EPSOM U3A Inc.

epsom1u3a@gmail.com

Website https://www.u3a.nz/directory.htm

Then click on Epsom under Auckland Central

MEETING PLACE

Royal Oak Bowls, 146 Selwyn St, Onehunga

10am on the 2ND Thursday of most months

NEWSLETTER

October 2024

Next meeting

Thursday, 10-12noon, 10 October

Greetings to all U3A members

I hope this finds you in good health and heart and that the daily round of life is going well for you. This note from me will be shorter than usual as we are away in our motorhome.

As I write this we are in Waikanae having done some good cycling around Palmerston North and Waikanae. We both enjoy cycling and keep doing it while we can. We had some challenging cycling in high winds and with the weather almost raining near Palmerston - of course noted for its wind farms.

One thing I did see is the U3A Manawatu developed special seminars as part of their activities. These are a weekly series of seminars on a special topic for a short period. How do you think these would work for us?

Last Monday we attended the Foxton Beach Lady Lions Club with my 86 year old sister for a fundraising event for the Cancer society. That small group managed to raise almost $1000 in the evening with a bottle auction and hamburgers. I was amazed at all the voluntary effort and work that goes into making this happen.

To all of you who are involved as volunteers a big thank you. It is so important that we do not take for granted all the good works that are done for others in the community.

So continue to learn and take care of yourselves and family. Keep active in both mind and body. Reach out to others and as U3A members continue to grow in mind and spirit.

We still need a new committee member to help arrange suitable speakers for our monthly meetings. Please consider this if you have three spare hours a month and let a committee member know.

Blessings

Duncan

EPSOM U3A EXECUTIVE

President
Duncan MacDonald - 021-316 661
president.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Immediate Past President:
Kaye Buchanan- 620 7572
Secretary
Emily Flynn- 021 0902 5094
secretary.u3aepsom@gmail.com.
Minutes Secretary
Jessie Mraviciich – 022 019 0896
Membership Secretary
Thomas Tam - 520 1084
membership.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Treasurer & **Technical Officer**
Thomas Tam - 520 1084
treasurer.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Almoner
Charmaine Strang – 027-4177 556
Assistance & Support
Grant Coupland – 638 7496
Interest Group Co-ordinators
Joslyn Squire - 021-168 0680
Bill Hagan – – 021 611 247
Guest Speaker Organiser:
Laraine Holdom –021 059 0136
Legal Advisor
Mike Matson - 022-630 7968
Newsletter
Jeanette Grant – 638 8566
Greeters:
Don Buchanan - 620 7572
Ngaire Mune – 624 0226

INTEREST GROUP CONVENERS

Appreciating Performing Arts
Shirin Caldwell – 630 1662
Architecture
Brian Murray – 021 026 68396
Art Appreciation
Kaye Buchanan – 620 7572
Big History
Emily Flynn – 021 0902 5094
Christine Keller-Smith – 021 140 9021
Book Chat
Helen Holdem - 021 260 3510
Comparative Religions
Duncan MacDonald - 021-316 661
John Locke- 021-187 8061
Current Affairs
Shirley McConville – 622 3542
Fabric & Fibre Crafts
Charmaine Strang – 027-4177 556
Famous & Infamous Group
Gary Preston – 021 297 3087
Foodies
Graham Gunn – 027 445 0929.
Garden Appreciation
Betty Townley - 626 6673
Introduction to Family History
Bryn Smith – 027 280 5235
Latin
Phylllis Downes – 630 5867
Lunch Club
Shirley McConville – 622 3542.
Medical Matters
Diana Hart – 021 284 4402
Music Appreciation
Carleen Edwards – 624 6298
19th Century History
Helen Holdem – 021 260 3510
NZ History
Kaye Buchanan - 620 7572
Philosophy
Jocelyn Hewin - 634-1552
Recreational Drawing
Grant Coupland – 638 7496
Scrabble
Joslyn Squire – 021 168 0680
Social Golf
Kay England 629-3281
Te Reo Maori
Jenny Whatman – 027 353 2487
Travel
Diana Hart- 021 284 4402
Walkers & Talkers Group
Don Buchanan ph:620 7572.

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER REPORT

Our September speaker**, Barry Dreyer** gave an interesting account of his fifteen months' military service as an young newly-commissioned officer in Vietnam during 1966-1967, where he fulfilled a number of roles including Battery Commander 161st Field Battery, Commanding Officer 16th Field Regiment and more latterly, Colonel-Commandant of the Royal NZ Artillery.

Barry trained at Duntroon Military College at the age of 16, and was deployed to Ben Hoa province in 1966 after North and South Vietnam had been partitioned. He believes the Vietnam War was really an ethnic conflict between north and south and the Chinese were hated by all, especially when they later supported Pol Pot. Barry travelled to Vietnam via Perth, for 14 hours in a Hercules, landing in an airfield full of military aircraft. In 1966 Australians also arrived to secure Phuoc Tuy province, assisted by USA forces.

Movement for the local villagers was free during the day, but anything that moved at night was regarded as a target. In the tropical climate where the grass grew 6-9 inches per day, herbicide sprays were used to keep the target ranges clear and allow the military to be more effective. (This was probably "Agent Orange"). Barry also flew in Cessna planes for four weeks, for four hours per day, doing reconnaissance work. Barry recounted his experience of meeting General William Westmoreland, who was in charge of the USA troops.

The NZ troops were tasked with building underground communications bunkers, laying concrete pads so guns did not sink into the ground in the wet season, setting up camps with tents and duckboards, and building sandbag walls for protection. Meanwhile, the enemy actively tried to destroy the nearby roads to prevent movement of military vehicles carrying weapons and supplies. The helicopters were therefore the workhorses of the army, in transporting supplies and military hardware as well as for moving troops. They used heavy guns that could be broken down and reassembled because the terrain was difficult for transporting equipment. Barry told us about the battle of Long Tan in August 1966 where Australian troops forced the Viet Kong to retreat, so they never tried to attack that area again.

The NZ troops established good relationships with the local people, supporting them and the children in particular, to whom they taught songs and helped to establish a choir. They provided help for the village of 300 Vietnamese Catholics who had moved to the south into the jungle, at Xuyen Moc, but who had suffered greatly when their village teachers were assassinated, the school was blown up, the priest killed and their well water-supply damaged.

The challenges were great: The hot climate with extremes of wet and dry, diseases, (note the villagers' "Hepatitis" bread rolls , danger from wildlife including tigers, elephants, snakes, scorpions and the ever present threat from the Viet Cong.

Barry believes that though participation in the Vietnam War was controversial, the intervention did stop further invasions and political take-overs, later, allowing for the development of other democratic Asian states in neighbouring countries. (eg Japan, South Korea.) Positive outcomes of the war were in the development of new technologies. eg Night Vision devices, and ways of measuring distances accurately for computer targeting by B52 bombers. Vietnam's ancient vulture is still strong and is now celebrated in a new museum which was developed by the French, and Vietnam is becoming a prosperous nation.

Though Barry was reticent to ever return to Vietnam, he was persuaded many years later to take his wife and children back to Vietnam, where he visited Xuyen Moc, and was delighted to find one of the children he had developed a friendship with during the war. Barry was delighted to discover that the young man was now a successful restaurant owner and was thriving.

SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION	The 2025 Epsom U3A subscription is payable AFTER the AGM in November This should be paid into our **ASB bank account –** **12 – 3067 – 0204618 – 00** Please enter **subs** in the "code" section and your **name** in the "reference" section in order for us to have a record of your payment.
OCTOBER SPEAKER **Keith Woodley**	**"Filling the Gaps: 5 years of shorebird surveys in North Korea**. Over the last 40 years populations of migratory shorebirds including bar-tailed godwits in the Asia Pacific region have been declining. The primary cause has been the enormous scale of habitat loss at migratory staging sites around the Yellow Sea. Between 2014 and 2019, Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust members carried out surveys of shorebird sites on the west coast of North Korea. This followed over 15 years of similar work in China and South Korea." Keith Woodley has been resident manager at the Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre on the Firth of Thames since 1993. He is the author Godwits: long-haul champions, Penguin 2009: Shorebirds of New Zealand: Sharing the Margins Penguin Random House 2012 and in Pursuit of Champions: the inspiring story of Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, PMNT and Sherlock & Co 2022. In 2022 he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Shorebird Conservation.
INTEREST GROUPS	**FABRIC AND FIBRE CRAFT SALE REMINDER!** When? Thursday 10th October (SALE STARTS AT 9.30!!) Where? Onehunga Bowling Club Selwyn Rd Onehunga Why? To raise money for the Salvation Army Just a reminder of the Fabric and Fibre October craft sale! Amazing craft for presents, Christmas and celebrations. **NO EFTPOS! GOLD COINS AND NOTES ONLY PLEASE!** **THE SALE STARTS AT 9.30!!** **SO COME EARLY TO GET A BARGAIN!!!**
GOING OVERSEAS?	The **2025 Summer School** programme at **Girton College, University of Cambridge,** UK might be of interest to any members who are planning to travel to Europe next year. Membership of any U3A is the only requirement. "The dates for next summer's two-week programme will be 17 -30 August 2025, though as previously it will also be possible to attend for just one week (either 17-23 August, or 24-30 August 2025). All the information on the 2025 summer school can be found on our website at: https://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/lifelong-learning, where you'll also find our new lifelong learning summer school video! The electronic version of the 2025 flyer is available here: https://www.girton.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-09/GirtonLifelongLearning_2025_SC_LR.pdf"
2024 MEETING DATES **Thursdays, 10am**	10 October 14 November AGM **NB Always wear your name badge** and be seated ready at 10am

JEANETTE'S JOTTINGS

A FEW OF MURPHY'S LAWS

- If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.
- After all is said and done, a hell of a lot more is said than done.
- Logic is a systematic method of coming to the wrong conclusion with confidence.
- The light at the end of the tunnel is only the light of an oncoming train.
- An expert is one who knows more and more about less and less until he knows absolutely everything about nothing.
- Computers are unreliable, but humans are even more unreliable. Any system which depends on human reliability is unreliable.
- The attention span of a computer is only as long as its electrical cord.
- It is impossible to make anything foolproof because fools are so ingenious.
- When all else fails, read the instructions.

ORIGIN OF AUTISM?

A virus common in newborn babies may increase their risk of developing autism, a study suggests.

By examining medical records of nearly 3million infants, researchers found those born with cytomegalovirus (CMV) were two-and-a-half times more likely to be diagnosed with autism in their lives than children without CMV.

This seemingly harmless cold-like bug affects roughly one in every 200 babies, and is the most common infection present at birth in the US. Approximately 2.8 percent of American children are diagnosed with autism. Yet doctors in the US don't currently screen for the common virus, which is passed from pregnant women to their foetus in the womb.

"*Though further research is needed, researchers believe the illness may cause inflammation in the foetus' brain that interrupts its development*," said Dr Megan Pesch, the study's lead author. She wants to raise awareness about the virus, so that screening during pregnancy might become more common in the US, as it is in other countries…It's unclear when babies most commonly contract this condition - since it's not standard in the US for pregnant women or newborns to get screened for the condition…

But some studies suggest that treating it will reduce the likelihood of developing more extreme symptoms - like hearing loss and developmental delays.

ELEPHANT SONG

A fascinating new insight into elephant communication has been uncovered…by…Stanford University researchers who made this incredible discovery through extensive analysis of elephant sounds collected across 12 years, between 2005 and 2017. They found that when a group of animals were in the one spot, for example, drinking at a watering hole, a senior elephant would make this rumbling sound, and one by one the others would add their own, in a different harmony, all overlapping until every individual got the message. Then, with everyone having acknowledged the "let's go" message, would make a coordinated move from the watering hole… They liken it to the way a barbershop quartet builds a chorus from one voice to the next…

But there's more to these endearing singalongs than a musical show of unity. It demonstrates that the gathered males have, much like the females in a herd, a power structure, with the dominant 'elder' of the group initiating the chorus, which the others instantly respond to in their own tone. While this study shows it is specific among bulls, similar collective vocalizing has been observed among herds with the most senior females being the first to sing out. So, most likely, this communication has been learned by the males from a young age…

It follows on from the groundbreaking discovery that elephants have names for each other, and unlocks crucial new understandings about the role that males play in the tight social network of herds.

"*These individuals take on mentoring roles,"* O'Connell-Rodwell said*. "They care about these young whippersnappers who are very needy and always wanting to be in physical contact. The older males are willing to take them under their wing, to guide them, share resources with them, and partake in their emotional ups and downs."*

The researchers hope this discovery will shed light on the important role males play in the matriarchal society of elephants, and show how poaching can disrupt this tight-knit structure, as well as how animals in captivity can be better served by better understanding the complex relationships at play.

TIME FLIES

Time is relative, and not only in an astrophysical sense. We are all familiar with that feeling that time drags when we're bored and flies when we're busy. New analysis of brain activity patterns shows how our brains track time, and some intriguing insights into how cells handle it. Our brains aren't like computers, tracking time based on precise measurements of seconds, minutes, hours, and so on…we're also just as likely to be surprised to find that three hours has passed when it felt like barely one.

Now, researchers at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) have found that brains perceive time based on the number of events or experiences that occur. In a way, it doesn't even matter how long in real-time a series of events takes – if you speed them up or slow them down, our brains will still likely estimate that the same amount of time has passed.

"We tell time in our own experience by things we do, things that happen to us," said James Hyman, senior author of the study. "When we're still and we're bored, time goes very slowly because we're not doing anything or nothing is happening. On the contrary, when a lot of events happen, each one of those activities is advancing our brains forward. And if this is how our brains objectively tell time, then the more that we do and the more that happens to us, the faster time goes."

…The team also witnessed how different brain cells handled the tasks at different times. Small groups of brain cells would collaborate on the task for a few repetitions, before passing it off to another group. This explains why iterations close together would be hard to tell apart, but why those separated by more time feel quite different. Not only does it show how and why our perception of time changes depending on how busy we are, but the study helps us better understand how our brains can organize memories in a timeline, and recall events at different relative times.

The research was published in the journal Current Biology. Source: UNLV

TOO MUCH WASHING IS BAD FOR YOU!

As Dr Robert H. Shmerling, the senior faculty editor at Harvard Health Publishing, explains: "*Our immune systems need a certain amount of stimulation by normal microorganisms, dirt, and other environmental exposures in order to create protective antibodies and 'immune memory'. This is one reason why some paediatricians and dermatologists recommend against daily baths for kids. Frequent baths or showers throughout a lifetime may reduce the ability of the immune system to do its job."*

Too much washing with harsh detergents and factory soaps also strips out the skin's natural oils (those made from all-natural ingredients aren't so bad).

So we wash these precious emolliating oils off with body washes and shower gels, which are mostly water packaged in single-use plastic containers, and then put them back again with body lotions, which are mostly water packaged in single-use plastic containers…It's ecologically indefensible, but like so many things that are bad for the environment and general human health, there is a giant industry based around keeping us all convinced that this plastic-packaged double trouble is an essential part of our daily lives and our weekly shop.

It isn't.

START OF SOLAR POWER

The first time anyone installed a photovoltaic solar panel was in 1884, when Charles Fritts assembled a billiard-table-sized array on a wooden frame, on a rooftop in New York City. Fritts used selenium coated with a thin film of gold, achieving less than 1% efficiency in converting sunlight into electricity to create a current he described as "continuous, constant and of considerable force." Fritts' project didn't go much further – gold and selenium weren't the kind of cheap, abundant materials that tend to lead to commercially competitive products…

In 1918, Jan Czochralski, a Polish chemist, inadvertently discovered a method for growing single crystals (monocrystalline) used in semiconductor wafers, now known as the Czochralski method. The discovery came when Czochralski accidentally dipped his pen into a crucible of molten tin instead of his inkwell. It's still the backbone of 90% of all electronics today.

HARD TO BELIEVE

While many countries like the UK can boast about superior vacation time, Americans on average get only 11 days of paid holidays a year - while in Iran, they get 27 paid holidays annually!