



IN THE THIRD AGE PERHAPS: It's 'good to know a little about a lot ...'

As I write, we are in the midst of the third series of our U3A lectures for this calendar year. All six courses are well attended, and participants are finding them to be most interesting and rewarding. We do happen to have a particularly good balance in the series running at the moment. A number of people complained that it had been very difficult to make a choice! They would have liked to have attended all six of them!

★ Chairman's message

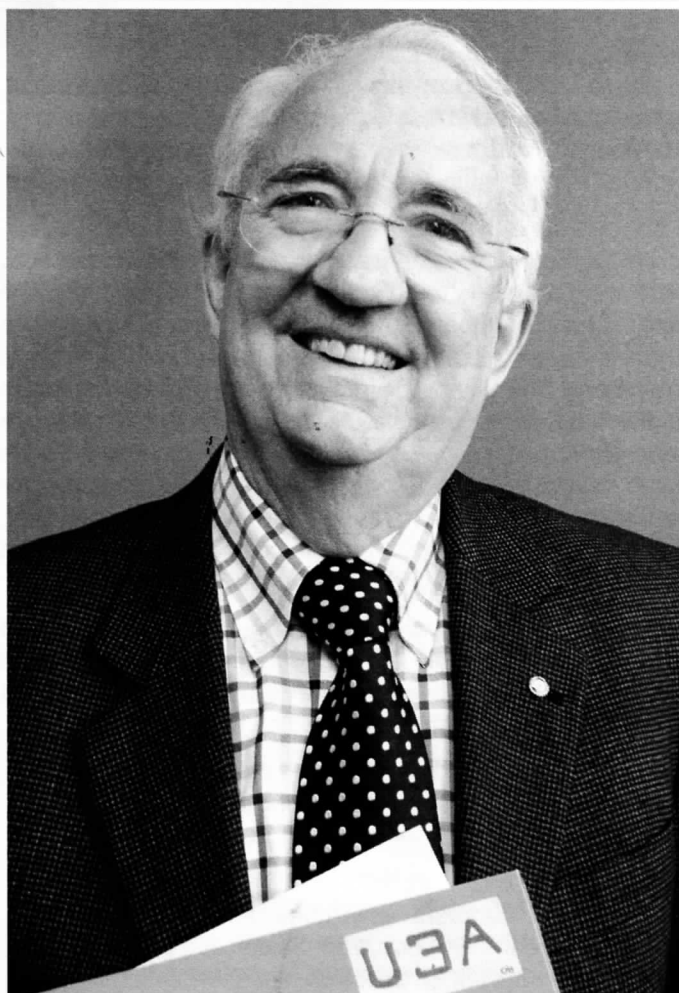
It has been said by some, that 'education is wasted on the young' however I am sure that can never be said of those who attend U3A courses! – (unless they unwittingly fall asleep in class!)

U3A attendees are at a stage in our lives, when having completed working careers, or having raised a family, we are free at last to have the opportunity to study subjects about which we hitherto had little appreciation or knowledge.

For example, we have a board member who has a double honours degree in English literature. She has led several courses in her area of expertise but has now chosen to attend a science-orientated course simply because, as she says, it is an area that she has never had to even consider before.

In my own case, after a life fully occupied by the challenges of engineering, it is a wonderful experience to look over the fence and find fresh fields. I greatly enjoyed a recent course in philosophy, and another in psychology. They opened up entirely new horizons for me. Such experiences contribute to our understanding of the world, and combined with our experience of living, enable us to appreciate all the more, the richness of life.

In our third age, perhaps it is now good to know a little about a lot, rather than a lot about a little!



Graham Batts, Chairman, U3A Dunedin Charitable Trust

May I thank Graeme Mortimer, our past Chairman, for his excellent leadership over the year.

Our Programme Co-ordinator Sue Cathro and her committee, together with board members have some great courses in the planning stages for series one and two next year.

Your board expects to remain committed to running courses from the three venues. Despite possible funding cuts, the University of Otago continues to support us both financially and with excellent presenters. In Dunedin we are most fortunate to have this association. — Graham Batts

Morepork and pixies

Our wise owl (top of page) has been given a makeover by its original artist, Gary Blackman, as it was near the horrible fate of pixellation! It's sharper now, and the opportunity was taken to spruce up the masthead beside the bird. See page 3: Gary explains more.

★ administration

Judith Gray

Secretary



★ looking ahead

Sue Cathro

Programme
Co-ordinator



Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a membership renewal form for 2010. Completed renewal forms must be sent to **Rodgers Law** by 31 December 2009. The annual membership fee of **\$10.00 per member** should accompany your form.

U3A Dunedin currently has a capped membership of 500. It should be noted that 87 members this year did not make use of their membership to apply for any courses, while there is a waiting list of over 40 people who wish to become members. There may be reasons for not participating in individual cases, but it should be remembered that those who do not make use of their membership keep others from taking part. It is therefore important to consider whether or not you wish to continue membership, so that, if not, others can be invited to join in time for the first series of lectures which begin in early March 2010.

The Board would like to know why those who have not used their membership this year do not seem to have found courses amongst the year's offerings of sufficient interest to attract them. Comments would be welcome.

We are extremely grateful to all those who have been willing to present whole courses or to share in sessions during this year. The gift of their time and expertise is much appreciated.

Application numbers were consistent for the first two series this year – Series 1, 286; Series 2, 288; but Series 3 drew 321 applicants, the largest ever. The vast majority of our members still only apply for and wish to attend one course, but several members were successful in being accepted for two courses, and in a few cases, for three. This only happens when demand for a course is less than expected. Making use of Leith Bowling Club with its greater capacity has also helped to provide an increased number of places.

This year has seen only three members miss out altogether on acceptance in a series (one in Series 1 and two in the most recent series). In each case the member had only provided one option.

The first mail out for the 2010 year will be sent out in late January. At this stage courses are likely to begin in the first week of March.

U3A arrives in Queenstown

It is pleasing to learn that a new U3A has now started up in Queenstown.

Graham Mortimer told the Board that a meeting on climate change was held in September. It was reported about 100 people arrived for the first session (30 more than expected.)

We have been pleased to be able to continue to use the Leith Bowling Club rooms for our courses. It comfortably holds 100 participants and this number has been reached for several courses in 2009. The Board has made improvements to the rooms with blackout curtains so our use of the Club's rooms benefits both organisations.

We have five confirmed courses in the third series and another being finalised. Look forward to a choice of courses on *Dunedin's Written Treasures*, *Health Care Ethics and the New Zealand Health System*, *Living on a Plate Boundary*, *Southern Maori* (which includes a Marae visit) and *Theology and Public Issues*. Planning for Series 2 and 3 is well advanced, with a participatory course on *The Victorian Age*. Others may be on: Italian art, two Irish poets and their times and two courses on Otago – visual arts and natural history, to name a few.

Your Board is open to suggestions. If you have an idea, please contact a Board member so that he/she can bring it to our meetings. Your comments, and suggestions for future courses in the course evaluation forms are very helpful; if possible, when you suggest a topic, could you also suggest the names of people who might be approached to present the course. You do not have to be on the Board to organise a course — you could even suggest yourself.

Deciding what to believe, and much more

U3A members who attended Alan Musgrave's delightful Series 1 course this year on 'Realism and Antirealism about Science' will be keenly interested in his book *Secular Sermons: Essays on Science and Philosophy* recently published. It is a gathering in 15 chapters of unpublished papers presented to a wide range of non-specialist audiences at conferences and seminars. Those who know his thoughtful and often bemused manner of speaking, will enjoy hearing his voice again in these engaging essays. Chapter 2 'Wandering Stars and Falling Stones' will be useful revision for his U3A audience.

[Musgrave, Alan. *Secular Sermons: Essays on Science and Philosophy*, Otago University Press, 2009, pp 216, \$49.99.]

**UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE
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Ruru, our reclusive avian scholar (a.k.a. the morepork)

In 1999, Brian O'Rourke, then on the U3A committee, asked me to devise a logo for a brochure being prepared to promote U3A Dunedin. Brian suggested an owl might be adopted as a symbol. He understood an owl had been used by a few U3A groups elsewhere.

The owl has had symbolic meaning from ancient times. In Athens, the image of an owl on a silver coin symbolised Athene Pronoia, the Greek goddess of wisdom.



Left: Greek coin

In folklore owls were often seen as bearers of knowledge and sagacity, but sometimes of death. In Finland the owl not only symbolised wisdom but also imbecility, the latter perhaps because of its 'dumb stare'. Some say the owl's nocturnal vigilance has the look of a studious scholar. In Farnham, USA, the U3A's newsletter is called *The Owl*. They claim it stands for 'Older, Wiser and still Learning'.

There was good reason then to adopt an owl as a U3A logo, and why not our native owl, ruru, the morepork. Ruru calling dolefully in the early morning hours is rather rarely heard in Dunedin, so why not celebrate its survival?

Based on a few published images in books on New Zealand birds, I worked up an ink drawing of a morepork and scanned it into my computer for transformation with that indispensable tool Photoshop. Because it would be reproduced in black and white with no halftones, I decided to give my morepork the look of a woodcut or wood engraving. I had actually taught myself wood engraving at high school, so I was familiar with what was possible. I would give it a bold, easily recognisable silhouette and enough detail to hold the eye at a small size.

I must mention here Thomas Bewick who pioneered a style of wood engraving in the later 18th century which has been long admired as a model for combining text with black and white imagery on the printed page. The engraved wood block is locked in with the metal text type and the whole page printed in one go through the press. This economical method of illustrating books or news magazines was widely used during the 19th century. For the curious reader I recommend Jenny Uglow's life of Thomas Bewick titled *Nature's Engraver* (Faber, 2006).

I completed my design for both logo and brochure in August 1999 and obtained quotes from Speedprint and the University Printery. The Printery won hands down and printed 750 copies in two colours on both sides of a greyish A4 paper and folded twice. The bold U3A on the front



Right: *Ruru* likes to face into the page, so this new image has been flipped horizontally.

panel and headings were printed in a bright green with text and the morepork logo in black. The result pleased me; it was a nicely restrained design. A matching two-colour letterhead with ruru logo was printed about the same time and is still in use for U3A correspondence.

Our *ruru* was once again called on when U3A Dunedin was registered as a charitable trust. For legal reasons a common seal was needed. Katherine Dolby asked me to design it and in November 2002 I came up with the simple typographic design shown here.



Ruru is enclosed in a square frame containing the words 'U3A Dunedin — Charitable Trust — Common Seal'. John Swan & Co made a rubber stamp of the design. Inevitably it is seldom seen. Readers who attended the 2008 U3A course on the history of typography will have no trouble recognising the font as Gill Sans.

Finally, our morepork has been part of the Newsletter masthead since the first issue of January 2004. Despite this exposure on the front of every issue, it surprises me that so far no ornithologist amongst our membership has protested at the inaccuracy of my version of *ruru* the morepork. The face is unnaturally white and the eyes are too far apart. Artistic license you might say. Nevertheless I have revised my original version. I believe it now represents *ruru* our reclusive avian scholar more faithfully. The masthead now incorporates the new logo. — **Gary Blackman**

Ruffling the ruru's feathers?

- * A Parliament: the collective noun for a group of owls.
- * 'The owl and the pussycat went to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat ...' (Edward Lear.)
- * Moreporks are superb night hunters with soft-edged feathers to fly silently. Their eyes are designed for optimum night vision — Maori *ruru* means 'big eyes.' They have excellent hearing; disc-like faces direct slightest sound to large ear openings. Flexible necks allow the bird's head to rotate 270 degrees.

Group plans to 'leave nest'

Our Book Discussion Group in 2009 had only seven members but it was a happy one and enjoyed sessions, course co-ordinators Nora Calvert and Marjorie Spittle reported to the Board.

In course evaluations everyone commented on the wide variety of books chosen, so that books beyond the 'comfort range' were read, which often proved to be of interest. Everyone enjoyed the group life, Some wanted the course to be longer, others were pleased that it was reduced to one term,' said the report,

In the final session, the group's future was discussed: 'We were grateful that you had allowed us to continue this year with smaller numbers, but decided that the time had come for us to leave this comfortable nest and go out into the wide world. We plan that next year we shall meet as an independent group in our own homes, with more flexibility about time and frequency of meetings. We shall miss the library at Salmond College and the delicious afternoon teas.'

Some board members commented that home groups were often fostered by other U3As. Board chairman Graham Batts will talk with the group's facilitators,

WANTED: technical helpers

Are you experienced with computers and data projectors, microphones, sound systems and the like? Are you willing to be instructed in these matters by Bill George, our treasurer and technical guru?

Bill cannot be at all our sessions of every course, so he needs some members to volunteer to be assistants, In return there could be favours in terms of being assured a place in a favourite course — so that help is on hand should there be a technical hitch.

Often hitches are caused by simplest things. At one session in the Leith Bowling Club recently the sound stopped working but it was thought nothing was wrong with the system. After all the microphone still had a light showing on it . . . but that red light was the warning a new battery needed to be inserted.

U3A Online courses

www.u3aonline.org.au now has 35 courses available. The latest to be added are *The Story of Science – the emergence of Natural Philosophy* and *Australian History prior to Federation*.

<http://sites/google.com/site/u3asitedemo/> You may want to cull an excerpt from a pdf file or completely change some other "foreign" document to Word but can't afford the expensive software. Nothing to download and you can work from any Internet-connected computer and need no technical skills. The converted document is emailed to your computer within minutes — free.

Three's a crowd

The East Gloucester Medical Assessment Unit, public notice: 'Visiting hours on the unit are any reasonable hour but we do insist that there is a maximum of two people per bed.'

Cost of loving lower

In times of financial hardship, an English vicar offered church marriages for £50 on eBay this year. He hoped the cut price for couples might keep wedding bells ringing.



[Oldie magazine archives]

Tall tales about backward moves

Someone asked why tall members of U3A always sit at the front of our lecture halls or venues to obscure the view, could they please sit at the back? This may be a misconception based on the fact that back rows do get a more interrupted view.

We suggest that anyone who calls out "speak up!" (if they have hearing difficulty) should, in fact sit nearer the front — come early if necessary. But our sound systems normally will solve this problem.

Those with poorer eyesight will surely head for seats closer to the screens? Don't be bashful in coming forward, there's often spare seats there. Back rows may get to the tea or coffee quicker but there's enough for all.

Footnote; It was announced at one session of art lectures that 'if anyone could not see very well' a pair of glasses had been found — and if somebody couldn't hear, one hearing aid! Lecturer Ross Grimmett then continued, playfully: 'and six wooden legs . . .'

Owls are a hoot!

Henry David Thoreau summarised one perception of owls in 1854: 'I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and underdeveloped nature which men have not recognised. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have.'

And before you fly off . . .

Good example of a schoolboy owler? — Harry Potter!

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Elizabeth Timms — U3A Board Liaison

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