EPSOM U3A Inc.

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

NEWSLETTER
August 2025

Next meeting 10-12noon Thursday, 14 August 2025

I am writing this Epsom u3a newsletter on a very wet afternoon. After being in hospital at the beginning of July, I have not felt well. So I guess this is what you call being melancholy and not being my usual bright cheery self. It is at these times I look to find good places and spaces to share my melancholy. I rely on family, friends and positive people to be with me on a journey to wellness and health. I need to draw deeply from relationships and involvement with others just as we do with u3a as we embark on a program of new learning.

At the u3a gathering last Saturday I learned about periodic tables with no science, dealing with dementia as we grow older, growing up on the West Coast, safe preparation of food as well as living in Northern India in the 60's.

What humanity and new knowledge have you learned about recently? Some things for me have become very important. These include: a strong desire to be loved and cared for, to be a close friend for others on an end journey, to have friends there when I need them and for myself to realise that life is a series of bumps and bruises as well as plain sailing. But also being there for them when they need me. So perhaps what is most important is what people can expect from us. Good behaviour, good listening and good care. Sometimes trying to line up your life can be difficult but it is the sweetest reasonableness we can and do change, that helps us on our journey with others.

So as we learn about our world and the body of human knowledge the most important learning is about human relationships where hopefully we move away from me and mine to yours and ours.

So, as you grow older and learn more, may you grow wiser and care for those near and dear to you.

Blessings

Duncan

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INTEREST GROUP CONVENERS

Applied Science
Peter Parsons - 021 521446)
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
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
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.

JULY SPEAKER REPORT

Charlotte Taylor is the Events and Exhibitions Manager for the Cornwall Park Trust Board and is based in the Huia Lodge Discovery Hub, a building well-known to many in the audience.

She gave an overview of the history of the Park, beginning with its purchase by the then Mister John Logan Campbell in 1853. He was born in Scotland and arrived in New Zealand in 1840 via a short period in Australia and set up a successful trading business with William Brown from a warehouse in Shortland Crescent (adjacent to the first site of Acacia Cottage). He was impressed by the volcanic cones that were visible around the developing city and formed a plan of how the lands might be best used.

Following a period of some years involvement in business and public affairs he was in a financial position to purchase the One Tree Hill Estate(the origins for the name are many and varied)with the aim of creating a "rus in urbe", an area of countryside to contrast with the encroachment of expanding urbanisation (sound familiar?). With the assistance of an American architect, Austin Strong, a design was agreed upon, based on the existing Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

Logan Campbell did not live on the estate until many years later and it was intitially leased to market gardeners and cattle farmers. Grape vines and olive trees were planted but these ventures were unsuccessful. However the first of the stone walls that we see today were formed from the materials onsite and planting for the familiar treescapes of Twin Oak, Pohutukawa and Grand Drive began. This was part of Logan Campbell's One Hundred Year Plan in order to maintain the historical integrity of the land

Logan Campbell married in 1858 and spent some years travelling around Europe before returning to NZ with his wife and their two daughters in 1871. But his wife did not want to live on the estate ("it was too far from the city") despite a plateau having been cleared for construction of a house. This is the site which is now occupied by Huia Lodge and, later the tearooms/Bistro. Huia Lodge was built in 1903 as a caretaker's Lodge and tearoom for visitors to the park.

Sir John always intended that the land should remain accessible to the people of Auckland and a formal "handing-over" ceremony occurred in 1901 during the visit to NZ by the Duke and Duchess of York and Cornwall, (hence the change of name). Acacia Cottage was moved to the park in 1921 from its site in Shortland St and then to its present position in 1950.

Following Sir John's death in 1912 the Cornwall Park Trust Board took over responsibility for the One Hundred Year Plan and worked to fulfill the aim of providing a "rural respite" within the city.

During the following decades many in the audience remembered using the park and particular features such as the siting of the American Field Hospital during WW2, (to the left of the Greenlane Rd entrance), and the existence of two golf courses until that same time. More recently a children's playground, the Stardome Observatory, Sorrento event venue and the café and public BBQs, near the band rotunda, have continued to attract Aucklanders of all ages.

In the early 2000s a second One Hundred Year Plan was begun with the redesign of the gardens surrounding the fountain and statue of Sir John in the area known as Campbell's Crescent which fronts Manukau Road. Interestingly, this was the original "entrance" to the One Tree Hill Estate. Planting or replacement of trees is an ongoing objective with the new stock propagated from onsite varieties, where possible, and allowance made for natural ecosystems to develop.

Estate governance is now shared between the Tupuna Maunga Authority and the Cornwall Park Trust Board since 2014.

At present there are three farmers living and managing stock on the site ("farming" was a requirement of Sir John's Deed) and income for the Trust comes from livestock sales and the endowment land (leasehold properties on the perimeter of the park). Work to make Cornwall Park a pest-free "Halo" is ongoing.

Public use of the park spaces continues to grow and use of the many walking tracks and roads is encouraged by an emphasis of the needs for parking, pedestrians and cycling. Charlotte confirmed that the present restrictions of "through traffic" would remain. And that there have been increased efforts to restore the "Springtime Daffodil Display" in Twin Oak Drive!!

We were reminded to watch out for notifications of the many walks and displays that Charlotte and her staff organize to make sure Sir John Logan Campbell's legacy remains available to the people of Auckland.

An enthusiastic round of applause and thanks for an entertaining presentation brought our July meeting to a close.

SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION	The 2026 subscription fee will be ratified at the AGM which will be held in November. Current paid-up members should wait until the completion of the AGM before paying the 2026 subs 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.
AUGUST SPEAKER	Our speaker for August is Dr Julian Paton, professor of physiology at Auckland University's Liggins Institute, NZ's foremost medical research centre. Julian will present his recent 'Drive4Hearts' experience – (https://www.justgiving.com/page/drive4hearts) which was a ~2,000 km charity road run in a 77 year old Land Rover that has been described as: 'an epic journey from Dunedin to Auckland, traversing some of New Zealand's most beautiful countryside whilst making a tangible difference to children's lives through heart research.' He will explain why the funds raised are critically important to prevent the unnecessary deaths in Kiwi kids with rheumatic heart disease. To this end, he will introduce a novel idea to make the world's first growing, living heart valve. Julian was born in Somerset, England, and studied at the University of Birmingham, UK (BSc, 1984) and University of London (PhD, 1987), EI Dupont de Nemours (USA), University of Washington, Seattle (USA), and as an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Göttingen (Germany). In 2017, he transferred to the University of Auckland as a strategic hire where he directs a multi-disciplinary research programme involving basic and clinical scientists with the aim of finding novel clinical therapeutic approaches (repurposed drugs and devices) for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. He is Director of University of Auckland's Manaaki Manawa – the Centre for Heart Research that is uniting discovery and clinical scientists across the region. He is chief scientific officer for Ceryx Medical – a spin out company testing a new cardiac pacemaker, which he invented. Julian has trained 28 PhD students and published 460 scientific papers. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 2022. He was awarded the Vice Chancellor research excellence medal in 2022, and won the Sir Peter Gluckman research excellence award in 2024.
INTEREST GROUPS	• 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 first session, convened by Peter Parsons, will start with an introduction to Applied Science and follow with the group interest in looking at specific areas listed for the remaining 3 sessions of the year. Please contact Peter Parsons - 021 521446 -if you are interested in joining this group. • The **final Well-being for Seniors** session will be on Wednesday August 20th, 1:30-3pm located at the Deaf Society in Three Kings. We are fortunate to have Prof. Ngaire Kerse from the Centre for Co-Created Aging Research at the University of Auckland to discuss some of the unexpected lessons of aging well from the earlier findings from the LiLACs study and continuing collaborative research on dementia. Her topic will be how neuroplasticity is a factor in fostering well-being. All members are welcome to attend. Please let Bill Hagan know if you are able to come.
2025 MEETING DATES Thursdays, 10am	14 August 11 September 9 October 13 November AGM **NB Always wear your name badge** and be seated ready at 10am

FAMILY HISTORY EXPO	Auckland Family History Expo 2025 Tāmaki Huinga Tātai Kōrero The New Zealand Society of Genealogists and its interest group the Genealogical Computing Group proudly present a weekend-long event covering a wide range of topics on researching genealogy and family history. Join us on Friday 8 August to Sunday 10 August 2025 at the Fickling Convention Centre , 546 Mt Albert Rd, Three Kings, Auckland. • Friday 8 August 1pm-4pm: Pre-Expo AI Workshop $40 per person - Ancestors Intelligence - Using AI for Family History with Fiona Brooker. Discover how artificial intelligence can support your family history research. In this hands-on session with genealogist Fiona Brooker, learn how to use AI tools to analyse documents, organise your research, and turn your findings into compelling family stories. Bring your laptop along. • Friday 8 August 5pm-8.30pm: Opening event $40 per person to cover catering expenses and TWO keynote speakers. 5pm: Meet and greet reception. Refreshments and canapes. 6pm: Keynote 1: Welcome address. Topic - The "Getting it Right" photos with Sarah Hewitt, chair of the New Zealand Society of Genealogists. Who are the people in the photos that introduce the NZSG's Getting It Right videos? Genealogy without Borders with Chris Paton, Scotland's Greatest Story. Irish born Chris Paton As family historians, we can be tempted to try to tell the stories of our ancestors solely from the resources in the areas where they once lived, but in this talk, genealogist Chris Paton examines why the consideration of the extended family around the world can be particularly fruitful for your family history research also. As part of a wider worldwide diaspora, Chris will show how emigrant family members provided him with clues to their stories overseas, often with records that plugged the missing gaps in research for family members back home, and giving him a much broader understanding of his family at both home and abroad. • Saturday 9 August 2025: $5 door charge. • Sunday 10 August 2025: $5 door charge. Those booking both Friday events get free entry to the Expo on Saturday and Sunday on presentation of their tickets. Take advantage of our free seminars, from beginner to advanced, computer-based tutorials, ask-an-expert sessions and research assistance on Saturday 9 August and Sunday 10 August. No booking required. Bring your laptops to take full advantage of the workshops and tutorials. Speakers and sessions • Awesome international speakers appearing in-person at the Expo. • Fabulous local speakers. • Plus many speakers from our favourite family history Vendors. • Please keep checking the New Zealand Society of Genealogists website for updates. Full programme to come soon. Venue information Fickling Convention Centre is adjacent to Three Kings Reserve and has some on-street parking on Mt Albert Rd and in side streets. If you are able-bodied we suggest public transport or street parking in surrounding streets. This multi-functional venue is wheelchair-friendly and has accessible toilets. Over the weekend there will be a coffee van with snacks onsite. There are a couple of cafes and a supermarket nearby, but you may wish to bring a packed lunch with you. Raffles: Three tickets for $5 – prizes include subscriptions to your favourite genealogy websites, DNA kits, magazine subscriptions, membership fees, and research tools and services.

JEANETTE'S JOTTINGS

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE BLACK DEATH

The Black Death was a bubonic plague pandemic, which reached England in June 1348. It was the first and most severe manifestation of the second pandemic, caused by Yersinia pestis bacteria. The term Black Death was not used until the late 17th century. Low estimates of mortality in the early 20th century have been revised upwards due to re-examination of data and new information, and a figure of 40–60% of the population is now widely accepted.

The high rate of mortality among the clergy naturally led to a shortage of priests in many parts of the country. The clergy were seen to have an elevated status among ordinary people and this was partly due to their purported closeness with God, being his envoys on earth. However, as the church itself had given the cause of the Black Death to be the impropriety of the behaviour of men, the higher death rate among the clergy led the people to lose faith in the Church as an institution—it had proved as ineffectual against the horror of Y. pestis as every other medieval institution. The corruption within the Catholic priesthood also angered the English people. Many priests abandoned the terrified people. Others sought benefits from the rich families who needed burials. The dissatisfaction led to anti-clericalism and the rise of John Wycliffe, an English priest. His ideas paved a path for the Christian reformation in England. Some people did not lose their Christian faith, if anything it was renewed; they began to long for a more personal relationship with God—around the time after the Black Death many chantries (private chapels) began to spread in use from not just the nobility, but to among the well-to-do. This change in the power of the papacy in England is demonstrated by the Statutes of Praemunire.

By targeting frail people of all ages, and killing them by the hundreds of thousands within an extremely short period of time, the Black Death might have represented a strong force of natural selection and removed the weakest individuals on a very broad scale within Europe. In particular, given that reproductive-aged individuals with relatively high frailty (i.e. an individual's risk of death relative to other members of the population were more likely to die during the Black Death than their age-peers with lower frailty, the epidemic might have affected genetic variation with respect to disease susceptibility or immune competence and thus, acted to reduce the average levels of frailty in the surviving population. This might explain why, according to historical documents, medieval plague mortality declined steeply between the initial outbreak in 1347–1351 and the second outbreak in 1361 and why mortality levels remained lower in subsequent plague outbreaks throughout the medieval and early modern periods.

SOLAR FARMS CAN STILL BE FARMS

Research into 124 UK solar farms found that they were collectively home to around 7,500 birds across 94 species – a fifth of which are endangered "Red List" species such as nightingales, skylarks and yellowhammers. Almost 3,000 butterflies and bumblebees were recorded at these sites, comprising 29 different species, along with eight species of mammal including water voles, common shrew, roe deer and brown hare.

A study by Cambridge University and the RSPB in February found that: "solar farms managed with nature in mind have nearly three times as many birds compared to nearby arable farmland…There is a growing body of evidence to show that solar farms have the potential to provide renewable energy and support farmland wildlife…In the right location and when managed with wildlife in mind, solar farms can deliver meaningful benefits for farmland species, particularly in intensively farmed landscapes where nature is often depleted. By creating much-needed habitats such as hedgerows and wildflowers, solar farms can provide food and shelter for farmland species as well as decarbonising our energy network…

Other solar farms are also starting to use the areas beneath solar panels to graze sheep and other livestock and Craig Bennett, chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts, says there is scope to use solar farms to help restore degraded peatland.

ANTARCTIC ACCUMULATION

The scientific community has been left stunned by the abrupt turn of events in Antarctica over the past few years. After more than twenty years of steady ice loss, the Antarctic Ice Sheet (AIS) surprised experts by gaining about 108 gigatons of mass per year between 2021 and 2023.

This unexpected growth was pinpointed through advanced satellite measurements, revealing that the ice was piling up fastest in East Antarctica's Wilkes Land-Queen Mary Land region. Such a reversal is nothing short of astonishing, especially given the continent's notorious track record for melting and shrinking. The main driver behind this sudden buildup appears to be a spike in precipitation, translating into heavy snowfall and new ice accumulation. This welcome but puzzling change has even managed to slow global sea-level rise, trimming it by roughly 0.3 millimeters a year. However, leading scientists urge caution, warning that this rebound could be fleeting and should not be mistaken for a permanent shift.

In stark contrast, West Antarctica continues to show signs of stress and instability. Glaciers like Thwaites—often called the "doomsday glacier" for its potential impact on sea levels—remain in a precarious state. This striking difference between East and West Antarctica highlights just how complicated and region-specific the climate's effects can be.

OUR ANCESTORS USED SUNSCREEN

New research from the University of Michigan suggests that during a cataclysmic polar reversal around 41,000 years ago, our ancestors might have used clothing and sunscreen to survive harmful solar radiation. Meanwhile, Neanderthals didn't seem to get to grips with these innovations and faded out around the same time… Archaeological evidence from the dating sites reveals a boom in the use of caves and tailored clothing, indicated by bone needles and awls. These clothes would have not only trapped warmth but also blocked harmful rays, allowing Homo sapiens to forage farther from their shelters… More interestingly, the use of red and yellow ochre pigments turned up more frequently. Ochre, composed of iron oxide, clay, and silica, is more than just cave-art paint. When ground and applied to the skin, it functions effectively like a mineral-rich sunscreen… this study simply offers a novel hypothesis to help explain what happened around 41,000 years ago that led to the rise of Homo sapiens and the decline of Neanderthals.

The study was published in Science Advances.

MAGNA CARTA

In an extraordinary revelation, researchers have confirmed that a document owned by Harvard Law School, long thought to be a mere copy of the Magna Carta, is in fact an exceedingly rare original from the early 14th century. When Harvard Law School acquired the document in 1946, it was regarded as a simple copy. Adjusted for inflation, the purchase price of $27.50 equates to just over $470 today. The true rarity of the piece went unnoticed until recent analysis by British historians and experts in medieval manuscripts. The document has now been identified by experts from King's College London and the University of East Anglia as one of only seven surviving copies issued by King Edward I in 1300.

The Magna Carta, originally sealed in June 1215, is considered one of the most influential documents in history. It established the ground-breaking principle that even the king and his government were subject to the law, a foundation that shaped constitutional law and democratic ideals worldwide.

Professor Vincent referred to the Magna Carta as *"a totem of liberty, central to our sense of who we are: a freedom-loving, free-born people."* This Great Charter influenced key historical texts such as the US Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, making it an enduring symbol of justice and human rights.

King Edward I issued a final, slightly revised version of the Magna Carta in 1300, known as the Confirmation of the Charters. This reaffirmation marked the last full issue of the document and stands as a crucial milestone in the legal and political traditions of the Western world.

Researchers observed that the document's dimensions match those of the six other known originals from Edward I's 1300 issue. The handwriting exhibits distinctive features, such as the large capital 'E' beginning the word 'Edwardus' and elongated letters in the first line, which align perfectly with other verified copies.

MARS – HERE WE COME

A U.K.-based space propulsion startup has unveiled an ambitious concept for a nuclear fusion rocket that may dramatically shorten the journey to Mars. In a recent video presentation, Pulsar Fusion showcased its Sunbird Migratory Transfer Vehicle, a next-generation spacecraft powered by dual direct fusion drive (DDFD) engines.

The Sunbird rocket, according to Pulsar Fusion, is designed to achieve speeds up to 329,000 miles per hour (or over 529,000 kilometers per hour), a velocity that would make it the fastest self-propelled object ever engineered. This leap in speed is made possible by nuclear fusion, the atomic reaction that powers stars, including our own Sun. The company estimates its DDFD engines could produce exhaust speeds of approximately 310 miles per second, or 500 kilometers per second — a significant upgrade from the chemical propulsion systems in use today.

A video released by the company illustrates the Sunbird undocking from such a station, using its eight thrusters to carefully attach to a larger spacecraft, resembling a SpaceX Starship upper stage, before igniting its engines and heading for distant planets.

Though the concept is visually striking and technically promising, Pulsar Fusion acknowledges that much development remains. The company plans to demonstrate essential components of the fusion power system later this year. Full in-orbit tests are targeted for 2027, marking a bold deadline for achieving sustained nuclear fusion in space. If successful, it would mark a major milestone in both aerospace and energy technology.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH…

Growing old isn't a punishment, nor a decline. It's a luxury not everyone has.