

# **OUR FIRST TWENTY YEARS**

**1991 - 2011**

## THE ORIGINS OF U3A

The University of the Third Age originated in France, where the first Université du Troisième Age (UTA) was formed by the University of Toulouse in 1972. The name refers to the concept of the First Age, childhood and education, followed by the Second Age, professional and family development and involvement, and then the Third Age, when the demands of the Second no longer define one's life and the person is enabled to pursue freely chosen interests. In the French model, committees of retired people negotiate with a university to provide facilities and expertise.

In 1982, Peter Laslett, recently retired as Reader in Social Structure at Cambridge University and one of the instigators of the Open University in the 1960s, turned his interests to practical means of bettering the life of the elderly. He considered the French UTA as a means of continued intellectual growth for the retired, but rejected its dependence on university staff and facilities. Retired people, he contended, have a wealth of abilities, knowledge, and experience and are quite capable of directing their own continued development. With Michael Young, a co-instigator of the Open University, and Eric Midwinter, Peter Laslett developed a model of a University of the Third Age based on eight Objects and twenty Principles for U3A (for an abridged and modified version see the inside back cover). By the time of his death in 2001, U3A in Britain had 472 branches and more than 112,000 members.

The first U3A in New Zealand was formed in Remuera in 1989, inspired by returning travellers who had become acquainted with the movement in Britain and Australia. Dr John Stewart, the founding President of U3A Remuera, was instrumental in encouraging the formation of U3As in Takapuna and Epsom. An Auckland Network was formed in 1993, enabling U3As in the region to exchange ideas and encouraging the formation of additional U3As. At present there are 22 U3As in the Auckland region, and a total of 46 in the North Island. U3As in the Wellington area were initiated by Age Concern organisers and some follow a different model from most of the North Island U3As. U3As in Christchurch and Otago grew out of Continuing Education departments in universities and there are now 18 U3As in the South Island.

Dr David Cole of U3A Remuera has published two editions of *U3A in Auckland*, which give more details of the history and activities of U3A, including the results of surveys in 2003 and 2007 of the activities of Auckland region U3As.

***In T H White's The Once and Future King, the boy who is to become King Arthur is sad because his foster brother Kay is to be knighted and he is not. Trying to disguise his feelings, Arthur goes to the wise old Merlin, who tells him "The best thing for being sad is to learn something. That's the only thing that never fails. You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you."***

### **U3A COMES TO TAKAPUNA**

On an overseas trip in 1990, Sylvia Arcus, a member of a North Shore family of long standing, heard about U3A in a casual conversation, and was immediately intrigued by the idea of a group where older people could continue learning in a supportive group environment. On returning to New Zealand, Sylvia learned that a U3A had been formed in Remuera. Soon the Remuera group was contacted and representatives agreed to help with forming a group on the Shore. John Stewart and several others came to a meeting in Takapuna on 5 June 1991 and explained the philosophy and operating principles of their U3A. The North Shore group agreed to adopt Peter Laslett's precept: "Those who teach also learn, and those who learn also teach." The learner-teachers would meet mostly in members' homes, studying mainly academic topics, but with considerable flexibility. A steering committee was formed with Sylvia Arcus as President and June Castle, Secretary. In addition to Sylvia and June, the Committee, as listed in the March 1992 Newsletter, consisted of Ken Adams, Kyle Bamford, Peter Austwick, and the Conveners of the Study Groups.

The inclusion of Study Group representatives was intended to facilitate communication between the groups and the committee. As the number of groups increased, having a representative of each group attend Committee meetings became unwieldy and the Committee took on the present structure of constitutional officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) and other members with defined responsibilities. At the July 1992 AGM a Committee of four officers and seven other members was elected. Membership increased rapidly, rising to 92 in June 1992, less than a year after formation.

Foundation President Sylvia Arcus attributes the continuing success of U3A Takapuna to the autonomy of the groups, to the fact that from the earliest years both men and women have taken active roles, and to the practice of allowing anyone 'to have a go' at convening a group, rather than relying on finding people with formal qualifications.

Perhaps all this could be summed up in the words of a song from the 1995 Christmas Extravaganza, written by the Drama/Music Group, Rhys Johns and Patricia Climie, conveners:

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|--|--|
| 1 The people of North Shore<br>They formed a small club<br>And residents came from afar<br>They wanted to start up<br>A school for the aged<br>So looked at, ----Remuera                               | 3 The History society<br>Was first off the blocks<br>It grew and it grew, and it grew<br>Till all of a sudden<br>One day it did burst<br>And it spawned the three other<br>ones too  |
| 2 It all started in View Lounge<br>The members were few<br>But they multiplied madly in clones<br>The news spread, the fame spread,<br>The hall was too small<br>But meetings were had in<br>the homes | 4 So if you feel lonely<br>Or jaded and dull<br>Just join and investigate all<br>You will never be sorry<br>You've made the new friends<br>And the days they will never<br>more pall |

## STUDY GROUPS—THE LIFE AND SOUL OF U3A

From the beginning, everyone realized that the study groups are the foundation of U3A. At the first meeting with “missionaries from Remuera”, according to Foundation Member Don Collin, six to eight subjects were suggested, and six groups were formed, four of which are still active. In 1992 and 1993 the number of groups increased by 50% to nine; 1994 saw a further 45% increase to 13. At present in 2011 there are 35 groups, although at one time there were over 40. Over the years there has been a total of 70 groups. Perhaps it is good to begin by tracing the conveners and the histories of the six foundation groups.



**Original Ancient History Group.** L-R Barbara Thesiger, Don Collin, Alan Gales, Eleanor Markwick, Jocelyn Dye, David Johnston, Matt Ramsden

**Ancient History:** Don Collin, the first convener of this group, continued until he moved to Christchurch in 2003, where he also organized an Ancient History group. Frank Rickman continued through 2010, succeeded by Stephen Warnes. Don remembers “leading U3A personalities in the group”: David Johnston,

Brian Clark, Frank Rickman, Robert Bann, and Peter Austwick. He attributes the survival of the group to “an appetite for knowledge about early civilisations, not well served by schools; they did lay the foundations for our own [civilisation].”

**Modern History:** Colin Brightwell was the convener for the first year, followed by Janet Wright, Colin Climie, June Castle, Graeme Leaming, Kyle Bamford, Roger Gill, Elaine Taylor, George Stevenson and John Willmott. This group became too large to meet in members’ homes and

rather than restrict the numbers, a room was rented sufficient to accommodate all. For most years since 2000, the group has studied one topic for the first meeting in the month, and another for the second meeting, with a different leader for each. A mostly democratic process has been followed in selecting and developing the topics.

**English (Creative Writing and Poetry)**, Malcolm Sinclair led this group until he and Betty moved to Christchurch in 1996. Malcolm was



**Sunday Expeditions at Ardmore**

succeeded by Holly Morton, who continued as convener until 1998. In 1996 another Creative Writing group called Writers Too was led by John White. This group continued through 2001.

**Psychology:** Jack Elmsley was the convener for about two years, when the group

went into recess. In 1994 Bernard Flower, a psychology graduate, revived the group as Psychology/Philosophy, but it ceased to exist in 1997.

**Languages:** The first notice announced a language group, but it immediately took up the study of French, with Jim Moody as Convener, followed in 2005 by Ann Andreassend. A German group soon formed, led by Cornelia Wadham until 1998, then Ray Evins, and Adrian Geers in 2009, and Peter Robinson in 2011. Frank Rickman established a Spanish group in 2007. Several have expressed an interest in Italian, but to date no one has been found to act as a tutor.

**Travel:** David Johnston first convened this group in 1991, followed in subsequent years by Connie Courtney, Sandra Moody, Alex and Mary Wilkinson, and Jocelyn Spinley who has continued from 1998 to the present. The group features talks and discussions about their intrepid

journeys, as well as talks from people outside the group who have had significant travel experiences.

Judging by the number of different groups offered, **History and Politics** has been the most popular topic area. Two of our four continuing foundation groups have been in that category, and twenty-six groups have existed at one time or another. Nine are offered at present. Fraser Campbell convened sixteen study groups in medieval, renaissance and early modern European history over the period 1994-2011. (Not all at the same time of course, but for two years (1999-2001) he convened four groups simultaneously with unflagging energy and enthusiasm.) Fraser's groups have differed from most others, in that a group usually completes a two-year syllabus and then disbands. Another topic is announced and a new group, often with many members from the former one, takes it up.



History of Ideas Group, 2004.  
Mary McGreal, Annette  
Kibblewhite, Warwick Elley

The next largest category could be labelled **Arts and Literature**, which has included eighteen groups over the years. **Languages** have included French (a foundation group), German, and Spanish. Twelve groups fit into the category of **Interest Groups** from Chess through Finance and Investment to Petanque and Mah Jong. Travel (foundation group) and Sunday Expeditions have catered to an interest

in visiting various places, whether internationally or in New Zealand. Current Affairs luncheon groups have been very popular, and Cabbages and Kings members speak of many things for five minutes each. Jim Hopkins led a photography group from 2000-2007. Interests in **Science** led members to Geology, Scientific Horizons, Natural History, and Anthropology (People of the Planet). A History of Ideas group, originated by Fraser Campbell and now led by Alick Kibblewhite, discusses ideas in a number of fields. Fraser convened a second

History of Ideas group which morphed into History of Political Theory, then to Political Themes and Scenes.

U3A Takapuna has been fortunate to have a large number of people who have been willing and able to convene groups. Some have had university-level experience in the fields covered by their groups; some have had little or no education at university level, but have put their energy and enthusiasm to good use in convening groups. (For the most part, the following list was compiled by examining the first and last newsletter of each year. The Editor apologises for any errors.)

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>CONVENER(S)</b>
Ancient History	Don Collin, 1991-2003; Frank Rickman, 2003-2010; Stephen Warnes, 2011—
Architecture	Gwen Bartley, 1999-2001; Ella and John Ikin, 2003-2005; Judy Hanna, 2006-2009; Diana Wallis, 2010—
Asian Studies	David Johnston, 1996-2006; Georgie Maurice, 2007-2009
Authors & Writers	John White, 2002-2004; Maggie Brown, 2005-2007; Nola McRae, 2008-2009
Books to Read and Enjoy	Nan Keall, 1998-1999; Leslie Christie, 2000—
Cabbages & Kings	David Johnston, 2009—
Chess	Ian Sutherland, 2000-2001; June Castle, 2002-2003; Jan Jupp, 2004—
Chinese Painting	Doreen Brown, 1998—
Classical Opera	Mary Skyring, 2009—
Classical Studies	Jocelyn Dye, 1995-1997
Comparative Religion	Bernard Flower, 1992; Marcus Cohen, 1997; Jean Holm, 1998-2007
Computers	Ken Adams, 1995
Creative Writing	Malcolm Sinclair, 1991-1996; Holly Morton, 1996-1997
Current Affairs: Stirrers	Fay Houlden, 1997-1999; Vern Pribble, 2000-2001; Edith Sharrock, 2002—



Current Affairs: Opinionated People	Fay Houlden, 1997-1999; Vern Pribble, 2000-2001
Drama Appreciation	Rhys Johns, 1994-1999; Marie Hay, 2000-2003; Margaret Tranter, 2004-2007
Early Modern Europe	Fraser Campbell, 1997-2001
Early Modern European Studies	Fraser Campbell, 1999-2001
Embroidery	Norah Turnwald, 1999—
English Literature and then Modern English Literature	Annette Kibblewhite & Jean Pugh, 2007-2008; Jean Pugh & Marjorie Warwick, 2009-2010; Marjorie Warwick, 2011—
Famous & Infamous	Doreen Jones, 2001-2002; Alison Brown, 2004-2007, 2009; Helen Howley, 2008—
Film Appreciation	John Hall, 2005-2006; (No convener identified for most of 2007); Mary Skyring, 2008-2009; Muriel Leith, 2010—
Finance & Investment	Ian Sutherland, 1998-2001; Murray Haslett, 2002-2010; James Laird, 2011
French	Jim Moody, 1991-2004; Ann Andreassend, 2005—
Gallery Visiting	Three groups in 1995-1997, with several conveners
Geology	Tom Turnwald, 1992—
German	Cornelia Wadham, 1992-1997; Ray Evins, 1998-2008; Adrian Geers, 2008-2010; Peter Robinson, 2011—
Globalization	Roger Gill, 2004—
Great Artists	Gwen Bartley, 1992-1996; Diane Turner, 1997-2002; Val Kivell, 2003-2007; Jennifer Knutsen, 2008-2010; Lesley Smith, 2011—
Great Artists 2	Fay Bennett, 1995, 2005; Gwen Bartley, 1996-2001; Ann Outwin, 2002-2003, 2008-2009; Marianne Dryfhout, 2004; Joy Gibson, 2006-2007
High Medieval Europe	Fraser Campbell, 2005-2006
Historical Studies	June Allen, 2001-2002; Andrew Pack, 2003—
History of Ideas A	Fraser Campbell, 1999-2001; Nelson Tolerton, 2002-2003; Alick Kibblewhite, 2005—

History of Ideas Alpha	Fraser Campbell, 2002-2003
History of Political Theory	Fraser Campbell, 2005-2006
Horticulture/Garden Group	Dilys Gill, 2004-2005; Heather McDonald, 2006-2010
Human Behaviour	Patricia Milson, 1998-2000
Italian Language & Culture	Roger Brebner, 1996
Late Medieval & Early Renaissance Europe	Fraser Campbell, 2007-2008
Local History	Val Shaw, 1993-1995; Mac Williams, 1996; Max Farquharson, 1997-1999, 2003; Val Rounthwaite, 2000-2001; Brenda Knight, 2002
Mah Jong	David Johnston, 1997—
Making History	Georgie Maurice, 2010—
Medieval History A	Fraser Campbell, 1994-2001
Medieval History Alpha	Fraser Campbell, 1995-1998
Medieval Life	Priscilla Lowry, 2009; Heather McDonald, 2009—
Modern History	Colin Brightwell, 1991; Janet Wright, 1992-1993; Colin Climie, 1994-1995; Roger Gill, 1995, 1999; June Castle, 1996-1997; Graeme Leaming, 1997-1998; Kyle Bamford, 1999; Elaine Taylor, 2000; George Stevenson, 2001-2003; John Willmott, 2004—
Music Appreciation	Phyl Wiltshire, 1992-1993; Shirley Sadlier, 1994-1995; Patricia Climie, 1996-1997; Ross Familton, 1998-2011; Jennifer Knutsen, 2011—
Musical Studies	Patricia Campbell, 1998—
Musical Troubadours	Betty Dance, 2001—
Natural History	Peter Austwick, 1997—
New Zealand History	Fraser Campbell, 2005-2006
NZ People & Places	Max Farquharson, 2004-2009
NZ Historical Geography	Fraser Campbell, 2007-2008
People of the Planet	Fay Houlden, 2003-2008; John Jarvis, 2009; Bob Baird, 2010—
Petanque	Jim Moody, 1995-2004; Helen Stoddart, 2005-2006

Photography	Jim Hopkins, 2000-2007
Poetry	Holly Morton, 1998-2003
Poetry II	Shirley Sadlier, 1999-2001; Dilys Gill, 2001-2005; Holly Morton, 2007—
Political Themes and Scenes	Fraser Campbell, 2007—
Psychology/Philosophy	Jack Elmsley, 1991-1992; Bernard Flower, 1994-1997
Renaissance Europe	Fraser Campbell, 2002-2004
Saxons to Saxe-Coburg	Wally Cook, 2002-2008
Scientific Horizons	Barton Evans, 2003-2008; Graham Alcock, 2009—
Seventeenth Century Europe	Howard Pugh, 2005-2006
Spanish	Frank Rickman, 2007—
Stage Hands	Brian Clark, 1998-1999; Frank Rickman, 2002-2007; Sylvia Davies, 2008-2009; Vern Pribble, 2009
Sunday Expeditions	John White & Doreen Brown, 1996-2000
Technology	Vic Hargis, 1996-1998
Theatre Games	June Allen, 2003-2004
Travel	David Johnston, 1991; Connie Courtney, 1992-1993; Sandra Moody, 1994-1996; Alec & Mary Wilkinson, 1997; Jocelyn Spinley, 1999—
Tudor & Stuart Britain	Fraser Campbell, 2002-2004
War & Warriors	June Castle, 2005-2006
Writers Too	John White, 1996-2005

## THE GENERAL MEETING

The monthly general meeting affords an opportunity to interact with members outside one's own group or groups and to be stimulated by speakers in a variety of fields. The General Meeting was held at the St George's Presbyterian Church Hall in Takapuna for the first year, moving to the Takapuna Methodist Church Hall in August 1992, then to the St John Ambulance Building on Shea Terrace in September 1993.

By the beginning of 1994, the membership had increased to 126 and the lecture room in the St John Ambulance Building was no longer adequate. A working group led by David Johnston, Treasurer, recommended the Northcote Citizens' Hall, which has housed the General Meeting since that time. The membership eventually exceeded the 190 limit of that Hall, but, as the committee realised that it would be extremely unlikely that all the members would attend any one general meeting, the membership limit was raised to 320, and the hall has been adequate since that time. This venue has the advantage of having a stage, a piano, kitchen facilities, a lounge for morning tea, and ample parking, as well as a reasonable hire cost.

Morning tea is an important feature of any New Zealand gathering, and U3A Takapuna is no exception. Almost from the beginning, study groups have been rostered to organize morning tea. For several years Toni Coombes took overall responsibility for catering, but in recent years a member of the Committee has taken on that role. For the first ten years, glass mugs were used to serve morning tea and coffee. Although reusable mugs were agreed to be the most environmentally sustainable, those on morning tea duty often missed the first part of the main speaker's presentation and some members felt that hand washing of cups might not be hygienically sound, nor was the space available to store the cups. Toni Coombes used to take all the cups home, wash them and bring them back for the next meeting, a big task as the membership continued to grow. After much discussion, the Committee decided to trial Styrofoam cups in 2002. The disposable cups worked well, and the glass cups were disposed of near the end of that year.

The monthly meeting from the beginning featured a main speaker, often a well-known person who was an authority in a particular field. The first recorded main speaker at a monthly meeting was Gordon Dryden, writer and broadcaster, in September 1991. Often speakers have been university staff members, mostly from Auckland University, Massey University at Albany, and AUT. Two who come quickly to mind

are Professor Richard Faull, of Auckland University Medical School, an internationally respected researcher in neuroscience, who spoke on The Human Brain, and Dr Marilyn Waring, now of AUT, who spoke on New Zealand's aid programme in the Pacific. We have had a speaker who told us of his work with St John Ambulance, another speaker who spoke about the planning and construction of the Orewa-Puhi section of SH1, and Precious McKenzie, a champion weightlifter, who gave us insights into his unusual life story. Once or twice a year a member of our own U3A has been the main speaker. To mention only a few: Howard Pugh, Priscilla Lowry, Roger Gill, and John Watt have given several excellent talks; and Lionel Izod gave, on separate occasions, a fascinating presentation on the Bayeux Tapestry and a subtly witty account of his early life. For the February 2009 meeting, the programme featured as speakers three members, Alick Kibblewhite, Peter Jenkins and Charlene Cordes, who each spoke for about thirty minutes on aspects of Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln, both born on 12 February 1809.

Mini-speakers for the monthly meeting were introduced in 1992; Jack Elmsley was the mini-speaker at the September 1992 meeting, and the mini-speakers became a permanent feature of the meeting from March 1993 when Tom Turnwald, convener of the Geology group, was the speaker. The tradition has been that the mini-speaker is a member of U3A Takapuna, who speaks for about 20 minutes immediately before morning tea. Mini-speakers are often relatively new members, who thus become known to other members and more quickly become a part of the group. In addition, when long-time members speak, we may discover new facets of people whom we have known for some time.

Many talks benefit from visual aids, and for years there was a struggle to make visuals available for the general meeting. An overhead projector was purchased and on several occasions there was talk of purchasing a slide projector, which did not occur. Instead, various members provided slide projectors of varying capabilities, but there

were always problems with the projector, the screen, and the interaction between the two, not to mention the varying skills of the projector operators. As time passed and technology evolved, more and more speakers wanted to use PowerPoint presentations. Most could bring their own computers and projectors, but several could not. In 2006 President Howard Pugh successfully applied to the Lion Foundation for a grant to purchase a notebook computer and projector. Having this equipment available has added much to the talks at the general meeting. John C.B. White operates and stores these.

The first available committee minutes, for the 16 September 1991 meeting, record a complaint about the acoustics in St George's Presbyterian Church Hall, where meetings were held in the first year. The combination of poor acoustics in public venues and the acoustics of elderly ears has been a persistent problem and a frequent topic of discussion at Committee meetings. Over the years audio equipment has been borrowed and purchased. For a number of years, Alan Gales operated the sound system, which evolved to include multiple microphones, including lapel microphones. After Alan retired from this responsibility Adrian Geers, Tom Turnwald, and Gary Dimmock continued with this work, with Barry Hartley as the current audio technician. When the sound system needed to be replaced, Norman Lodge as President in 2007 applied for another grant from the Lion Foundation, which allowed the purchase of a modern sound system.

Book sales were held before the General Meeting in June 1996, April 1997, April 2000, April 2001, and May 2003, organised by Maureen Thoms and her teams of helpers. Funds raised at the first two Book Sales were designated for the U3A Takapuna general fund, but the proceeds of the last three were donated to the North Shore Hospice, amounting to several hundred dollars each time. The 2003 sale raised over \$700 for the Hospice, helped greatly by a generous donation by Betty Coates of many of her books, as well as a large number from the library of her late husband.

Although the book sale has not been held since 2003, the Bring-and-Take table at each of the General Meetings serves to recycle books and is always the centre of attraction as people gather for the meeting. (Sometimes to the displeasure of the President, who finds it hard to lure members away from the book table!)

## **THE NEWSLETTER**

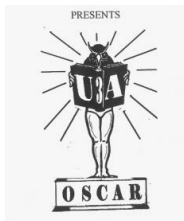
The importance of a newsletter was realized early in the life of U3A Takapuna. The earliest newsletter in the files is dated September 1991. The August 1991 meeting was announced in a flyer aimed at prospective members, giving background information about U3A, listing the initial six study groups, announcing the subscription (\$35 single, \$60 double), and including a short membership application. Early newsletters included a report on the previous meeting, speaker information for the upcoming meeting, news from the Committee, and news from the groups. The owl logo first appeared on the newsletter in April 1993. David Johnston had suggested a logo for our U3A; and Jocelyn Dye, who likes owls, designed one which, converted to a horned owl, became the official logo. The owl, supposed to be wise and intellectual, makes a fitting symbol for our group.

Apparently for the first few years the compilation of the newsletter was the work of the Secretary, although by 1995 June Mackley was listed as in charge for newsletter distribution, while Joan Austwick, Secretary, was collecting and compiling information. After Joan's time as Secretary, a separate role of Newsletter Editor was established. Joan developed a format for the newsletter which was followed by Robert Bann from June 1997 through 2002, with Malcolm Bailey filling in during July-December 1999 while Robert took a much-deserved break. The newsletter was published as A4 sheets until 1993, when David Johnston as Editor proposed, and the Committee agreed to, a format of an A5 booklet. David continued as Editor until May 2010, when Phyl McArtney assumed this role.

## THE END OF YEAR FROLIC

Learning should always include times of fun and fantasy, and that need is certainly met in U3A Takapuna. A highlight of each year since the early 1990s has been the end-of-year frolic and lunch.

In December 1994, the Medieval History group (Fraser Campbell, convener) presented a “Christmas Confection”, featuring a pageant in appropriate costumes, with members of the Art, Music, Modern History, and Writers groups sharing Christmas reflections by the famous and yet to be famous. Food and light music added to U3A Takapuna’s first Christmas celebration.



For 1995, there was an “Extravaganza”, with a bring-a-plate lunch arranged by Group Leaders. This meeting was the first to be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday, to allow for the lunch, as another group had priority after noon on the first Wednesday. For December 1996 Fraser and Frank Rickman organised “The Frankly-Fraser Show”, advertised as “a hodgepodge of shockingly under-rehearsed but zestfully spontaneous brilliance-a merry and unforgettable gallimaufry of five key ingredients (group items)”. This description bears evidence of Fraser’s inimitable exuberance! A shared luncheon followed. In 1997 the event was billed as a “Christmas Party”, with a catered lunch. In subsequent years the programme followed the same format. The December 2003 newsletter referred to the programme as the “Oscars” and featured a logo by Jocelyn Dye.



Maureen Pribble gives advice at 2002 Oscars

OSCARS is an acronym, for which various explanations have been offered. The one given in the 2004 December Newsletter is **O**utstandingly **S**electd Sketches, Sounds,



Songs, **Cleverly** Created/Compiled by **An Agile and Artistic Assembly** and **Rumbustiously Rehearsed—Star-Studded Seniors...Simply Superb.** Whatever the derivation, the OSCARS were an admirable showcase for the talents and creativity of our witty and erudite members at their best.

The OSCARS were written, produced and performed entirely by members of U3A Takapuna. Imaginative costumes, attractive scenery, clever scripts, and lively songs gave pleasure both to those who produced them and those who provided that essential for an excellent performance, an appreciative audience. Sixty-two people are listed as being involved in the 2006 OSCARS, some in multiple roles. This figure does not include those who helped in serving food and wine for the lunch, setting up and decorating tables, and restoring order in the hall after the feasting was over.

In 1998 David Johnston recognised that groups organising skits could use help with scenery, props, lighting and sound. Accordingly, a group called the **Stagehands** was formed to assist study groups in producing

a few minutes of entertaining devilment. As groups became less involved, more of the production of the OSCARS devolved on the Stagehands, who, as they became older and fewer, found they could not continue. For 2010, a well-received simpler entertainment, the NOTSCARS, was developed for the end-of-year function.



Cooking Pancakes at Okura, February 2005

## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE FEAST

In February 1995 a barbecue at Long Bay coincided with Shrove Tuesday and members were

advised that “In deference to the day, you may wish to bring a frying pan and make your own pancake.” In 1996 the “Shrove Tuesday Pancake Picnic” was held at the Vaughan Homestead at Long Bay, pancake mix and hot water supplied. In 1997, a barbecue was held on Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February, with no mention of pancakes. Perhaps because it wasn’t Tuesday! In February 1999, a Shrove Tuesday Pancake Party was held at the home of David Johnston and Jocelyn Dye. This seems to have been a new venue for this event, which was a great success; David and Jocelyn have hosted the event every year since.

## COOPERATION WITH OTHER U3As

Although the autonomy of each U3A has been vigorously preserved, U3As often cooperate locally, nationally and internationally. An example previously mentioned is the role of U3A Remuera in the founding of U3A Takapuna, as well as several other U3As in the Auckland region. In turn, U3A Takapuna played a significant role in the founding of U3As in Orewa (Hibiscus Coast, 1995), Birkenhead (1997),

Devonport (1997), and Browns Bay (2000). At least in the case of Hibiscus Coast, U3A Takapuna advanced some funding as a loan.



Some posters from the Network Gathering, from Takapuna and Franklin U3As

The Auckland Network Committee was established in 1993, with the aim of facilitating the exchange of ideas among the U3As in the greater Auckland area. Representatives from each U3A in the region meet at

least twice a year to exchange ideas and to discuss common problems.

In Takapuna, the network representative, usually being the President or another Committee member, has always worked closely with the local Committee. In 1999 the network organized a very successful international conference, "Towards the 21st Century", to celebrate the first decade of U3A in New Zealand. Additional international conferences have been held in New Zealand, one in Tauranga in 2002 and another in Christchurch in 2007. Individual members from Takapuna have attended all of these conferences, as well as most of the conferences held in Australia. Recently two members, Wensley Wilcox and Mary Skyring, attended a conference held in India, organised by the Asia Pacific U3A Conference.

In August 2001 U3A Takapuna, with encouragement and financial underwriting from the Network, held a one-day conference, called a U3A Gathering, at Netball North Harbour for U3As throughout the Auckland region. Donald Cordes, at that time Takapuna's Network representative, organised the Conference, which was planned during the presidency of Patricia Campbell and chaired by John Willmott, the newly elected President of U3A Takapuna. A notable feature of the conference was a display of posters from many of the regional U3As, coordinated with his usual enthusiasm and gift for organisation by



Garden Group at Eden Garden, 2009

Fraser Campbell. These posters, highlighting the studies undertaken by their groups, were displayed in the room where the opening morning tea was served. Viewing and discussing the posters provided a positive beginning to the day and encouraged people from different U3As to talk with

one another. Another highlight was the award-winning Westlake Girls High School Choir, who performed at the catered luncheon. The

keynote speaker was Dr Brian Findsen, at that time a staff member at AUT, who spoke on education and the older adult. The Gathering was financially successful also, with U3A Takapuna donating part of the proceeds to the Network.

Another example of inter-U3A cooperation was the establishment of **Inter-U3A study groups**. Especially in the early years of a U3A, small membership numbers can make it difficult to find enough members interested in a topic to form a viable group, while a neighbouring U3A has a group studying a similar topic with room for additional members. After a meeting of presidents of U3As in Birkenhead, Browns Bay, Devonport and Takapuna, President Fraser Campbell proposed a category of Inter-U3A Groups, which was approved by the Committee in September 2004. At present there are six such groups. For a U3A Takapuna group to be designated an Inter-U3A group there must be vacancies in the group and non-Takapuna members joining the group must be financial members of another U3A, for example, Browns Bay. Establishment of Inter-U3A groups among the North Shore U3As has enhanced the study opportunities for all U3A members.

## OUR PEOPLE

Harry Truman, President of the United States in the 1940s and early 1950s, said of his office, "The buck stops here." That is true for the presidency of any organisation. When things go well, others often get the credit, but when things go badly, the President must shoulder the responsibility of putting matters right. In addition to the important behind the scenes role, the President has the responsibility for an interesting and smooth-running monthly meeting. U3A Takapuna has been fortunate in the quality of the men and women who have been willing to take on this role.



**Sylvia Arcus, 1991-1993, Foundation President.** Sylvia was born in Takapuna, a member of the well-known Roberts family, and trained as a school dental nurse. During the 1980s she enjoyed time overseas, working at casual jobs and expanding her knowledge of the world. After the death of her husband, Sylvia, ever creative and innovative, played a central role in the founding of U3A Takapuna. As well, Sylvia taught music, established a baby-sitting business with a neighbour, and helped set up the Stroke Club in Takapuna. Sylvia is known for her enthusiasm, kindness and individuality. The Takapuna community is indebted to Sylvia for her many contributions to its life.



**Ken Adams, 1993-1995,** Holly Morton said of him in the newsletter after his death in 1999: "He was an exceptionally gifted man, in professional life working at the leading edge of science and technology, including astronomy. He applied his expertise with similar enthusiasm in retirement to the benefit of many organisations, including U3A. [As President of U3A Takapuna, he was] largely responsible for the intellectual and organisational vision which we still draw upon today. He then initiated U3A Birkenhead, and was President there until his death." Another foundation member spoke of a brilliant impromptu lecture on astronomy which he gave when the General Meeting speaker failed to appear.



**Betty Sinclair, 1995-1996** Betty and her late husband Malcolm were both Foundation Members of U3A Takapuna. She says that being a foundation member of U3A Takapuna and part of its organic growth, gave strength and stimulation both to their marriage and to their senior years. Writing, poetry, art and music were studied with energy and with love; new companions stretched their horizons. Malcolm convened the foundation Creative Writing group until the couple moved to Christchurch in 1996, where they remained active in U3A. A significant event of Betty's presidency was her interview with Peter Laslett, who gave vision to the U3A concept in the UK.



**Colin Climie, 1996-1997.** Colin was educated at Wellington College and Otago University Medical School. After a period in general practice from 1951, he says that he “decided people were more interesting when asleep so studied anaesthesia in London in 1956”. He was lured to Sydney in 1963 as Director of Anaesthesia, Royal Hospital for Women. Retiring to

Auckland in 1984, he built a house overlooking the Gulf in Browns Bay and joined U3A Takapuna. In 1999 he and Patricia moved to Hobart to be closer to their family. He keeps busy helping out with grandchildren and protecting their garden plot from roaming wallabies.



**Holly Morton, 1997-1999.** After growing up in England through depression and war, Holly moved to New Zealand, armed with an M.A. in Geography. Becoming a teacher at Whangarei Girls' High School, she began with an assignment on the traditional Maori way of life, learning quite a bit from her class of mostly Maori girls. Later she came to Auckland and married, teaching at Westlake. In retirement she has done voluntary work, especially with U3A Takapuna. Holly's main interests have been Poetry and Anthropology. She says, 'It is wonderful to see U3A Takapuna growing from strength to strength. We are so lucky.'



**Patricia Campbell, 1999-2001.** Patricia began her teaching career as Head of Music at Papakura High School and concluded her professional career as Head of Music at Hamilton Girls' High School. Her encouragement of enthusiasm for (good) music among the young evolved to sharing that enthusiasm with the more mature in U3A through convening Musical Studies. A

much-enjoyed feature of her Presidency was “short bursts” of musical studies in the General Meeting. Patricia was President during the 10th anniversary celebration and during the preparation for the U3A Gathering in 2001. She quotes Alan MacDiarmid, Nobel Prize winner, “While you are learning, you are living, Once you stop learning, you are dying.”





**John Willmott, 2001-2003.** John was born, educated and spent nearly all his life in Auckland. His professional career was as a teacher and principal, mainly in intermediate schools around greater Auckland except for two years in the UK. His personal interests have focussed around music, especially choirs. John has sung and directed in many choirs, including his still

continuing directorship of the North Shore Male Choir for the past 24 years. He has been a church organist for over 40 years. John says he has served U3A Takapuna as "Committee, President, Convener Modern History, Oscar victim...also pianist for Troubadours Orchestral group".



**Fraser Campbell, 2003-2005.** Fraser's formal education in the South Island (Canterbury) was followed by a secondary teaching career which included 23 years of headmastering. He thoroughly enjoyed his teaching career which he continued in the less formal, but highly stimulating setting of U3A Takapuna.

Fraser convened sixteen different study groups, which were always fully subscribed, over 16 years. A feature of his Presidency was the establishment of Inter-U3A groups, enabling nearby U3As to share resources. His emphasis as President was on ambience: cheerful learning, hearty involvement, with out-of-routine experiences providing splashes of colour. Fraser says, "KEEP LEARNING: KEEP LIVING!"



**Howard Pugh, 2005-2007.** Howard grew up in England through the depression and war years but having lived three-quarters of his life here sees himself as very much a New Zealander. After qualifying B.Com., A.C.A. Howard held various corporate financial and administrative roles including CEO of a supermarket chain and Managing Director of engineering

companies in New Zealand and Fiji. His accounts of his voluntary work in retirement as Field Treasurer of a Mission in Nigeria will be remembered by many, while his interests in architecture and travel have resulted in several talks to our General Meeting. Howard now serves as Treasurer of U3A Takapuna.



**Norman Lodge, 2007-2009.** Norman was born in Liverpool and has degrees in Chemistry and in Food Science. For 20 years he was involved in international aid development, undertaking projects in the food sector in the South Pacific and Asia. He was based in Singapore for 6 years. In 2000 he established his own consulting company and at present is a contract lecturer in Food Science at the University of Auckland. For services to New Zealand he holds the 1990 Queen's Commemoration Medal. His term as President was influenced by the changing times and the use of computer aids for presentations, something that Norman actively encouraged.



**Judy Hanna, 2010-2011.** Judy was educated at Wellington Girls' College and then qualified as a pharmacist after an apprenticeship at Wellington Hospital. A career was fitted in around marriage to John (and 4 sons) and floral art. Part-time regular positions in community pharmacies and locum work, often in emergency situations, kept knowledge current.

Contracts as Trainer of Junior Staff for Pharmacy Guild Auckland and then area Liaison Pharmacist for Pharmaceutical Society of NZ added variety. As a member of Geology and Architecture Groups, Judy enjoys the opportunity to expand her life-long interest in these diverse areas, which also increases the pleasures of travelling. Judy says "It is great to know that all U3A Takapuna members can benefit in this way."

The success of U3A Takapuna has come from many people not specifically mentioned above. Many of their roles could be described as housekeeping, which, as every woman knows, is never noticed unless it is not done! Our "housekeepers" can attribute the fact that their work is not noticed to the faithfulness with which they do it.





Foundation Member Sarah Metge addressing 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting.  
Seated: Patricia Campbell, Sylvia Arcus

There are those who are responsible for opening and setting up the hall every month; others ensure that the morning tea service goes smoothly and on time. Someone keeps the records of Committee meetings, the funds are managed efficiently, newsletters are distributed, and speakers are arranged, and numerous other tasks are efficiently carried out. Although space does not permit mentioning them all by name, much is owed to the people who do all these things!

Much also is owed to those who had the foresight and energy to build our U3A in the early years. These men and women are recognised as Foundation Members and are listed below:

Ken Adams  
Sylvia Arcus  
Joan Austwick  
Peter Austwick  
Kyle Bamford  
Colin Brightwell  
June Castle  
Don Collin  
Toni Coombes  
Connie Courtney

Jocelyn Dye  
Alan Gales  
Faye Houlden  
David Johnston  
Nan Keall  
Peter Kivell  
Helen Laird  
Graeme Leaming  
Sarah Metge  
Jim Moody

Sandra Moody  
Holly Morton  
June Norcliffe-Gales  
Betty Sinclair  
Malcolm Sinclair  
Dawn Thomas  
Tom Turnwald  
Mac Williams  
Janet Wright

A select few members have been recognised for their outstanding service to U3A Takapuna by being designated as Life Members:

Ken Adams

Sylvia Arcus

Fraser Campbell

Patricia Campbell

June Castle

Colin Climie

Alan Gales

Yvonne Hamilton

David Johnston

Sarah Metge

Betty Sinclair

Maureen Thoms

Judy Hanna, the President of U3A Takapuna in this anniversary year, reflects on our Past, Present and Future:

“An active mind in an active body”, “keeping those little grey cells working”, “life-long learning”. However it is phrased, the importance of continued mental stimulation and maintenance of connections to the world around us is now recognised as essential to one’s health and well-being. Twenty years ago a few people on the North Shore became aware of “The University of the Third Age”, an international movement specifically designed to keep minds active after retirement from paid employment. U3A Takapuna was quickly established, adopting the “Cambridge” model, not the original French system, and has flourished ever since. Membership (capped at 320) soon out-grew the capacity of local venues, eventually leading to U3A Takapuna guiding the formation of other U3As north of the Bridge.

U3A Takapuna holds a monthly general meeting and at present has 35 study or interest groups, with 8 to 25 members, which meet at regular intervals. Every U3A member is expected to join at least one group. Groups are autonomous, follow a specified topic and member

participation is encouraged. One may pursue an existing interest or study a completely new subject. There is a strong motivation to study, albeit in a less formal way.

Membership also provides enjoyment, good company, new friends and quite possibly, the renewal of old friendships forged through previous community activities.

Over recent years, the Internet, well-stocked libraries, availability of DVDs etc, have all greatly increased our ability to access information. U3A studies already benefit: What will the future bring?

### **ABOUT OUR NAME**

Overseas, our organisation is usually known as the University of the Third Age. However, in New Zealand, the use of the term University is restricted by legislation to those institutions so designated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. Although U3As meet the original understanding of the University as a community of scholars and teachers, in deference to the law, New Zealand U3As do not use the term “University” in their materials or publicity.

### **OUR COMMITTEE—2010-2011**

President: Judy Hanna	Vice President: Ken Pascoe
Secretary: Margaret McLaren	Treasurer: Howard Pugh

Committee:

Ron Carroll	Marion Corles	Tony Lewis
Chris Rimmer	Mary Skyring	May Stewart

## **ABOUT THIS HISTORY**

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of U3A Takapuna approached, I felt very strongly that someone should write a history of this organisation which has meant so much in the lives of retired people living on the North Shore. Presumptuously perhaps, I volunteered to undertake this project and the Committee accepted my offer.

In compiling this history, I wanted to give an overall view of U3A Takapuna as an organisation, answering questions such as how and when was it formed, who were the prime movers in its formation, and how has its mode of operation evolved. I have relied heavily on the archives held by the Secretary, which are remarkably complete, containing nearly all the monthly newsletters, minutes of Committee meetings, and President's annual reports, as well as some correspondence and other documents. Graeme Leaming had written a short history which he delivered at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary function, and I am grateful to him for sharing it with me and for his comments. Other long-time members have been very helpful in answering questions as they arose. Brian Clark has kept a photographic archive, which he kindly lent to me. Many of the photos used in this publication were scanned from his archive. Don Collin, a foundation member who now lives in Christchurch, was very helpful with information and some photos from the early days.

I am very grateful to Helen Sturm, a new member of U3A Takapuna, and Margaret McLaren, at present our Secretary, who read the complete manuscript. Both Helen and Margaret are experienced professional writers and editors, who made very helpful corrections and suggestions. Any remaining errors or omissions, of course, are my responsibility.

With gratitude for what U3A has meant to Don and me,

Charlene Cordes,  
May 2011

## U3A OBJECTS AND PRINCIPLES — A NEW ZEALAND VERSION

### Objects:

1. To provide educational and interest activities for older people who are not in gainful employment.
2. To provide opportunities for retired people to meet, share experiences and pursue interests held in common.
3. To make those in their later years aware of their intellectual, cultural and aesthetic potentialities and of their value to themselves and to their society and to assail the dogma of intellectual decline with age.
4. To provide from amongst the retired the resources for the development and intensification of their intellectual, cultural and aesthetic lives, in this way helping them make effective and satisfying use of their freedom from work.
5. To create for these purposes an institution which is affordable, where there is no distinction between those who teach and those who learn and the activity is voluntary, freely offered by the members.

### Principles:

*Each U3A is independent and is free to arrange its own programme. However, there are certain basic principles. U3As in Britain, following Peter Laslett, adopted nineteen principles, not all of which are applicable to New Zealand. The Auckland Network has summarised and reduced these to five, which are as follows:*

1. There is no distinction between teachers and taught.
2. No qualifications are required to enter and no qualifications are given.
3. U3As are voluntary self-help organisations. There is a small annual subscription to cover running expenses, but no course fees are charged. The “teachers” [group facilitators] are normally U3A members and get no remuneration.
4. U3As use the great reservoir of knowledge, skills and experience which is to be found amongst older people and is often undervalued or overlooked.
5. Study group meetings are held during the day at a convenient place in the locality, often in private homes.

## And We're Still Going Strong!



Class of 1931 Lunch, 8 March 2011.

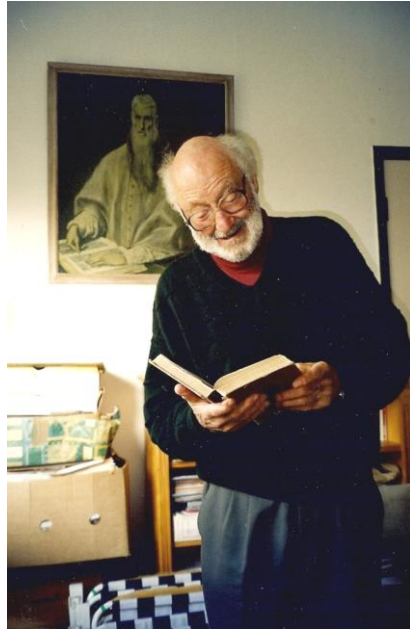
*Standing L-R:* Muriel Leith, Diana Thompson, June Castle, Janet Beech, David Johnston, John Hanna, Peter McCartney, Jackie Hill, Val Elley, Merle Barnes, Warwick Elley, Betty Dance, Graeme Leaming, Jocelyn Dye, Ken Nathan, John Watts, George Stevenson. *Kneeling:* Val Kivell, *Sitting:* John White



# Over the Years



Daphne Rickman in a new rendering of Shakespeare.



Fraser reviews history, under the watchful eye of St. Jerome



10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cake. The Anniversary was celebrated with a special morning tea and comments from several Foundation Members



NOTSCARS 2010: Catastrophe by Chinese Painting Group, Doreen Brown, Convener (Front Right)



**Darwin's Dinner Party**, People of the Planet: June Castle, Pamela Rengatch, Holly Morton, Lyndley Clark, Peter Jenkins as Bishop Wilberforce





**Modern History 2010.** Back: John Willmott, Bill Heppleston, Ken Pascoe, Garry Dimmock, James Laird, George Stevenson, Donald Cordes, Graeme Leaming, Arthur Minton, Max Farquharson. Middle: Hugh Coutts, Roger Gill, Frances Hansen, Judy Boros, John Watts, Chris Rimmer, Mary Bell, Annette Heppleston, Kyle Bamford. Front: Mary Mangan, Pamela Rengatch, Patricia Dare, Helen Ryburn, Betty Russell, June Mackley, Sheila Webb



**Famous and Infamous 2002.** Back: Fay Houlden, Alex & Mary Wilkinson, Frank Jones, Val Kivell, Maureen Thoms, Jillian Virch. Front: Elizabeth McArett, Alison Brown, Doreen Jones, June Castle, Jessica Stewart, Betty Russell



**Alan Gales 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday.** Front: Robert Bann, Alan Gales, Lesley Christie, Doris Anderson, Mary Bell



**New Zealand Historical Geography** at Puhoi Church, Sally Stone in foreground.



**Tudor and Stuart Britain.** Clockwise: Fraser Campbell, Sidney Le Couteur, Doris Patterson, Ann Holdaway, Robyn Winstone, John Ross, Iris Watts, Margaret Tranter, Patricia Campbell