EPSOM U3A Inc.

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Website https://u3aepsom.nz/.

MEETING PLACE
Royal Oak Bowls, 146 Selwyn St, Onehunga
10am on the 2ND Thursday of most months

NEWSLETTER - July 2025

Next meeting
10-12noon
Thursday 10th 2025 July

Greetings to all our members. I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and enjoying what is a magnificent summer for those who have been around Auckland. I'm writing while staying at Tawharanui Regional Park. Wonderful beaches! Noisy birdsong! Pleasant fellow campers and sunny weather Simple living in a camping environment.

As I have just started driving again after knee surgery and travelling in the motorhome I realise how privileged we are to live in New Zealand. From the scenery to the wildlife, it truly is a special place. I feel truly Blessed to be living in this country. This is doubly reinforced growing up in the best time of our country's history as a baby boomer with good food and medicine keeping me in good health. My increasing aging is directly related to being a recipient of good times for humanity. So I feel very thankful for a good life in every way.

But I am saddened at seeing how much we have moved from a 'we' society to a 'me' society. That we don't always welcome new people to our country and that we are very slow at acknowledging and addressing our past history in terms of land and assets. I believe we must do more for our children's and grandchildren's sake. As I grow older I feel more and more committed to work with others to make this country a better place for all future New Zealanders.

So what about you? What are you doing for family and children, strangers and friends? If we don't learn to be more caring in all ways for all parts of this country we will lose the beautiful scenery and see the social scenery getting worse for all people.

So could I suggest that whatever is happening in your life and whatever age you are please make an effort to care for this country. For its scenery, people and a better future for our grandchildren. One of the best things we learned in life is that it is not hard to reach out to others in any way we can. A smile and a few words can make someone's day.

Each month your committee meets and gets through our agenda. These tend to be short and deal with organisational matters regarding the monthly activities of the Epsom U3A

At the end of each meeting one of the things that I ask the committee Is there anything that we could do better or are there different activities or other things we could do? It would seem that both the committee and the membership are happy as to how U3A is going. As an organisation it would seem that we don't need to make any changes. But I do urge you as individuals to do everything in your power to do whatever you are able to and whatever you are doing to provide as much leadership as you can in any direction.

Last week I was talking to my three grandchildren aged between 16 and 21, and listening to them, I can't imagine what sort of jobs if any, they will do in the future. For kids growing up into today's society is not easy. So all we can do is provide as much help within our families in every possible way. Love, care and support are paramount for them to be leaders as they grow and mature. Especially when they want help and a good listening ear So I urge you to do all your can for **your famil**ies and all you can in your communities

EPSOM U3A EXECUTIVE

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Jessie Mraviciich – 022 019 0896
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Interest Group Co-ordinators
Joslyn Squire - 021-168 0680
Bill Hagan – – 021 611 247
Guest Speaker Organiser:
Ian Jost - 027-488 7037
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
Art History
Emily Flynn – 021 0902 5094
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
Shirley McConville – 622 3542
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.
Music Appreciation
Carleen Edwards – 624 6298
19th & 20th Century History
Helen Holdem – 021 260 3510
NZ History
Kaye Buchanan - 620 7572

to make them better places for all of us. We certainly need positive leadership in every way possible in the world at this time.

This is not dissimilar to us as we grow older with the attendant health issues we may have. We must care for ourselves in terms of health and wellbeing. This means we must be positive about ourselves and others. In this report I did give notice to the committee that I would be standing down after two years as President in November. As some of you know, my health has not been easy lately. So I will not be carrying on with the Wellness Group after July and August.

It's winter so please take care of yourselves.

Regards Duncan

Love and care

Duncan

And Philosophy
Jocelyn Hewin - 634-1552
Recreational Drawing
Grant Coupland – 638 7496
Scrabble
Joslyn Squire – 021 168 0680
Te Reo Maori
Jenny Whatman – 027 353 2487
Travel
Diana Hart- 021 284 4402
Walkers & Talkers Group
Don Buchanan ph:620 7572.
Wellbeing for Seniors
Duncan MacDonald – 021 316 661 and
Bill Hagan – – 021 611 247

JUNE SPEAKER REPORT

From the Black Forest to Ponsonby – and On to Cannes and Halle!

By Emeritus Professor Uwe Grodd

In his interesting, well-received talk, interspersed with amusing anecdotes, Professor Grodd reflected on his life in music, crossing continents and cultures.

Uwe was born in the small Black Forest town of Calw and grew up in Stuttgart in a family where music wasn't part of his home life. His father being a survivor of Russian captivity during WW11, wanted his sons to have stable jobs, such as a trade or working in a bank. However, German children learned instruments, played recorders and sang in choirs until their voices broke. Early exposure to Debussy's Syrinx, as leaves swirled in the breeze, made Uwe realise music could tell any story, and captivated by the sound, he began to learn the flute, deciding at age 18 that his life's mission was to be a flautist and a conductor.

In spite of the disadvantages of the era, with Germany still rebuilding its culture after the war, the Berlin State Opera reopened in 1945 as the city lay in ruins and culture was seen as healing and necessary for the populace. To this day, freedom of the arts is enshrined in Article 5 of the German constitution. Uwe was lucky enough to meet Manfred Schreier a disciple of Celibidache, who became his guru and esteemed mentor.

Since 1966, Uwe has recorded 35 CDs for Naxos, from obscure Baroque music to full-scale symphonies. His 2000 recording of Vanhal's symphonies won the best 18th Century Recording at the Cannes Classical Awards and he has focussed on unearthing and recording the works of unique and unknown composers working at the same time as Mozart, Beethoven and Haydn with over 100 works premiered on CDs. This led to an invitation to the prestigious Halle Festival where he conducted a new edition of Imeneo, in the Opera House which employs 500 people and proudly wore a tailor-made suited they gifted to him!

Migrating to NZ as a performer was a bold move, and Uwe settled in Nelson working at the Nelson School of Music, later accepting a teaching position at the University of Auckland. The freshness and openness of NZ was exhilarating, allowing for creative freedom. Uwe then became involved as inaugural conductor for the newly-founded Manukau Symphony Orchestra, and is still in this role as Musical Director. Young players and community musicians were able to experience Mahler, Beethoven and Strauss, playing alongside seasoned professionals. He also conducted the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra and became Musical Director of Auckland Choral in 2008.

Uwe says *" Conducting for me is shared breathing and feeling, not command, but invitation. Once inspired, Kiwi musicians play with tremendous sincerity. Music is a bridge, connecting cultures, generations and hearts"*

Uwe has been active in encouraging young musicians through the Tuakana Mentorship programme, providing scholarships to help young musicians thrive, and mentoring promising singers via Auckland Choral. Professionals, community, young and old help one another to become their best selves through teamwork and performance. He also helped create the doctoral programme DMA at Auckland University and supervises the graduate programme at Canterbury and Waikato Universities.

His expertise, energy and enthusiasm for music are having a profound influence on NZ's music scene and are helping to bring on a new generation of skilled performers to enrich NZ's musical culture.

	Listening and You Tube excerpts to view: 1 **Schubert** – Am Lindenbaum https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uTNrwcdZY0&list=PLKq64tL0GeMH6RIVL2xDUBjsjfaxlfQkU dex=5 2 **Sergiu Celibidache** Viola! Viola! Viola! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xrwo5pn4RMk 3 **David Hamilton**: Manukau Songs: A Choral Symphony – trailer 4 **Johann Baptiste Vanhal**- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlJc_aBgJfI& list=PLfPZvIvKEmV2sM32X58t9Yusp41avHPf2 **5 Minuetto** (Top of th NZ charts for 3 months) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlJc_aBgJfI&list=PLfPZvIvKEmV2sM32X58t9Y usp41avHPf2
SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION	The 2025 Epsom U3A subscription is $50 per person This should be paid into our ASB bank account – Payee: U3A EPSOM INCORPORATED 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. We currently have 194 members.
JULY SPEAKER **CHARLOTTE TAYLOR** on "Cornwall Park's Landscape Heritage."	Charlotte is the manager of the Events and Exhibitions Programme at Huia Lodge Discovery Hub in Cornwall Park. Huia Lodge is the welcoming heart of Cornwall Park. Nestled in the heritage precinct, it connects visitors with 425 acres of living history through engaging exhibitions, hands-on displays, and free community events. It administers the park's layers of ecology, agriculture, heritage, and community life where people are invited to explore, learn, and feel part of its living legacy. She will describe how the past has shaped the landscape you see today and talk about the enduring vision of Sir John Logan Campbell and landscape architect Austin Strong, who imagined the park as a 'rus in urbe' — a countryside within the city. She will reveal how two 100-year masterplans have guided the park's design, preserving its rural character while creating a space for all New Zealanders to enjoy.
INTEREST GROUPS	• Any Interest Group Convenors who need to use the club's data projector should contact Kaye Buchanan – ph 620 7572. • The Fabric and Fibre Craft Stall. The group participants are producing a great array of items for sale at the September Branch meeting. • The new Applied Science group will be starting on Wednesday 6th August, 10-12:00pm located at the Deaf Society in 16 Hillsborough Rd, Three Kings. The 4 sessions this year will start with an introduction to Applied Science and follow with the group interest in looking at specific areas listed. Applied science refers to the practical application of scientific knowledge and the scientific method to achieve specific goals, often with technological or commercial implications. It contrasts with basic research, which focuses on expanding theoretical knowledge. Applied science encompasses a wide range of disciplines and areas, including engineering, medicine, and various technological fields, such as food, textiles, wool, wine, coatings, audio, optical, construction etc……..This group is for those people who are interested in knowing how science has a direct effect on our standard of living and lifestyles. Please contact Bill Hagan if you are interested in joining this group. • The Wellbeing for Seniors group will terminate following the August meeting. Duncan feels unable to continue as Convenor so Bill will assist in running it till then. We will have a guest speaker at the 16th July session from the Retirement Village sector who will give some background on what is on offer in our area, and also take any questions about their particular

	service, including some tips to help the people who are interested to make the right decision for them. Bill will also show a short YouTube clip introducing Prof. Ngaire Kerse's (School of Population Health, U of Auckland) longitudinal study LiLACs (Life & Living in Advanced Age) to give some background on her talk to us at the August session. • The Final Well-being Session will be on August 20th. Prof. Ngaire Kerse will discuss some of the unexpected lessons of aging well from the findings so far in the LiLACs study, in particular regarding how neuroplasticity is a factor. Please let Bill know if you want to join this session with the group.
INVITATION TO ATTEND	**U3A Meadowbank Winter Series 2025** **Book now, and bring a friend, or two.** When: Wednesdays the 9th, 16th and 23rd July 2025, 1 – 3 pm Place: St Chads Church, 38 St Johns Road, Meadowbank Presenter: Dr Gay Williams Topic: Artificial Intelligence Cost: $50.00 for three sessions Including: Afternoon tea **Topics include :** -The history of AI -AI applications -AI use in everyday life -How AI could be used by U3a groups -AI terminology and stories demonstrating the use of AI -Safety and security when using AI -Possible future uses of AI -Resources **Bookings:** Book by paying $50.00 for each attendee to the U3A Meadowbank bank account Kiwibank account number 38-9014-0359752-00. Enter "winter series" and your name as reference for the transaction.
2025 MEETING DATES Thursdays, 10am	10 July 14 August 11 September 9 October 13 November AGM **NB Always wear your name badge** and be seated ready at 10am

BELIEVE IT OR NOT…

New Zealand - Where Every Breath Feels Like Pure Mountain Water ©wikimedia

New Zealand consistently ranks as having the world's cleanest air, with PM2.5 levels averaging just 5.7 micrograms per cubic meter according to 2024 IQAir data. The country's geographic isolation, minimal heavy industry, and strong environmental regulations create an almost surreal breathing experience.

Wellington and Auckland regularly record air quality readings that would make residents of polluted cities weep with envy. The nation's commitment to renewable energy sources means 84% of electricity comes from hydro, geothermal, and wind power, dramatically reducing air pollution from fossil fuels. Trade winds from the Southern Ocean sweep across the islands, naturally filtering the atmosphere and maintaining pristine air quality year-round.

India - Delhi's Toxic Air Apocalypse ©wikimedia

Delhi stands as one of the world's most polluted cities, with PM2.5 levels regularly exceeding 400 micrograms per cubic meter during winter months in 2024-2025. The city's air pollution crisis has reached such extreme levels that doctors now recommend wearing N95 masks outdoors year-round, not just during the pandemic.

Crop burning in surrounding states, combined with vehicle emissions from over 12 million registered vehicles, creates a toxic soup that reduces visibility to mere meters during peak pollution periods. Children in Delhi show lung development equivalent to those who smoke cigarettes, according to recent medical studies conducted by the Indian Institute of Technology. The situation becomes so dire during winter that schools frequently close, flights get cancelled, and the government declares public health emergencies with alarming regularity.

JEANETTE'S JOTTINGS

SELF-DENSIFIED WOOD

While sustainably-grown wood can be an economical and eco-friendly building material, its relatively low tensile strength limits its potential applications. That could soon change, however, thanks to a new self-densifying technique for creating super-strong wood. Individual wood fibers are made up mainly of cellulose, along with a binder material known as lignin. This mixture forms the wall of what is essentially a long hollow tube – the fiber – which runs lengthwise within the larger piece of wood. The hollow space inside the tube is called the lumen, and it is what limits wood's strength.

A team from China's Nanjing University recently set out to address that shortcoming, by developing the new process.

It begins by boiling a block of wood in a mixture of sodium hydroxide (lye) and sodium sulfite, removing some of the lignin. That block is then immersed in a heated blend of lithium chloride salt and a solvent known as dimethylacetamide. This causes the cellulose (and remaining lignin) to swell, expanding inwards to fill the lumen. In a final step, the processed wood is left to air-dry at room temperature for 10 hours. As it does so, it uniformly shrinks inwards from all sides, but maintains its original length.

The resulting material is claimed to exhibit "ultra-high" tensile strength, flexural strength, and impact toughness – much more so than natural wood. It even surpasses wood which has been compressed by traditional methods, in which the fibers are just mechanically flattened in one direction. And unlike other methods of uniformly densifying wood, it doesn't require an energy-intensive hot-pressing process.

It is hoped that once the technology is developed further, the self-densified wood could be used as an alternative to traditional metals in building construction and other possible applications.

Source: Journal of Bioresources and Bioproducts via EurekAlert

NEWLY DISCOVERED ANTARCTIC CURRENT

The discovery of an ocean current slithering under the icy realm of Antarctica will revolutionise our understanding of the frozen continent and its impacts on global climate…. The discovery was made possible through advanced satellite technology and sophisticated oceanographic instruments that penetrate the icy veil. By understanding these hidden currents, scientists hope to unravel more mysteries about the continent's role in global ocean circulation…The formation of this hidden current is a fascinating tale of nature's ingenuity. It begins with the melting of ice, driven by both natural and human-induced factors. As the ice melts, freshwater is released, creating a unique blend with the salty ocean water. This delicate dance between fresh and saltwater sets the current in motion

Ocean currents are the Earth's natural climate regulators, distributing heat and influencing weather patterns. This newly discovered current beneath Antarctica plays a vital role in this global system. It carries cold water from the icy continent into the world's oceans, impacting sea levels and temperatures. Understanding its dynamics is crucial for predicting future climate scenarios and preparing for their impacts…**B**eneath the ice, a hidden world thrives. The discovery of this current offers new insights into the Antarctic marine ecosystem. It affects nutrient distribution, influencing the food chain from microscopic plankton to larger marine animals. This current is a lifeline for many species, and understanding its role is essential for conservation efforts in these fragile environments.

In conclusion, the discovery of a hidden ocean current beneath Antarctica is a groundbreaking achievement in oceanography and climate science. It offers new insights into the complex interactions between the Earth's oceans and climate, highlighting the importance of continued research and international collaboration. As we deepen our understanding of these hidden currents, we gain valuable knowledge for addressing global environmental challenges and protecting our planet's future.

LITTLE LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein is the fourth smallest country in Europe and the sixth in the world. It lies along the banks of the Rhine between Switzerland and Austria but has managed to stay neutral (and thereby avoid losses) in both world wars. However, the story of the last 80 guards of the Liechtenstein army from the Seven Weeks War of 1866 is famous for two reasons - first, they did not have a single casualty, because they avoided all wars. Second, although they went to the front line with 80 soldiers - they returned home with 81. Although the army was prepared to carry out its duties - to protect the territory from possible attacks by the Italians - actually they did not need to do anything except to sit on the beautiful mountains - drink wine and enjoy cigarettes.

However, the Prussians won and Liechtenstein's soldiers returned home. But when they returned – there was one more – the 81st soldier came back with them. – but has never been positively identified. None of the various accounts of his origin have been confirmed, but neither have they been denied.

Meanwhile, Liechtenstein has managed to become a small but very successful country that even though it has not had an army since 1866, is thriving - being one of the few countries in the world with more registered companies than citizens.

PLASTIC ROADS

The innovative idea of building roads from recycled plastic is not just a trend; it's a transformative approach to tackling two global issues at once: waste management and infrastructure development. This unique solution is captivating the minds of environmentalists, engineers, and everyday people alike…

Plastic roads offer a myriad of environmental benefits that make them an attractive option for countries committed to sustainability. Firstly, they significantly reduce the amount of plastic waste that would otherwise end up polluting the environment. Moreover, these roads are often more durable and require less maintenance than traditional asphalt roads. This longevity reduces the need for frequent repairs and the associated environmental impact. Furthermore, the production process of plastic roads consumes less energy compared to conventional methods, leading to a reduction in carbon emissions. Together, these benefits make plastic roads an eco-friendly alternative that aligns with global efforts to combat climate change…

Traditional road materials can be expensive, and their price is subject to market fluctuations. In contrast, recycled plastic is often more cost-effective due to its abundance and lower production costs. Countries that have adopted this technology have reported savings in both initial construction and long-term maintenance. Additionally, the use of local plastic waste stimulates economic growth by creating jobs in recycling and road construction industries…

Some countries are experimenting with fully plastic roads, using specially designed interlocking tiles that can be easily replaced or recycled. Countries like the Netherlands and India are leading the charge in the development of plastic roads. One of the primary concerns is the potential release of microplastics into the environment as the roads wear down over time. This issue requires further research to develop methods to mitigate microplastic pollution. Additionally, the quality and consistency of recycled plastic can vary, posing challenges for engineers to create a uniform product. Regulatory hurdles and public scepticism also present obstacles to widespread adoption.

EARTHQUAKE EXTREMES

The Japanese government has issued an urgent warning over the catastrophic damage which could be caused by an impending megaquake.

Experts now believe there is an 80 per cent chance of a magnitude nine tremor occurring in the Nankai Trough off Japan's Pacific coast within the next 30 years. New government estimates show that this disaster would kill 300,000 in the worst-case scenario. This includes 215,000 deaths caused by tsunami waves exceeding 30 metres (98ft) in some areas.

The Nankai Trough is a deep ocean trench formed by the boundary of two tectonic plates, which is hit by a megaquake once every 100 to 200 years. In the deadliest scenario, the report predicts that 2.35 million buildings would be destroyed by collapses, flooding, and fires. The destruction would cause damage worth £1.44 trillion (214.2 trillion yen) and create 12.3 million evacuees. That is the equivalent of displacing 10 per cent of the Japanese population within a week of the earthquake.

DRONE DEFENCE

The British Army has successfully tested a Radiofrequency Directed Energy Weapon (RF DEW) that took out multiple swarms of drones simultaneously and near instantaneously using high-frequency radio waves at a cost of 10p (US$0.13) per shot. Drones are becoming a major factor in modern warfare as well as a growing potential hazard to civilian air traffic. In 2024 alone, Russia launched 18,000 drone attacks against Ukraine and the Bard College's Center for the Study of the Drone claims that there were 241 near collisions between drones and civilian aircraft last year in the US alone.

The problem with drones is that many variants are very small and cheap and can be launched in swarms that could potentially overwhelm or evade conventional air defence systems. One approach to countering these swarms is to use directed energy weapons to attack all the intruders at once instead of one at a time.

Developed as part of Project Ealing, the £40-million (US$53-million) RF DEW can engage multiple drones at a range of up to one kilometer (0.62 miles). Unlike other systems, it doesn't jam the drone's control signals. Instead, it counters the threat by firing a blast of electromagnetic radiation that scrambles or fries the drone's delicate electronics and sensors, neutralizing it almost instantly. By doing so, it can act as a significant layer in defending military installations and civilian airports from drone threats.

In addition, the system is highly automated and requires only one person to operate it from a wide variety of platforms, including trucks and armored vehicles.

It was built by a consortium of the British Ministry of Defence's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S), and industry partners including Thales UK, QinetiQ, Teledyne e2v, and Horiba Mira under the umbrella name of Team HERSA. During the latest tests in West Wales, the RF DEW took out two drone swarms at once, taking out 100 drones in the course of the trials. Source: Ministry of Defence.