



epsom1u3a@gmail.com

Website <https://www.epsom.u3a.nz>

MEETING PLACE

Royal Oak Bowls, 146 Selwyn St, Onehunga

10am on the 2ND Thursday of most months

NEWSLETTER

March 2024

Next meeting

10-12noon

Thursday 14th March 2024

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings to all members in our Epsom U3A club.

At this time of the year I hope all of you have found this long and sometimes very hot summer to have been a good time to celebrate being outdoors, re food, gardens, travel, friends, activities and just enjoying the long days.

We need to make sure that celebration is an important part of our lives. It gives us joy in terms of hope, health, memories and peace of mind in so many ways. I have read somewhere that celebrating is such an important factor in terms of our health and longevity and quality of life.

Celebration gives us joy and peace of mind which is very important in living a fulfilled life. So what have you been doing lately?

The U3A committee has met twice this year looking at our 2024 programme, interest groups, how we function and operate. U3A is your organization. We welcome any suggestions as to how we can improve and make it better for you. If you would like to suggest another interest group and take responsibility to set it up and lead we would welcome your enthusiasm.

Please be aware that your committee has worked very hard in organizing all things necessary to make Epsom function well. I understand our membership is nearly 200.

So celebrate 2024. Live life to the full. Graciously participate, share, socialize and do something for others as well as ourselves for this helps us stay healthy.

Finally, if you want to discuss anything please call me anytime - Ph 021 316 661.

With love and care

Duncan

EPSOM U3A EXECUTIVE

President

Duncan MacDonald - 021-316 661
president.u3aepsom@gmail.com

Immediate Past President:

Kaye Buchanan- 620 7572

Vice President

Secretary

Emily Flynn- 021 0902 5094
secretary.u3aepsom@gmail.com

Minutes Secretary

Jessie Mravicih – 022 019 0896

Membership Secretary

Thomas Tam - 520 1084
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Almoner

Charmaine Strang – 027-4177 556

Assistance & Support

Grant Coupland – 638 7496

Interest Group Co-ordinator

Joslyn Squire - 021-168 0680

Interest Group Assistant

Bill Hagan - – 021 611 247

Guest Speaker Organiser:

Laraine Holdom – 624 4454

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

Christine Keller-Smith - 021 140 9021

& Emily Flynn – 021 0902 5094

Book Chat

Helen Holdom - 021 260 3510

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

Reg Stuart – 630 3576

Lunch Club

Shirley McConville – 622 3542.

Medical Matters

Diana Hart – 021 284 4402

Music Appreciation

Carleen Edwards – 624 6298

19th Century History

Helen Holdom - 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.

<p>FEBRUARY SPEAKER REPORT</p>	<p>VOLCANOES OF AUCKLAND TALK</p> <p>A packed house came to hear Dr Bruce Hayward talk about New Zealand's Volcanic City: Auckland. All of New Zealand may have features reminding us of volcanic activity in times past, but Auckland's volcanic field is young and not yet extinct. The most recent eruption here was as recent as 600 years ago, and it was the largest. It was located in what is now Rangitoto.</p> <p>Dr Hayward demonstrated, with aerial views of familiar natural landmarks, that it is volcanoes which provide Auckland's character and diversity. So many of our suburbs are named in reference to volcanic hills: One Tree Hill, Three Kings, Mt. Albert, and so on. All named after local volcanoes. As well, numerous constructed landmarks are made out of the main product of volcanoes: basalt. A prime example is St. Andrews Church built in 1846. In all, there are approximately 53 volcano sites in the city.</p> <p>There are three main types of volcanic eruptions. The most common is a 'wet' explosion pouring out magma at 1200 degrees Celsius. This leaves a crater and one example in Auckland is the Panmure Basin. The second kind is 'dry' fountaining which traps gas bubbles in its magma, and the third produces a dry 'out-welling' lava flow.</p> <p>The bad news is that there is no pattern for when or where the next eruption might occur. The good news is that there will be small warning surface earthquakes days or weeks in advance. This is being carefully monitored, and we will hear from Civil Defence well in time to know who needs to clear out before activity begins.</p> <p>His book – Volcanoes of Auckland - includes many aerial photos\graphs and how to get to the relevant sites.</p>
<p>SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION</p>	<p>The 2024 Epsom U3A subscription is \$50 per person. This can be paid any time now and is <u>due by 31 March</u>. No cash will be accepted.</p> <p>This should be paid into our ASB bank account – 12 – 3067 – 0204618 – 00.</p> <p>Please enter <u>subs</u> in the "code" section and your <u>name</u> in the "reference" section in order for us to have a record of your payment.</p> <p>As of this February, our numbers have risen to 195, of whom over 60% have paid. [Speakers are given a koha of \$100 which is paid into their bank accounts.]</p>
<p>MARCH MAIN SPEAKER Dr Hoadley</p>	<p>Dr Stephen Hoadley is a veteran academic (University of Auckland), author, media commentator, and public speaker. He has engaged in the Israel-Palestine debate for several decades, not least as a challenge to US & NZ policy.</p> <p>"Israelis, Palestinians, and Hamas: A Clash of Narratives"</p> <p>Israelis and Palestinians see the world in starkly contrasting terms. This talk outlines the two views, putting them into historical and geopolitical perspective. It explores why and how Israel may win the military war but lose the political war. It assesses accusations of legitimacy, legality, war crimes and genocide, and proposals for Middle East peace.</p> <p>Comments and questions are welcome.</p>
<p>INTEREST GROUPS</p>	<p>1 If you no longer want to be in an interest group that you were in last year, you must let the convenor know. It is also courteous to let the convenor know if you can't attend any particular one month meeting, as this makes a difference to catering or trip transport.</p> <p>2 There are a few new members who have paid their subscriptions but who did not fill out a membership form so, without their phone numbers or email addresses, we have no way of contacting them to advise of group meetings or sending newsletters. Please let the co-ordinators, Bill or Joslyn know the contact details if you are one of these people, or remind them if you are a friend of a new member who may have joined in February. Check if they received a newsletter.</p>

	<p>3 All groups are now up and running but with our increase in new members, we would like to start more groups so if there is anyone with a special interest who would be prepared to be a convenor, please contact Joslyn or Bill to discuss the logistics of this. (Ideas: Any branch of Science, Winetasting group, Quiz Group, Writers group, Poetry groups, Photography group, Singing for Fun.)</p> <p>4 Several of our groups have now reached capacity for the size of their venues and cannot take on any new members.</p> <p>5 Some groups can accommodate more participants. Their convenors will be invited to give a five minute presentation of their group during the business part of the Branch meeting. Any convenors interested should contact Joslyn.</p> <p>Thanks, <i>Joslyn</i></p>										
<p>2024 MEETING DATES Thursdays, 10am</p>	<table><tr><td>14 March</td><td>11 April</td><td>9 May</td><td>13 June</td><td>11 July</td></tr><tr><td>8 August</td><td>12 September</td><td>10 October</td><td>14 November</td><td>AGM</td></tr></table> <p>NB Always wear your name badge and be seated ready at 10am</p>	14 March	11 April	9 May	13 June	11 July	8 August	12 September	10 October	14 November	AGM
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OPEN DAY

Monday, 11th March
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WHALES ARE OUR ALIEN NEIGHBOURS

Communication between humans speaking different languages is tricky enough, and that's with us all using the same biological hardware. Alien life could not just have their own language but completely different modes of communication – they might banter by breakdancing, or convey an entire emotional spectrum through the volume, frequency, tone, smell, flavor and density of passing gas.

So how could we even begin to prepare for what might be the most important meeting in human history? Scientists at the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Institute have started by looking much closer to home, exploring how we can chat to the intelligent life we already share the planet with.

Whales are a great starting point – they're very brainy, and have complex social communication systems that could potentially be deciphered through context. As an added bonus, if we offend them the only casualties might be a few more yachts rather than world landmarks.

In August 2021, a team of scientists from SETI, UC Davis and the Alaska Whale Foundation set out to make contact with "non-human intelligence." They recorded calls from a pod of whales, and then the next day broadcast a "whup/throp" – a type of greeting call – out through an underwater speaker to see if anyone would whup or throp back.

And someone did. A 38-year-old female humpback whale named Twain approached the boat, and over the course of 20 minutes had what the researchers describe as a casual conversation with them. The team says it was interactive, because they would play back the recorded call at different intervals and heard Twain respond with the same rhythm.

"We believe this is the first such communicative exchange between humans and humpback whales in the humpback 'language,'" said Dr. Brenda McCowan, lead author of the study.

Intriguing as it is, it doesn't sound like the conversation was particularly exciting. The team only had the one call on hand, and all they could change was when they played it, not the tone or pitch or anything else. As such, they noted the chat went through three phases –

- Engagement, when Twain first heard the call and was responding quickly and enthusiastically
- Agitation, when she was breaching the surface a lot and letting out "wheezy blows" that can express either excitement or frustration; and finally
- Disengagement, when Twain swam off to presumably find someone who could hold a better conversation than just saying "hey" over and over again.

Source: SETI Institute

TRUMP

New research suggests that Trump is one of the main reasons for the sharp increase in negative political language in the United States...

As data scientists, West and his colleagues spent four years collecting a compendium of quotes. By the time they finished their collection, the Trump presidency was over and they had an enormous number of quotes.

The data was put into a collection called and organized into a website Quotebank, which is a publicly accessible search tool that allows others to search keywords for quotes about that word. Focusing just on the U.S., there are 24 million quotes from over 18,000 politicians. It was this data pool that the researchers used to analyze the changing nature of politics in the United States using a tool called Linguistic Inquiry and Word. This tool measured quotes for their tone and content.

The quotes were scored based on whether or not the words in them prompted negative emotions, and when the research was completed, the study's authors found that a spike in the use of negative language followed Trump's entrance into politics." *The tone of US politicians indeed became suddenly and significantly more negative with the start of the 2016 primary campaigns in June 2015,".*

Political debate during Trump's entire term was characterized by a negative tone and the study's authors noted "Trump as a key driver of this development." So just how bad was the former president's influence on political discourse? PsyPost pointed out that when the researchers removed the former president's quotes from their analysis, the rise in negative language dropped by 40 percent, which means Trump almost certainly had a huge impact on turning politics negative.

SOLAR EFFICIENCY

With most of Arizona in a state of moderate to extreme drought, the Gila River Indian Community and the US Army Corps of Engineers have signed a deal to begin a solar-over-canal project designed to cut down evaporation and boost solar efficiency. This is the second US pilot for installing solar panels over canals – Project Nexus is a \$20 million pilot in California's Turlock Irrigation District that launched in October 2022 and is expected to be completed in 2024.

The first phase of the Arizona project aims to build solar photovoltaic shades stretching across the 1-10 Level Top canal for a length of around 1,000 ft (305 m).

The benefits of this simple idea could be significant. Not only will the solar panels generate up to one megawatt of power for the Gila River Indian Community, they'll also provide shade for the water below, helping keep water in the canals rather than letting the baking desert heat evaporate it away. Viewed as a solar farm, it should be considerably cheaper, since no land needs to be acquired.

In a study published in 2021, Bales and his team argued that "covering all 4,000 miles of California's canals with solar panels would save more than 65 billion gallons of water annually by reducing evaporation," while generating up to 13 GW of renewable energy in a distributed fashion that could cut down on transmission losses.

Furthermore, the water will help cool the panels, increasing their efficiency and creating a ~3% boost to power production, according to Professor Roger Bales, who wrote about the California project for The Conversation in 2022.

The new Arizona project is scheduled for completion in 2025.

FIVE MEDIAEVAL MYTHS

- The notion that medieval women remained primarily at home—uneducated, forbidden to work and subservient to men—was not the reality for the majority of the Middle Ages. Female members of nobility, as well as nuns, were often literate and/or acted as land owners, and many women worked as writers, artists and tradespeople. Several women were rulers of empires, including Queen Isabella I of Spain and the Empress Matilda in England. Restrictions on women's work and property rights did start in the last century of the Middle Ages and onwards, but before that, it was common to see women in just about every profession and walk of life.
- It's easy to think of servants in the Middle Ages as being lowly peasants, but oftentimes they were much more than that. Domestic servants were trusted advisors and confidants of their employers (nobility, royalty and wealthy merchants). The highest-ranking servants, like stewards and chamberlains, were often given many privileges and sometimes had the opportunity to rise to positions of power and influence within their households.
- One of the most notable aspects of Viking culture is their horned helmets, but what if we told you there's no evidence they ever wore them? The Scandinavians certainly wore head coverings, but those were much more likely to have been simple skullcaps. No horned helmets have ever been found in any archaeological digs, and there's a very good reason for that. It wasn't until the 19th century that artists first depicted Viking characters with horns atop their head, and they just continued perpetuating the fantasy.
- Given that not even half of Americans own a valid passport, it's pretty rich to assume most medieval people never left their village, and it's not even close to accurate, either. Knights, nobles, merchants and preachers naturally travelled as part of their duties, but even peasants would go on pilgrimages in their country and overseas to visit churches and monasteries.
- The Middle Ages were certainly a high point of influence and power for the Church, but entire populations were by no means completely obedient. First of all, many rural areas were still used to the pagan belief systems of their ancestors, and this dichotomy with an elite urban culture dominated by the clergy was the norm for Christianity throughout the Middle Ages. Indifference to following religious practices and theological debates were more or less as common as today.

SMARTER ANCESTORS?

Neanderthals were gluing handles onto their tools over 100,000 years ago, possibly making the species even smarter than previously thought. Researchers have found traces of bitumen that had previously been overlooked on ancient stone tools. Bitumen can be made from crude oil but it is also found occurring naturally in the ground. The location of the bitumen residue led the researchers to believe that the substance formed a handle that would have made the tools easier to hold and use.