



U3A



DUNEDIN

Newsletter, Issue No 6

Date: July, 2005

From The Chairman:

When you read this, I will be Chairman no longer, but this Newsletter gives me a chance to raise a matter of concern to us all. In the Annual Report I drew attention to the rapid growth in our numbers - from 375 in mid 2004 to a current 479. Even more dramatic is the over 50% increase since mid 2000 when we numbered 300. As a consequence we have seen a number of recent courses fully subscribed and some of you disappointed that you missed a chosen course.

To increase your chance of success, do include a second and third choice when making application, and I encourage you to apply for courses which are beyond your main area of interest. Don't be put off by a scientific topic. U3A aims to present material which presumes no special background so that participants may extend their horizons. Recent examples are Merv Smith's course, *Genetic Engineering*, and Sam Sneyd's *Enigma of the Atom*. Participants praised both speakers for their ability to make science easily understood by non-scientists. I am anything but a computer buff, but Hank Wolfe's course on computers last year gave much I could relate to. As well as covering technical aspects, he had many anecdotes concerning espionage and code-breaking as well as business and personal security today (how private is your cordless phone?) In an earlier course my lack of knowledge of classical scholars proved no barrier to participating in David McKenzie's course, *The Educated Person*.

Returning to the question of larger membership, there is no easy solution. If more lecture courses are offered, venues might be a difficulty, and we could rapidly deplete the pool of willing presenters. Increasing enrol-

ments above 50 (the capacity of our venues) could destroy the essential quality of U3A, as greater numbers would make interaction and discussion even less possible than at present. Have you experienced the more lively exchange in a course of 25 rather than 50 members? Ideally U3A should allow for interchange of ideas among group members, as well as questions to the speaker. To this end I applaud the increased offering of smaller self-study and discussion courses - see Jenny Laws *Looking Ahead*. I hope these proposals will appeal!

Elizabeth Timms, Out-going Chairman

Looking Ahead

In this third series of 2005, as well as four of the usual lecture-type courses, we are offering two for small groups. One is a discussion group based on the book *God or Godswallow* that explores the personal religious beliefs of the author; and the other is a study group that arises from the recent lecture course *Aspects of the Medieval World in the 12th -- 14th Centuries*. The idea behind both these groups is that members will teach themselves through their own study and through interaction with other class participants. There will of course be a group leader who is experienced in the area being studied and who will act as a facilitator, but there will be the opportunity for all participants to have their say or present their findings.

We already have one such course under way based on Albert Moore's book *Freedom, Religion and Spirit*. With Margaret Feist as the facilitator and Albert to guide us, the group is working well together and we are enjoying lively and wide-ranging discussions. As with any such activity, the interest aroused comes largely from the

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(See Supplement enclosed)

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diverse experiences of the various members; we all bring a different perspective to the subject under discussion. One member at the end of the second session said that she had failed to get into the course of her first choice and had been persuaded to try this one, but how pleased she now was, because "it really made you think." We hope to offer more such challenges for members in the future. For those who have not had much experience of such interactive learning, it can be a daunting prospect; but in a small and supportive group the rewards can be great.

Jenny Laws (Programme Co-ordinator)

A Tribute



Brian Maguire, Chairman of U3A Dunedin from 2001 to 2003, died in January of this year, aged 71. His energy and his dedication to our organization is acknowledged with gratitude.

Brian came to U3A in his retirement after a work life of great variety. His love of the sea led him to an adventurous career in the Navy where he attained the rank of Chief Petty Officer. But, in between times, he worked as a bookbinder, scriptwriter for radio, illustrations editor for a newspaper and as a signalman and instructor. On the side, he was a harmonica player of great skill. He was indeed, a man of many parts.

Having been impressed with his wife, Margaret's, reaction to the first course offered by U3A in 1994, Brian subsequently became a member and by July, 1998 had been elected to the Board.

His rich background of life experiences allowed him to plan and organise courses over a wide range of areas of interest. Those which were his responsibility included: *Shipping and Sea Transport* (1999), *How Dunedin Works* (2000), *Otago Regional Council* (2001), *Central Otago Fieldtrip* (2001), and, *The Media in Dunedin* (2002). In all, Brian attended and/or organised 22 courses during his time with U3A..

Brian's years as Chairman were those which immediately followed U3A's transition from a relatively informal organisation to a more structured Charitable Trust. It was his strong presence and wickered but much appreciated sense of humour which helped ease U3A through this potentially difficult period.

As his health declined from 2003, Brian continued to read up to four books a week. Margaret comments: "His passion for learning and laughter never stopped until near the end."

U3A is fortunate in having been able to draw on the talents and energy of such a man as Brian Maguire.

Important - Please read this

The Brochures for Series 3 2005 are enclosed with this newsletter. Please note that the deadline for the ballot is Wednesday, 10 August so make sure that your applications are with Rodgers and Associates by that date, along with your cheque for the appropriate fee. The Board has agreed that the standard course fee is to reduce to \$30.00 and you will see that the decision has been implemented for this series.

Please indicate clearly your first choice, and make a note of which one it was. You may assume that you have been accepted for your first choice course if you have not received a letter of rejection from Rodgers and Associates by Tuesday, 23 August.

If you have any questions about acceptance or otherwise for any course after the ballot date, please contact the Secretary, or Rodgers and Associates.

In order to bridge the long gap in communication with members, the Board has decided to produce an additional newsletter each year, and it is intended to send this out to members during November. The annual form for renewal of your membership will accompany that newsletter, so please don't think we have omitted to send it now. That fee will remain at \$10.00 per household.

Judith Gray, Secretary to the Board

Reflections on 'Aspects of the Medieval World 12-14th Century'

I found this course which ran in the first semester 2005 to be enthralling. The organisers — Honor Anderson and Jenny Laws — began by setting the scene and gathered together a series of lecturers who each provided penetrating analyses of a period in English history which has often later come to be portrayed in the media as an old-fashioned romantic idyll. In fact as these lectures proceeded it quickly became apparent that this was no static world far removed from our own but rather one which was dominated by technological and social change and one whose inhabitants were reaching out to our own times. Father Michael Hill introduced us to a fascinating medieval feminist theologian, Julian of Norwich. Her views of the nature of God were so radical that it seems amazing that she was not burnt at the stake for heresy. However, as Dr Takashi Shogimen explained, views on heresy in this period were much more sophisticated and flexible than is commonly appreciated. Marjorie Maslen used her deep research knowledge to show how life in medieval London underwent great change as the city became a foremost trading, manufacturing, and administrative centre. Dorothy Page provided the class with many examples of medieval women who were powerful and achieving people in their own right in defiance of the stereotypical views of medieval women. Jenny Laws appraised Langland's *Piers Plowman* the great vernacular poem of the period which narrates the lives of ordinary and not so ordinary people. (Continued, next page)

The class participation and contribution to these sessions was noteworthy. Additionally, Wilson Daniel showed some of his slides of medieval cathedrals and Anthony Wood provided copies of several treasures including an early school-text book which used life in a middle-class English medieval home as didactic material for teaching French.

Altogether Honor and Jenny are to be congratulated for the work they put into organising such a memorable feast.

David McKenzie

Chairman's Term Ends



Elizabeth Timms, the first woman to chair U3A Dunedin, finished her term soon after the Annual General Meeting, 2005.

'I'm looking forward to getting back to research into family history and other interests in the near future. Being Chairman of U3A has been a great honour: it has also been a rewarding task but quite demanding.'

Elizabeth could scarcely have anticipated, when she joined U3A in 1997, that by 2004 she would be responsible for leading an organization which now has 479 members.

Along the way, as a member of the Board, she made a strong contribution as a course organiser (remember *Food Glorious Food* which was presented twice in Dunedin, once at Mosgiel and is promised for Invercargill soon) and lecturer (who could forget her fascinating exposition on 'shipboard food', a topic which reflected her long career as a food scientist)

She was a supporter of a general move to provide a fairer system of allocation of places in courses than that offered by the old 'first past the post' system. The need for radical change led to the introduction of the present ballot system.

Over the past year, Elizabeth was conscious of the impacts, both good and questionable, of the ever growing membership of the organization.

'The number of courses offered necessitates detailed advance planning, sometimes up to a year before presentation. Courses may be jeopardised when lecturers become unavailable and so a fallback programme always has to be in place. This puts considerable pressure on the members of the Board who are preparing courses. I cannot speak too highly of the work done by members of the Board in course organisation.'

U3A is grateful to Elizabeth for the dedicated effort she has put into her role as Chairman and for her general contribution to the welfare of the organization.

HAVE YOUR SAY If you have ideas on how we might meet the challenge of increased membership, (see *From The Chairman*) why not put your thoughts on paper in a Letter to the Editor. Mail (or e-mail) to the Secretary.

EDITOR REQUIRED! Remember that Brian is stepping down as Editor. Do we have a volunteer for this position? Please contact the Secretary.

Kapiti Coast U3A

(From their June 2004 Newsletter)

Kapiti Coast U3A is a large group of about 550 members which accordingly does not meet on a monthly basis. Regular communication with members is through their Newsletter, its major role being to give details of the programme being offered in each semester. Members register their interest by contacting the convenor or leader of the course.

The 2004 June newsletter lists 23 courses for the second semester which ran until November. Some courses were on-going from the first semester, while others were new.

A selection:

Antiques and Collectables: (4 sessions) rare books, silverware, china, early NZ art

Armchair Travel: Experiences of members with some outside speakers. Each member to host a meeting.

Creative Writing: Four groups covering different interests from beginners to advanced, and short story.

India since Independence: With reference to economic, social and international affairs.

Jazz appreciation: Members contribute tapes, CDs and vinyl and participate in discussion.

Treaty business - profit or loss? Open discussion of what members think or know about the Treaty with some special guest speakers (8 sessions)

The coming of the Third Reich: How and why did the German people allow Hitler and the Nazis to seize power? Could this happen again and in another country?

What can we learn from each other? Participants talk about what led them to their particular career, and their experiences.

Movies for enthusiasts: This on-going course is led by a member who has a collection of old and new 'classic' films. Other films of interest are also obtained. The group meets to view films in a small theatre in Paraparaumu.

Experiencing History: Personal recollections of the 1930s depression in New Zealand. A small group format was planned where each member was to contribute by giving insights into the experiences of their own family. Discussion of published accounts of the period (e.g. excerpts from "*The Sugar Bag Years*" by Tony Simpson) were also to be included.

Culture and Society: Approached from the perspectives of anthropology and sociology. this group (maximum 15) was to discuss such questions as "What is Culture?" "Do all people have a culture?" They also planned to examine differences within societies such as those of gender, social class, ethnicity and race, and the role of culture in maintaining or breaking down of such differences.

NOTHING CHANGES: "Whereas then a rattle is a suitable occupation for infant children, education serves as a rattle for people when they are old". - Aristotle

RECENT COURSES

Merv Smith (right), Course Organiser (*Genetic Engineering*) and presenter of three introductory sessions on the structure and functions of protein, is about to



introduce Professor Warren Tate (Department of Biochemistry, University of Otago). Warren spoke of his research, and discussed human gene therapy including the issues raised by such treatment.



Sam Sneyd - Course Organiser and presenter of *The Enigma of the Atom*, discusses a point with Dick Laverty, Donald Feist and Rosalie Sneyd during a coffee break.



Nicky Moore, who spoke on Low Carb Diets, in the *Topical Issues in Human Nutrition Course*.

Secretary Judith Gray and Treasurer Bill George discuss a point after a **Board meeting**.



Charitable Trust

Our U3A is a charitable trust, known as U3A Dunedin Charitable Trust, and is therefore a legal entity in its own right. It was set up by the following original Trustees: Honor Anderson, Stan Andrews, Ken Fraser, Jenny Laws, David McKenzie, Brian Maguire, Albert Moore, John Newton, Lin Phelan, Sam Sneyd and Elizabeth Timms.

The purposes of the Trust are as follows: to foster and develop education for people who form the Third Age population of the Dunedin Region; to organise and present educational courses alone or in conjunction with tertiary education institutions in Dunedin and elsewhere in New Zealand; to enter into such contracts loans and other arrangements as are necessary to achieve the educational purposes described.

The Trust is administered by a Board of Trustees which is accountable to and elected by members of the Trust (when you vote in a Board at the Annual General Meeting, you are actually voting in the Trustees for the coming year). This Board consists of not less than four nor more than fourteen members. The Board retires at each annual general meeting, but is eligible for re-election. If a vacancy occurs, the Board has the power to co-opt to fill the position. The positions of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined, and they need not be members of the Board.

The rules of the Trust may be altered, added to, rescinded or otherwise amended by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of members present at a general or special meeting. This is provided that the charitable nature of the Trust, or distribution of its funds are not affected.

The Newsletter Team : Brian O'Rourke (Editor), Mervyn Cranefield (Layout and Design), Elizabeth Timms (Board Liaison).