



Fine vintage — special honour

Emeritus Professor Alan Horsman has accepted honorary life membership of U3A Dunedin. The Board unanimously agreed to offer this (believed to be a first) in recognition of his long-standing and valuable support.

Prof Horsman (Department of English, University of Otago, 1957-1983.) celebrated his 91st birthday last October. He has taught many varied courses for members over the past 15 years, most recently one on novels of Joseph Conrad in last year's Series 3. Our Chairman, Graham Batts, visited Prof Horsman with a letter of appreciation and handed him a bottle of Central Otago Pinot Noir— a fine vintage for our Life Member.



Alan (left) admires his wine gift; Graham shares a happy moment. *Photo: Geoff Adams*

Courses might teach us practical realities?

By Graham Batts

As older citizens, we naturally choose the courses that interest us, that let us revel in English literature, or the excitement of scientific advancement, or we learn to appreciate ethnic and cultural differences, or understand modern art.

Some courses bring back memories of past studies, or introduce us to new ones, but we seldom feel the need to become more informed about the practical reality of the world we live in day by day. We tend to hold on to ideas that are now outworn, or are reluctant to embrace new technology.

One of the things that I particularly appreciate about U3A, is that we can trust our presenters as most of them are associated with the university. It is the rigor of scholarship that ensures that facts are facts, and opinions are considered opinions. We benefit from a culture of critical analysis, or scientific honesty.

The same cannot be said for much of the media which pervades our daily life.

I think it was Benjamin Disraeli who said that there were 'Lies, Damn Lies, and Statistics'. Today we could say there are 'Lies, Damn Lies, and Advertising!'

Never before have we been so immersed in advertising and so manipulated by marketing experts. Ten years ago, do you think you could have been persuaded

★ Chairman's message

to buy bottled water — and at a price in excess of fruit juice?

If you really knew the odds, would you still buy Lotto tickets?

Would you invest in finance companies that constantly told you on TV how well they could be trusted? — sounding like Lady Macbeth protesting too much!

Perhaps we need to be re-educated to become street-smart again.

In addition to the courses we currently run, I would like to see us try a course say, on how to become financially literate; i.e to know how to keep one's retirement savings intact.

Or, imagine what could be saved if we knew how to determine which health supplements or health foods were actually effective and which ones were only placebos.

Perhaps some doctor or physiologist could tell us if a Biomag blanket truly worked.

Knowledge may give us power, but practical knowledge could save us money!

If you have any thoughts on a subject that could help us be more critical and better able to survive our next 20 years, please let me or the editor know.

★ administration

Judith Gray

Secretary to the Board



Course brochures and the application form for Series 1 2010 accompany this newsletter and the Board hopes that there will be something to appeal to everyone.

Some comments related to filling in course application forms.:

Please mark your choices clearly, and remember that you may only have ONE first choice. If your intention is not clear the decision will be made for you at ballot time. The name and address panel on the back of the form should be completed, including your post code. This will ensure that the response reaches you promptly.

Members are free to apply for one, two or three options in any series of courses, but if you actually only want to attend one of those course options, then only send the fee for one course. Specifying several options gives members more chance of being successful in being accepted for at least one course when demand is heavy.

In the very few cases now where a member misses out completely in one series they are guaranteed a place in one of the course options for which they apply in the next series.

The deadline for course applications for Series 1 is noon on Wednesday, 10 February, and responses should be sent to you from Rodgers Law on or about 19 February. Any questions about course applications and acceptances after 19 February should be referred to me (471 9913, or graysinn@clear.net.nz)

Please keep the brochures for any courses for which you have applied so that you have the correct information about venue and starting day and time available when courses start. The brochures also provide a useful reminder about the content of each session and the name of the Course Organiser.

Our membership is still close to the 500 cap. Once all membership renewals for 2010 have been processed it is hoped that some of the 50-plus people on our waiting list will be able to join but it is most unlikely that all those waiting will be successful in time for Series 1.

The Board is aware that parking at the Knox and Salmond College venues is limited but please do not park in areas which make access difficult for College staff and large delivery vehicles.

Also, as a courtesy to the course presenter, remember to turn off cell phones before the beginning of any session.

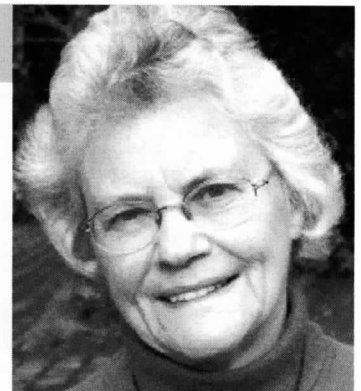
Indian Summer

More than 300 delegates from many countries have signed up for the international U3A conference in India this February. — See <http://worldu3aconference2010.org>

★ looking ahead

Sue Cathro

Programme Co-ordinator



For the first series in 2010, we are pleased to be able to use the Frank Nichol seminar room at Knox College for two of our courses – *Dunedin's Written Treasures* and *Public Theology and Global Issues*. The others will be held in Salmond College and the Leith Bowling Club.

The unconfirmed course mentioned in the November newsletter is entitled *Aspects of Australia* and resulted from a suggestion by one of our members. It took a bit of organising as there are six speakers, each taking a look at an aspect of Australia that is in their field of specialisation. This course looks mainly at the physical features and flora and fauna. There is a lot to Australia and consideration is being given to a future course that looks at the history, the political makeup and the arts as some of possible topics. If anyone has an interest or special expertise in these areas then the Board would be pleased to hear from you.

Further to those courses named in the last newsletter, can be added courses on *Jane Austen*, and *History of Costume/Fashion*.

There were several ideas from the latest evaluations that will be taken up by the Programme Committee and worked on this year. Please remember that names of possible presenters are always welcome, both from within and outside U3A membership. As you know we have members who are very generous with their time and expertise.

We are sure that you will find that you have a good choice of interesting courses in 2010.

They spoke on education

'Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run.' ~ *Mark Twain*

'Personally, I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught.' ~ *Winston Churchill*

'All men who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education.' ~ *Sir Walter Scott*

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'Successful Ageing' – study in NZ and Australia

U3As in Australia and New Zealand 2008: The Successful Ageing Organizations is the largest study of U3As in the region. A survey of 265 U3As was carried out by a group of eight retired researchers and U3A administrators (funded by U3A Online.) The full 55-page study report is now available for download from <http://www.u3aonline.org.au/>

Before you decide whether to go to the cost of printing it out have a look at the Executive Summary: <http://sites.google.com/site/u3asitedemo/>

Some points that emerge.-

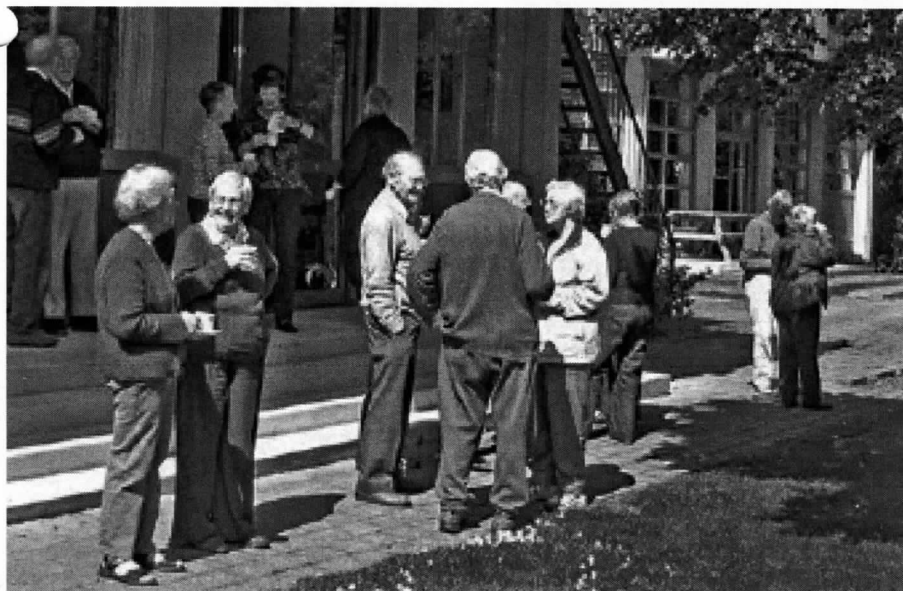
1. The 60 NZ U3A groups range in size from 30 members to 824 (Wellington City U3A.) The median membership is 201. Many of these groups limit membership to around 200; most capped U3As have waiting lists. [U3A Dunedin has a limit of 500 and waiting list.]

2. In both countries the number of males participating has

increased substantially from earlier findings, The female/male ratio is now 3:1.

3. In NZ U3As volunteer tutors in 2008 provided more than 54,000 hours and administrators and other volunteers provided more than 14,000 hours. These figures were used to extrapolate to all 60 NZ U3As to give a conservative value for NZ U3A voluntarism in 2008 of more than \$1.9 million.

4. The three most sought after course areas in Australian U3As are computing, history and languages. In NZ the three most sought after are history, music and art appreciation. Exercise courses rate highly in Australian but not in NZ U3As. Teaching takes place in any suitable community venue like rented premises, free or subsidised community facilities or private homes. Teaching in members' homes is much more prevalent in NZ U3As than it is in Australian ones.



Website warriors?

A number of other U3As overseas and in New Zealand have their own websites. The U3A Dunedin Board has been considering whether or not it wants or needs one. While a website is relatively easy to set up, it's a chore to maintain. No decision has been made, but if you could be interested in running a website please let the secretary know (contact details on page 2.)



Left: Time for morning tea, a cuppa and a chat. U3A Dunedin members take a break on the lawn at Salmond College in a session on 'Some Issues on Criminal Justice in New Zealand' last year.

Photo: Jim Neilan

Ruru returns

A few more hoots from our emblematic bird —

After reading about Ruru, the New Zealand owl or 'morepork,' in the last newsletter, a reader emailed the editor in November (when Cabinet Ministers' housing and travel allowances with apparent abuses were much in the news): 'Do you think our parliamentarians are always collecting/taking more pork while feathering their nests?'

For literature fans: *The Owl and the Nightingale* was a poem in some 2,000 lines written in the mid-13th Century. It's about a debate between the grave Owl and the gay (in the proper sense) Nightingale about the benefits they confer on man: probably symbolising the religious poet and the poet of love.

The Greek proverb 'to send owls to Athens' meant the same as 'to carry coals to Newcastle' in English.

Ageing population

In 2020 there will be more people in the UK over 65 than those under 20. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/uk_news/4045261.stm and also http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/in_depth/uk/2004/ageing

Policies and practices

Growing older and reaching your 80s and 90s plus isn't some game on reality television to see who survives, who makes it to 100. It's about real life and being confident that as you grow older you will be able to enjoy it.

While we maintain that 'ageing' begins from the day we're born, it only seems to become a national 'problem' when people reach their 70s and beyond. It is then that a range of 'policies, programs and practice' are needed to ensure people in that age group are 'accepted and welcomed as worthwhile and active members of our communities.' That will only happen if attitudes change and decision-makers better understand what it is that the older generation both needs and wants. [Excerpt from a U3A Online report]

Sensible lifting

As we age it's easy to overlook the dangers of back injuries caused by incorrect lifting of common heavy household items like pot plants. Find sensible advice about "Osteoporosis and lifting as you get older" and other informative research on such problems at <http://www.liftsmart.com.au/>

Putting age into context

Thanks to Shakespeare, people used to refer to 'the seven ages of man.' Time changes most things and in the latter part of the 20th century others began using the phrases young-old, old and oldest-old, with chronological birthdays separating each. People who fell into any of these categories not only considered the definition to be inappropriate but claimed it was positively derogatory. Such groups might be acceptable for statistics but not for anything else.

Those with any knowledge and understanding of older people instead use the Four Ages. They are:

First Age: when we are dependant on others for survival, i.e when we are children.

Second Age: when we are independent and likely to be in the paid workforce.

Third Age: when we reach 'retirement' but remain independent.

Fourth Age: when we become dependent again and need care.

None of these is based on a chronological understanding of 'age.' In fact, you can be 90 and in the third age or you can be 50 and need care. It is therefore most important that people are not classified solely on the basis of chronological age; an understanding of the complexity of later life must be taken into account.

[Excerpt from *U3A Online* report]

★ internet links

More websites for Internet addicts (note that your computer should add *http://* to the front of each address):

translate.google.co.uk/# — In early November 2009, Google announced quicker translation, appearing as you type along! The facility is available from English to 50 languages.

www.sciencedaily.com — Interested in keeping up with summaries of the latest research written for the lay person? Each week you can get summaries of many specific research areas including Health and Medicine; Mind and Brain; Living Well; Earth and Climate, Matter and Energy.

www.zamzar.com — Convert a pdf or other format to Word. Nothing to download and you can work from any Internet connected computer. The converted document is emailed to your computer within minutes with free Zamzar.

cooperative.ning.com — Researchers, translators, and retired academics may find this interesting. The Research Cooperative is an international, not-for-profit organisation. A U3A group has already been formed.

www.wordnik.com — All wordsmiths should check this one out. Wordnik contains more than 1.7 million words and 130 million examples. Type in any word and you'll be amazed at the amount of information returned.

askbobrankin.com/data_recovery.html — 'My data is gone, how do I recover it?' Quick tips and free data recovery software available here.

tinyurl.com/yz3czmq — Volunteers, extroverts and joiners are on the right track to a longer (and hopefully higher quality) life, says *Good Housekeeping* magazine.



I can't believe you've gone back 400 years and they're all as boring as you... [Oldie magazine archives]

May we? ... Mais oui!

Members who enjoyed the course on the Impressionist painters in term 3 last year might be amused by this tale sent to the newsletter. —

A thief in Paris planned to steal paintings from The Louvre. After careful planning, he got past security, stole some treasured targets, and made it safely to his van.

Fortunately, he was captured just two blocks away, when his van ran out of gas.

Questioned how he could mastermind such a clever crime yet make so serious an error, the thief replied:

'But Monsieur, that is the reason I stole the paintings, I had no Monet to buy Degas to make the Van Gogh.'

[Asked if he really had De Gaulle to publish this, the editor replied: 'nothing Toulouse.']

And the artful question . . .

Our father Adam sat under the Tree
and scratched with a stick in the mould
And the first rude sketch that the world had seen
was joy to his mighty heart.

Till the Devil whispered behind the leaves
'It's pretty, but is it Art?'

Rudyard Kipling

(from *The Conundrum of the Workshops*)

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Elizabeth Timms — U3A Board Liaison

U3A Dunedin is most grateful for assistance from Dr Claire Matthewson (Director, Summer School and Adviser, Distance Learning and Continuing Education, University of Otago) in producing this publication.