets third Thursday each month, 2pm. Contact: Stuart Birks, 021 204 7903 or kstuartbirks@gmail.com

See Stuart's article on on-line enabled groups on Page 1



Google Meet

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