

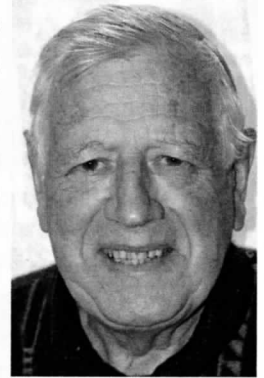
U3A DUNEDIN

Newsletter

November 2011
No. 31



I deem it a great honour to have been elected to chair the Board of U3A Dunedin. Over the past two years there has been an exodus of long-serving members and we now have a number of new faces around the table. Following the election of Jane Higham, Rosemary Hudson and Brian Robinson last year, Rosalie Clarke and Doug Holborow were elected at this year's AGM. At the first meeting of the new year in September, the Board elected Norma Restieaux as deputy Chairman and co-opted Marjan Lousberg in order to fill the vacant position and broaden the skill base. I look forward to working together with the Board to fulfil the aims laid down in its Deed of Charitable Trust; firstly, to foster and develop education for people who form the Third Age population of the Dunedin region and, secondly, to organise and present educational courses alone or in conjunction with tertiary education institutions in Dunedin and elsewhere in New Zealand. —*John Burton*



Waiting list is due to our success

Our organisation has been extremely successful; so successful that we have slightly more than the 500 members which we set as our 'cap' in 2008, and there is a waiting list of around 125. This means that people applying for membership can expect to wait for a year or two before being accepted as members. This is unfortunate, but the Board feels that there is no real alternative.

Currently we run 18 courses each year and aim to have at least six of these catering for 100 people. This allows us to provide places for the 350 (on average) applicants for each series. By no means all members apply for places each session; some are away for various reasons and others, no doubt, choose not to apply. It is to the great credit of our secretary, Judith Gray, that very few people, typically, are unable to gain a place at any one series although not everyone, of course, gains entry to their first choice.

The waiting list obviously poses a big problem which not many organisations face nowadays – how to deal fairly with the large number of people wanting to become members. There are real problems in increasing membership beyond present limits, principally among them are the availability of suitable venues at regular times and the availability of speakers of the very high calibre that we are fortunate to be able to access.

Increasing the membership would mean providing additional courses at additional venues. A subcommittee was set up in 2007 and reported to the Board in September of that year. It looked at a comprehensive list of approximately 100 possible venues in the greater Dunedin area and identified seven in the northern part of the city which

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

appeared to be worthy of further investigation. Sixteen prerequisites were considered and only the Leith Bowling Club 'ticked all the boxes'

One possibility would be for a second group to open within Dunedin focussing on southern and eastern parts of the city. International U3A protocols make it clear, however, that it is up to individuals wishing to start a group to do so, rather than it being the responsibility of an existing U3A to set up a splinter group. The obligation on the 'existing' U3A is to provide assistance when requested to people wishing to form a new group and we have over recent years assisted in the formation of several groups in the South Island. An internet search of 'U3A' will demonstrate the wide variety of groups in existence around the globe (which take many different forms) and there are plenty of guidelines which may assist in the setting up of a new club.

Another problem we are facing is that of parking at our venues and 'shortage of parking' is often commented upon in the evaluation forms. Parking is usually no problem at the Leith Bowling Club but can be a real hassle at both Knox College and Salmond College. Unfortunately, provision of parking is beyond our control and there is not much we can do about it. The principles which must apply are; come early; share transport; take the bus; walk; get a friend to drop you off; or use a taxi

Over the past year I have acted as chairman of the Programme subcommittee. It was both a surprise and delight to find that Sue Cathro was prepared to return to lead that committee following her year as Chairman of the Board. The programme for the first series of 2012 is already finalised and there is a firm booking as far ahead as the Autumn series in 2013! It is no easy task – as Robert Burns wrote 'The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley' and this is a saying that must come often to members of the subcommittee to whom we all owe a great deal of thanks. — John Burton

★ administration

By Judith Gray Secretary to the Board

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a membership renewal form for 2012. Completed renewal forms must be sent to *Rodgers Law* by **31 December 2011**, and the annual membership fee of \$20.00 per member should accompany your form.

In line with U3A Dunedin Board policy, members who do not renew by the deadline may be removed from the mailing list and placed at the bottom of our ever-growing waiting list.

We have a waiting list of over 120 people who wish to become members, some of whom have been waiting for almost two years.

The U3A Dunedin Board has been most grateful for the time and expertise of those who have presented whole courses or individual sessions during 2011, and our members appear from verbal comments and evaluation

forms to have enjoyed them too. Applicants for the year's courses have been 332 (Series 1), 308 in Series 2, with 338 for the most recent series. No member missed out entirely on acceptance for Series 2 or 3, though two members missed out on Series 1.

Fifty-three people have not taken advantage of their membership to enrol for any course this year, a similar number to 2010; and there is a small group of about 12 who have not applied for any courses in the past three years.

The first mail out for the 2012 year will probably be sent out about 20 January with the ballot likely to take place on 9 February.



★ looking ahead

By Sue Cathro

Programme Co-ordinator

As you can see, I am back as Programme Co-ordinator with a sub-committee of John Burton, Sue Harvey, Jane Higham, and Rosemary Hudson. We have been able to build on the efforts of John Burton and the 2010-11 Programme Committee, who had done all the initial work for Series 1, 2012. We are now confirming dates and times in preparation for the brochures.

We have six confirmed courses in the first series. You can look forward to a choice of courses on *Printmaking as Art*, learning about *What Chemists Do*, *The Industrial Revolution*, *Masterpieces of Western Religious Music*, *Gold and Science Fiction – 'Frankenstein' and 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'*. Planning for Series 2 and 3 is well advanced, with courses on *Adventure in Art*, *Marine Science*, *Africa* and *Making Music in Dunedin* to name a few that we are working on.

I have said this before, but it is worth repeating: your Board is always open to suggestions. If you have an idea for a course at any time, please contact a Board member so that he/she can bring it to our meetings. Your comments, and suggestions for future courses from the course

evaluation forms are very helpful and if you are able to, when you suggest a topic, could you also name people who might be approached to present the course. You do not have to be on the Board to organise a course – perhaps you could suggest yourself as the organiser or even a presenter?



'Moan' about difficult U-turns

U3A member Margaret Favell emailed to the newsletter about poor driving skills, near the Leith Bowling Club venue:

'Every day that I go to a U3A lecture I am reminded that mature drivers can be as thoughtless as teenagers. The problem is U-turns. Drivers wanting a parking space on the other side of the road or wishing to return to town attempt a U-turn where there is insufficient room. They often hold up traffic in both directions.

'Fortunately there has not yet been an accident. There are two problems: the road is too narrow for a full U-turn; and because of the curve in the road visibility is insufficient. People should go up to Malvern Street, past the bus stop, to where visibility is good in both directions and the road is wide enough to do a complete U-turn. Sorry to moan.'

U3A Conference in India in 2012.

The Core Group of the U3A Asia Pacific Alliance have now agreed that the next International Conference will be held in October 2012 in India, at a very modern conference centre near Pune. [<http://u3a-asiapacificalliance.org>]

Donation to University for valuable books

At the October meeting of the Board it was agreed that the U3A Dunedin Charitable Trust will make two donations to the University of Otago to purchase two sets of books. They are the rare Magnum Opus edition in 48 volumes of the Edinburgh edition of the Waverley novels (Walter Scott's final authorised edition) costing about \$2,000, and the seven-volume Cambridge edition of the works of Ben Jonson (2011) costing about \$1,200.

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE CHARITABLE TRUST, DUNEDIN

Address: C/o The Secretary,
PO Box 117, Dunedin 9054
Email: graysinn@clear.net.nz

Chairman: John Burton ph 477-7371
Secretary: Judith Gray ph 471-9913
[Registered Charitable Institution - #CC22345]

Have you patience to help in preparing old fossils?

Over the years, Professor Ewan Fordyce, head of the Geology Department at the University of Otago, has had retired volunteers help with fossil preparation in the laboratory there. "It seems to have suited people with patience and interest in fine manual activity," he says.

There are some projects at present (involving fossil dolphins, penguins etc) that might appeal to the sort of person also interested in U3A, and he would be happy to hear from anyone who would like some details.

An interest in paleontology and/or geology and/or vertebrate zoology would help.

The lab projects involve uncovering and extracting the bones of fossil dolphins, whales and penguins from rock, using hand tools (scrapers) and sometimes pneumatic scribes. Training, laboratory induction, and supervision would be provided.

Volunteers with large muscles able to swing a pickaxe are not required. The work is detailed, not too heavy. The rocks are fairly soft, and small tools like dental instruments are used, U3A was told. Heavy lifting not required. Past volunteers have commonly done a half-day a week on fairly regular basis. For more on some of the research results, see the Geology Department's website:

www.otago.ac.nz/geology/research/paleontology/paleontology.html

If you would like to help, please email ewan.fordyce@otago.ac.nz or phone 479-7510.

Rock shows for public

Some spectacular or important fossils, rocks and minerals are on display in the University's Geology Museum, and it is open to the public. The fossils have been collected by staff and students in a century of field work mainly in southern regions. The museum now contains the South Island's largest fossil collection.

The Geology Museum is open to the public 9 am to 5 pm weekdays. Access is from the University Quadrangle. There is no entry charge, but please sign the visitors' book.

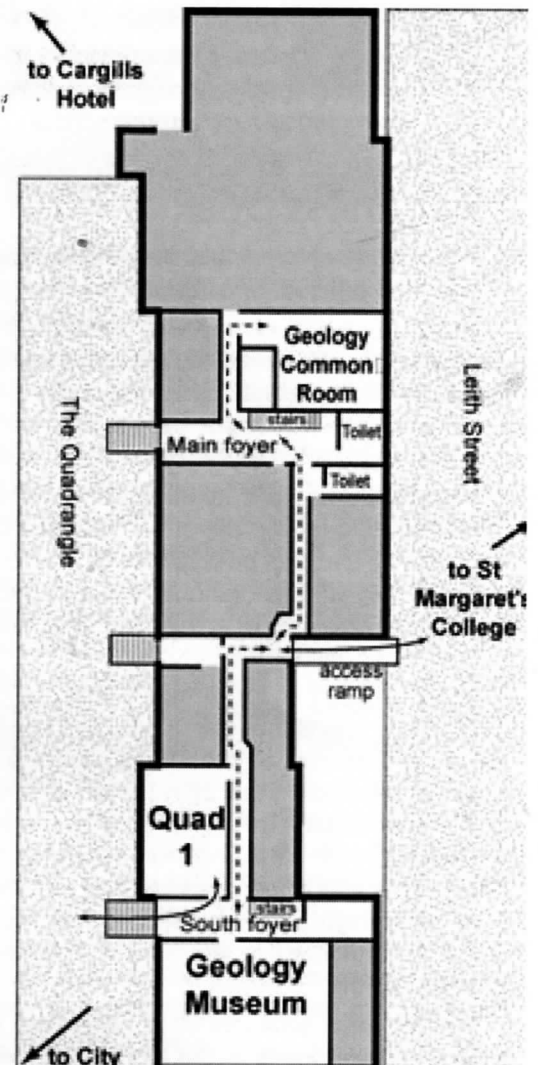
The Geology Museum includes the fossil preparation lab where work on specimens can be viewed by visitors. This is the only such public-view facility in New Zealand. You can often see large fossil vertebrates, such as whales, dolphins and penguins, being prepared.

The Geology Museum is in the south end of the historic geology building, that faces the rear of the clocktower building. The museum contains large and scientifically important collections of rocks, minerals and fossils — the largest in the South Island. There are displays in the museum itself and in the adjacent foyer.

The museum is open to the public five days a week, from 9 am to 5 pm. Visitors may look through large viewing windows to see fossils being worked on in the Fossil Preparation Laboratory (room Gs13a). The fossils include whales, dolphins, penguins, and fish.



This scene in the fossil preparation lab of the Geology Museum shows a work position with an assistant and one of the senior students.



How to find the Geology Museum.

Edited by Geoff Adams

Ph: 467 2278 Email: hgadams@slingshot.co.nz

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

Dating with Google? A handy hint

For those making Internet searches with Google, here is a handy hint to narrow a big search to a year range.

1. Enter the search term you want to look up
2. Type the starting year followed by two full stops, followed by the ending year.

— e.g. to find recent information on railways in Europe, enter 'railways in Europe 2010..2011'

Summer learning?

Do you want to learn something new this summer? The University of Otago Summer School offers these opportunities. —

Scottish Summer School: 'Scottish Migration to New Zealand in a Global Context,' Monday and Tuesday, January 23-24, 2012.

'Scottish Literature Since Burns,' Wednesday and Thursday, January 25-26, 2012.

The Chaucer School: 'April is the kindest month' (Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*). Monday to Friday, January 23-27, 2012.

Wordsmith – The Art of Writing (Poetry), Monday to Saturday, February 13-18, 2012.

For information, phone (03) 479 9181
email summer.school@otago.ac.nz
www.otago.ac.nz/summerschool

Happiness peak at 70?

A recent study of happiness over the life-span showed two peaks — at ages 20 and 70.

In 2008 a phone survey was performed by the Gallup Organisation with over 340,000 randomly selected adults aged 18-85 in the US. The respondents were average folks, with 29% holding a college degree and a median monthly household income between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

The participants were asked to rate how they currently felt their life stood on a scale of 0 ('the worst possible life for you') to 10 ('The best possible life for you'). They were also asked if they had felt various different emotions, such as happiness, enjoyment, stress, sadness, anger, and worry, a lot on the previous day.

Lead researcher Dr. Arthur Stone, of Stony Brook University, reports that stress peaked between the ages of 22-25, and decreased drastically after age 50. Worry was relatively constant from 20-40, then declined in the mid-50's. Anger began tapering off after 18; Sadness increased for those in their 40's, and then declined for those in their mid- to late 50's. It increased slightly for those in their mid-70's. (One might well imagine that sadness at those times could be attributed to the loss of parents and partners through death.)

The best news was that both happiness and enjoyment peaked at two points in the life-cycle, when people were 20 and again when they were 70.

These findings support the frequently found difference between younger and older people, that older people are more able to regulate negative emotions, and recall fewer of them in their lives. Interestingly, between the genders, women throughout the life-span tend to report more stress, sadness and worry than men.

[It's getting better all the time: Happiness, well-being increase after 50,' by Katherine Harmon, *Scientific American*, May 17, 2010 — from website.]



This cloakroom door's odd signage at the Leith Bowling Club was photographed by an alert U3A member.

Smart arrest at a rest home!

It happened years ago but this is a priceless yet true story. A former London journalist retold it in Britain's *Oldie* magazine recently and now it's our turn. The scene was a retirement home in south-east London.

It was afternoon with residents dozing in chairs or watching a noisy cowboy film on TV. Double doors suddenly flew open and a masked man burst in, wielding a hand gun. 'Don't move!' he yelled at the pensioners.

One elderly lady murmured 'I would if I could, dear, but I can't.' Another woke up to crossly exclaim 'Will someone turn that sound down!'

A resident who had been watching action on the film realised something real was now happening before him. Struggling to his feet, he collided with a trolley full of plates sending them all crashing to the floor. The startled robber tried to retreat then but the old man barred his way with his walking frame. Another pensioner used his walking stick to crack the robber hard on his head. A third (an old soldier) then held the intruder in a karate grip.

The emergency alarm bell was pressed to bring carers running to the scene and police were called. The rest home staff commended the old people: 'They never panicked. Once they took in the situation they acted magnificently.'



Part of the U3A audience listening to PhD student Mudassir Anwar at Leith Bowling Club during session 4 of 'Medicines and Magic' in term 3 last year.