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

June 2025

Next meeting
10-12noon
Thursday 12 June 2025

Seasons / Changes

If we were in the USA we would be talking about an Indian summer - especially colour, bright red and yellow leaves with cooler nights to bring on the colour and gentle warm days with a soft breeze. Sounds wonderful.

This is what we are currently having in New Zealand. But on the news today we've learnt that temperatures are dropping with snow here or coming to the South island. Just as we experience all kinds of weather as we live out our lives on planet Earth and live and dress and act accordingly, so to our very lives and existing endeavours go through these seasons and changes.

Sometimes we can control them or are in control of most things that a affect our lives as we grow older. But there are always things that we are not in control of; including people, events, activities, family change, finances, worries and health. So how do we cope in these changing seasons as we get older. We seem to be less and less in control. Hence health, worry, isolation, loneliness mean we become part of the worry brigade. 'Things aren't like the good old days.'

Our lives do not have to be like this. We are responsible for ourselves in all ways. Health, life, activities, relationships. We do this in the following ways by owning all our behaviours, thoughts, feelings and actions. When we do this we leave the worry brigade and our world view changes. We become positive people, alive and well, participating in our community. As we age we know that our health and existence is directly related to our socialisation. IE we spend time with others.

So what is essential? Good family relationships even in separated families, close and dear friends who are with us on life's journey especially at end times. It is ok to be alone but as we age it is not ok to be lonely. So let's reach out through activities, people and events and connect with others.

Your Epsom U3A does present this. People want to learn, grow and develop and try new things. Most people need and want a good life balance with a healthy mixture of doing and being. They want to be a useful contributor in their community. Helping, volunteering and being creative. At our U3A we should be proud of what we are doing with nearly 200 people sharing their wealth of experience, learning , history and being ith other members.

So make friends, do something new, be creative and joyful knowing that you are not alone. So here's a little test. Check out with friends to see what kind of person they think you are. Listen and act on their response.

Duncan

EPSOM U3A EXECUTIVE

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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
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.
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.
Wellbeing for Seniors
Duncan MacDonald – 021 316 661

MAY SPEAKER REPORT	U3A Epsom's guest speaker in May was Duncan Garner, well-known over the last thirty years in NZ as a broadcaster, TV and radio journalist, a parliamentary reporter and writer for the NZ Herald and the Listener magazine, as well as currently producing a regular podcast and receiving cheques from You Tube. His speech was entitled "How did we ever lose Paradise, and is it possible to get it back? He complimented the U3A audience on being interested and aware, while putting forward his own strong opinions on the state of NZ society at present and the possible reasons for this. He began by giving background of his own Gisborne upbringing and why he was motivated to become a journalist from an early age, studying at AUT in Auckland. He was then sent to Taranaki, came back to Auckland, and moved on the Wellington Parliamentary press gallery as six weeks "punishment", but ended up staying there for 18 years. Journalism was very different then, with no internet and modern media. At the age of 38 he came back to talk-back on Auckland's Radio Live. Journalism is suffering huge change at present having lost $200million in the last year and 600 jobs have disappeared in two and a half years, with the rise of so many media platforms and the increased costs of production. Problems Duncan Garner believes are causing NZ great challenges include: -Change that began in 1975 with the Treaty negotiations, as full and final settlements and which are causing NZ to pay a huge price financially. These are still not resolved. -Immigration policies that will cause one million new people to arrive in the next 10 years, without carefully pre-selecting for the skills we need, and building the infrastructure and housing we require. - Ambiguity on safety laws which are exposing young people to dangers on the internet and pornography, inducing addictive behaviours and brain change. This is leading to young people being insecure, not thinking for themselves and relying on phones and digital platforms for interactions, reducing their abilities to communicate and participate in the real world. He noted that more time is spent on phones and screens than at school. Work ethics are suffering and many young people want instant gratification without putting in the work. Duncan noted that 20,750 Pacific people come to NZ each year to pick fruit and do seasonal work as NZ citizens will not do the work and our hospitals could not run without immigrants as so many trained skilled NZ citizens are leaving to work overseas.(80,000 in the last year) - 23.1% of young people are unemployed in NZ or on benefits and this is a total waste of their abilities which will affect society in the future. It also wastes the money spent on their education. The 221,000 people in NZ on Jobseekers' benefits, should be required to upskill and work, as in Australia. -Corporates are following PC policies due to pressure from minority groups who have more power than their numbers, due to MMP. Some groups are being openly defiant and separatist, creating divisions in society. -Our education system is demanding too much of teachers without support. (eg. being expected to deal with special needs students and ESOL needs of immigrants while teaching a full class of mixed abilities in an era of constantly changing curricula.) -National Superannuation is increasingly taking more of our money and the age of access needs to lift to make it more affordable, as people are living to healthier old ages and are working for longer. -No allowance has been made for population growth and changing demographics in government policies. -We are a low saving country and have poor statistics for cancer treatment and the availability of modern drugs. Drug and alcohol addiction are causing many people to be lost to the workforce. Duncan believes the answer for NZ is better government and policies that support New Zealanders. People need to be less apathetic and get involved in political parties, to demandpolicies that meet our needs , rather than to curry favour to appease minorities or to get elected. Conclusion: It must be made clear that these are the speaker's personal opinions and the U3A audience may not necessarily agree with some or all of the speaker's ideas. Some questioners at the conclusion, would have liked more positive ideas about what we can do about the problems raised, to make NZ regain its perceived Paradise, even if in a changed iteration. In spite of the problems, we still have much to be grateful for.
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 191 paid up members.
JUNE SPEAKER	Our June guest speaker is Emeritus Professor Uwe Grodd, a truly modern Renaissance man who is a flautist, conductor, music director, recording artist, researcher and editor of 18th and 19th century music and a strong believer that music enriches and supports well-being. To this end, he encourages and supports community involvement in his concerts and the mentoring of young musicians. His unique teaching style has led to great success for many of his students. He is

	currently conductor of Auckland Choral and the Manukau Symphony Orchestra and has travelled the world performing, conducting and also editing and recording previously unrecorded works for Naxos. Uwe was born in Stuttgart, Germany, later moving to the Black Forest area, where as a young person he played recorder, sang until his voice broke then became entranced with the flute and conducting. He arrived in NZ in 1983 and was based in Nelson where he conducted the Radio NZ Chamber Orchestra at the Nelson School of Music. He then moved to Auckland University where he taught flute while retaining his connections with Europe, attending masterclasses, and entering competitions. Uwe's dynamic and energetic commitment to his musical ventures has enhanced the quality of performance of major orchestral and choral works in NZ and he has been a strong supporter of NZ singers, musicians and composers, including NZ works in his concerts, while also using his overseas connections to engage major artists for his concerts. We are very lucky to have Uwe, as his expertise and enthusiasm have greatly enhanced our NZ music scene and hopefully will continue to do so for many years to come.
INTEREST GROUPS	Science Group – The establishment of this new group is progressing well, and it will commence in August.
SPEAKING OPPORTUNITY	As we all know, the guest presenter is the centrepiece of our monthly meetings. The address by this speaker who has specialist knowledge or interest in a particular subject is generally well received. But such expertise or talent is not limited to our guests. We, in the audience, also have an enormous amount of talent, know-how and wisdom. We have been formed by a lifetime of experiences and activity that have made us interesting. We should share our stories with each other. At our March meeting next year, we propose the following: instead of one guest speaker, we will have four speakers from our own membership. Each speaker would speak for roughly fifteen minutes (maximum) on any topic at all – whatever interests that person, be it something from his/her past, their own field of expertise, hobbies, work, sport, personal achievements, anything. We, as a group, have a lot to offer each other. This sharing of a part of ourselves can be great fun and a really good way of getting to know each other better. I know March seems like a long way away but we're just floating an idea. If it gets good support, we might well bring the date forward. If you're interested, email our speaker coordinator, Ian Jost, (ianmarionj@gmail.com). You don't have to have everything completely thought out. At this stage, you can just express an interest. We'll discuss in a bit more detail at our next meeting. *Jessie Mraviciich*
2025 MEETING DATES Thursdays, 10am	**12 June** 10 July 14 August 11 September 9 October 13 November AGM **NB Always wear your name badge** and be seated ready at 10am

JEANETTE'S JOTTINGS

WILL WAVES WORK?

Covering 71 per cent of the Earth's surface, oceans are one of the world's most valuable and yet largest untapped renewable resources. Ocean wave energy is immense, with a huge contribution to make to the clean energy transition. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), ocean power generation needs to grow by 33 per cent per year to achieve a net-zero world by 2050.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that wave energy could generate up to 29,500 TWh per year. That's nearly ten times Europe's total annual electricity consumption, and more than the global annual electricity generated in 2018.

The wave energy converter device was inspired by the human heart. Heart specialist Dr Stig Lundbäck was inspired by the pumping of the human heart to co-found Swedish wave energy company CorPower Ocean in 2009. Through years of hydrodynamic research, the company developed 'CorPack' - a gigantic buoy made from durable, lightweight materials that converts the movement of waves into clean and stable electricity.

Similar to the heart's use of hydraulic pressure to pump blood in one direction, CorPack works by applying tension on itself to pull the buoy down, while the waves push it up. The wave motion is turned into rotation, which is then converted into electricity by generators. The wave energy converter's mechanism enables a large amount of energy to be harvested using a relatively small and low-cost device, a CorPower Ocean spokesperson explains.

They say the converter is able to deliver more than five times as much electricity per tonne of equipment compared with previous state-of-the-art wave energy.

BEAVER BUILDS

A family of beavers made global headlines earlier this year when they built a dam exactly where authorities had been planning one in Czechia, saving taxpayers around CZK 30 million (€1.2 million).

Officials in the Brdy Protected Landscape Area, 30km southwest of Prague, got the permit for the project on a former army training site years ago. Their aim? To stop acidic water from two ponds spilling over into the Klabava River, which carries critically endangered crayfish. It was bogged down in bureaucracy as military and Vltava River Basin authorities wrestled over land ownership. But the beaver colony cut through that red tape almost overnight in January, damming the river and turning the area into a wetland with pools and canals…

Beavers certainly have an innate knack of finding the best spots for their dams in the wild, however. McCandless points to the example of a nature reserve in Scotland where they made a dam at the exact right 'pinch point' to manage water levels. It was better situated than a sluice that had been put in at a less ideal place to keep costs down.

Another remarkable instance of beavers lightening the bureaucratic load and saving taxpayer money occurred in the German town of Winzer. After suffering from severe flooding for many years, particularly in 2013, the local government decided to build a dam in the waterway flowing into the small Bavarian town. But before they could get to work, a beaver family moved into the forest at the head of the waterway. By building dams in the forest creeks, they slowed the flow of water to such an extent that the government didn't need to proceed with some of the hard-engineering work. Just one beaver family saved Winzer an estimated €30,000…

In Essex, for example, a beaver family released into a 40,000 square metre enclosure on an estate in 2019 has stored roughly 3 million litres of water in ponds. This has helped reduce the impact of drought and flooding, including for the downstream town of Finchingfield.

It is one of numerous positive examples that resulted in beavers being included in the Environment Agency's Natural Flood Management plan for the first time last month.

Beavers are now a protected species in England 400 years after they were hunted to extinction!

SOLAR FILM

Since 2012, UK-based Power Roll has been working on a way to print low-cost solar film to generate clean energy from sunlight. It's now one crucial step closer to manufacturing its lightweight, apply-anywhere film, with a new design for its perovskite solar cells that should make make production cheap and scalable. The big deal about its product is that this solar film is awfully light and easy to apply. That means you can install it on all kinds of surfaces including non-loading bearing rooftops, transport it to remote areas that need accessible options for generating electricity, and hopefully, blanket many currently unproductive buildings and spaces with it so you've got many more sources of clean energy to supply the grid.

CARBON LOW CONCRETE

Researchers have found a way to take waste concrete from demolition sites and turn it into fresh new concrete that has a strength not seen before from such a product. hey took existing concrete waste and pulverized it, turning it into a fine powder. Then they cooked it at 932 °F (500 °C), which is about a third the temperature needed to create the original batch of concrete. They found that this temperature was high enough to dehydrate the cement powder while not being so hot that it destroyed the carbonate components it contained, which would cause the release of CO2.

When they used the new "thermoactivated" cement to make new concrete, they found that it was simply not strong enough due to the fact that it was more porous than regular cement. The solution, they found, was to add about 20% of finely ground fresh Portland cement or limestone to the mix. This filled in the pores and created an end product on par with current industry standards.

The researchers estimate that the new material could cut emissions from the cement industry by up to 61%. They note that their cement produces between 198 and 320 kilograms of carbon dioxide per metric ton, resulting in emissions up to 40% lower than even those of limestone calcined clay cement (LC3), a commercially available low-carbon alternative.

"Construction waste typically ends up either in a landfill, or, if it's recycled, will be used in low-grade applications such as in pavements or in soils," said research leader Sérgio Angulo, from USP*. "It's exciting to show that we can, in fact, recycle this recovered cement waste into a high-quality application."*

Source: Princeton Engineering.

PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS NOT NEW

A study published in the journal Antiquity suggested an ancient South American civilization spiked a beer-like drink with psychoactive drugs as a way of maintaining social cohesion and forging new bonds with surrounding communities. The findings offer some of the clearest archaeological evidence demonstrating how ancient civilizations used psychoactive substances for recreation and social cohesion.

The Wari civilization flourished in the Peruvian Andes from about 500 to 1000 CE. The current research arose from archaeological findings at a Wari outpost known as Quilcapampa. Excavations revealed evidence the Wari were brewing large quantities of a beer-like drink known as chicha. The alcoholic beverage is common to a number of ancient civilizations in the region, however, spiking it with a hallucinogenic substance is unusual.

Alongside evidence of the plants used to brew chicha, the excavations revealed traces of vilca seeds. These seeds are known to contain a psychoactive substance called bufotenine. Traditional uses of vilca generally involve either smoking or inhaling the powdered seed. But curiously, no smoking or snuffing paraphernalia was found at the Quilcapampa site. Instead, the traces of vilca were detected near signs of chicha brewing. There are anecdotal accounts of vilca being added to beverages but this is the first archaeological evidence to indicate the hallucinogenic substance was consumed in an alcoholic drink…

Many ancient uses of hallucinogenic substances were consumed by a select few in any given community. Drug use was often ceremonial with strong spiritual foundations. Here, the Wari were seen to be using the hallucinogenic beer as part of large social events. The presence of the vilca-spiked beer, particularly at the Quilcapampa outpost, suggests it was used to forge strong social connections with outlying communities. Perhaps as a way to expand the Wari empire without military force?... Wari feasts certainly had social, economic and political motivations. Providing neighbouring communities with these kinds of psychedelic-charged experiences creates a powerful dynamic that can indebt guests to their host.

POWER PROSPECTS

Researchers in Denmark have set a new world record in efficiency for converting sunlight into electricity by using new windows that allow light to pass through while simultaneously generating power.

The transparent solar cell technology could provide a breakthrough for renewable energy by transforming skyscrapers and offices into power plants, using their windows to become solar panels.

The innovation from the CitySolar project could also help Europe meet its ambitions to make all new buildings nearly zero energy and fully decarbonise the European building sector by 2050. The researchers from the University of Southern Denmark combined organic solar cells with the material perovskite, which saw an efficiency of 12.3 per cent, which is on par with commercial solar cells.

The international team say the panels also have a transparency of 30 per cent. Until now, transparent solar windows have not been able to absorb enough energy to be able to generate the amount of electricity needed for a building and the panels have previously not been transparent enough for use…The large glass facades found in modern office buildings can now be used for energy production without requiring additional space or special structural changes... This represents a massive market opportunity.

. When added to the organic solar cell, the perovskite layer absorbs near-ultraviolet light and the cell absorbs near-infrared light. The tandem solar cell mainly harvests energy from the infrared and ultraviolet parts of the sun's rays, but not from visible light. This then allows the light from the visible spectrum to pass through while leaving the visible spectrum relatively untouched. Furthermore, the two materials used in the cells are highly affordable and could be scaled for commercial deployment.