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Newsletter

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A Message from the President of U3A Wellington City

Kia Ora,

Season's greetings to everyone.

I hope you all have a restful and yet stimulating summer break. Of course, the real stimulation commences with the International Festival of the Arts in February and then on March 20th we begin the 2012 Lecture Series. There will be an increase to 50 lectures for next year, ending on November 2nd. Thank you to all who sent us suggestions for the next series. It was a great response and has given us loads of thoughts and contacts. The Programme group met in early November and is now hard at work getting the speakers organized. Thank you especially to our own members who offered themselves as speakers. What a pleasure it will be to hear them.

At the Committee meeting on November 14th, a decision was made to limit the membership numbers to 875 financial members annually. People wishing to join will apply for membership as per usual (the form is on the website) and when a vacancy occurs, they will be contacted by the Membership Secretary. This together with the extra seating available should ensure that members are not turned away from well supported lectures – but, of course, there are no guarantees!

Many members have asked about donating to some of our speakers' causes such as the Malaghan Institute and the McIndoe-Gillies centre. The committee has decided that apart from the book voucher provided for the speaker,

Wellington City U3A will donate \$100 to groups that qualify, a decision that will be made by the President, Secretary and Programme Convener.

The Study Groups have had a successful year and were able to celebrate at the Cocktail Party in late October. Our special thanks go to Bruce Garton, who has retired as convener of the Music Group after many years, and a warm welcome to Dilys Jones who has taken up the role. The music group is most stimulating and innovative. The writing group (Convener: John Bonallack) would like new members this year. If you have any queries about any groups or wish to start on, please contact Gaynor Stewart.

We now have two Life Members, an accolade to members who have given exceptional service to Wellington City U3A. These recipients no longer pay membership fees and entry fees. The Committee is to draw up guidelines for any future awards. Our congratulations this year were to Rodger Sparks who is the ultimate Mr. Fixit electronically and almost everything else. He spent the last 5 years on the committee organizing the Front of House volunteers and all the speakers. He was presented with a small certificate at the AGM and features in his frequent pose below.

A less favourable topic also occupied the Committee discussions. I would like to call it commitment. We had some stellar events during the October holiday, including trips to Efil Doog and the Island Bay Marine Centre. For both these events, people who had committed to come withdrew at the last minute. The coach to Efil Doog was therefore only part full but the cost was still the same. The shortfall was made up from U3A funds including the 14 uneaten lunches. I am sure that we all have competing interests and that booking in advance means making a choice. I suspect that future choices will be just as difficult but maybe not by coach.

Best wishes

Karen Palmer, President



Rodger Sparks, "the techie".

From

The Membership Secretary

Members will be aware that a decision was made earlier this year to close the membership. In the interim, 25 people have been placed on a waiting list, and the committee has now decided to accept those membership applications. Arrangements have been made for us to have additional seating in the Spectrum Theatre and there has also been a drop in membership numbers. We will continue to accept applications for a Waiting List, admitting members when the time seems appropriate.

Welcome to the following new members: **Jan & Ron Cormack, Gwynfa Duckworth, John Locke, Lesley Parker, Graeme Peebles, Craig Rickit, Jeremy Spanjaard, Alan Wright, Paul & Shirley Wah.**

Events October 2011

The October 2011 Visits programme was well supported. It consisted of a visit to the Times Cinema where 24 people viewed the movie *Shadowlands*, a visit to the Effil Doog Garden in the Akatarawa Valley, and a visit to the Marine Education Centre in Island Bay.

53 people went to Efil Doog on a day with a real mix of spring weather and viewed the rhododendrons, garden sculptures and the art. Everyone enjoyed it; however there were problems with the number of cancellations and another bus trip is unlikely.

30 people went to the Marine Education Centre on a wild and windy spring day for a most interesting and informative visit. There were some new marine animals to view and Julian Hodge provided an excellent commentary on the sea creatures and the work of the Marine Centre.

Volunteers' Cocktail Party

This year, because of the World Cup, the Volunteers Cocktail Party was held a month early in the Wellesley Hotel. It was well attended (better than years 2010 and 2009) and went off with a real buzz so the Committee has decided to hold the party in October in future years.

STUDY GROUP REPORTS 2011

Art History Group:

This year the group has been very well attended and, given the size of the room and the number of interested members, we would find it very difficult to take on any new people. We still share responsibilities and enjoy working together. We began by studying masterpieces familiar to most of us and discussing their history, their influence on later art and artists, and as icons how many of them have been re-worked in advertising, cartoons and films, and even in graffiti. Many stories behind these paintings and statues can add to our enjoyment and fascination and led us to some lively discussions. Then we studied four paintings from the National Gallery in London to understand how they were seen in their own time and how they demonstrate some of their beliefs in religion, mythology, the expanding world and the new science, and how they can illustrate the way of life of the artists and the original patrons. We are now looking at one part of the collection in the Louvre, the Department of European Paintings, and learning the history of the way the collection was set up, how it was acquired and how it is shown to the public. We live in a world of visual communication and we are bombarded on all sides by images but these paintings divided by tradition, region, school and style still have meaning for us and for artists painting today. Close study of some of the masterpieces can add to our awareness of the huge numbers of art treasures around the world and how we can enjoy them, even if only in reproduction.

Contact: Janice Huddleston, phone 972 0404.

Book Group 1

Our membership for 2011 has remained unchanged, standing at 11. We continue to meet at the same venue, the old Sharella in Glenmore Street, where the charge of \$5.00 per person for rental and morning coffee (and muffin) also remains unchanged, although we continue to hold our breath on this score. Our December meeting will be held at Raumatī in the home of one of our members, where a festive lunch will follow the final book discussion and business for the year. This we find is more convivial than dining out as it gives us the opportunity to mingle on a personal basis. Our monthly meetings do not always offer this opportunity.

Books for the year have been varied, ranging from *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie; the rather savage *The people's act of love* by James Meek, the non fiction, *Things I didn't know* by Robert Hughes and *The Elegance of the hedgehog* by Muriel Barbery. *Breath*, by Tim Winton, took us into the world of surfing. So the range of reading has been eclectic.

We have tried to move away from reportage, review style of participation, which can be repetitive, to a more questioning approach. We continue to work on the best method of fruitful discussion.

We have finalized our choices for 2012, but not yet allocated the months. I think it is safe to say that the year's reading has been both interesting and profitable for all.

Jan Watchman, Convener Sharella Book Group

Book Group 2

Book group 2 continues to meet on Thursday mornings, in each other's houses. We have ten members but as one is leaving at the end of this year there will be a vacancy for a new person to join us next year. In 2011 we decided to read works by some of the writers who talked at Writers and Readers Week in 2010, trying to keep a balance of fiction and non-fiction. We began with *Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie, followed by *The American Future: a history*, by Simon Schama. *The Outlander* by Gil Adamson was our April book, followed by *The Collector of Worlds* by Iliya Trojanov, *I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops: stories*, by Hanan Al-Shaykh, *The Ethics of What We Eat* by Peter Singer and Jim Mason and *A Handful of Honey : away to the palm groves of Morocco and Algeria* by Annie Hawes. In September we had a poetry session, for which our two poets assembled a collection of poetry that provided a historical overview of poetry, from early English, *The Wanderer*, to a poem by our own Jenny Bornholdt. In October we read *The Legacy: an elder's vision for our sustainable future* by David Suzuki. Having found the books on the Middle East interesting, we diverged from our original plan and read *A Scandalous Life : a biography of Jane Digby el Mezrab* by Mary Lovell. In our final meeting we will each discuss a book we have read and found interesting, and have a pot-luck lunch. In 2012 we shall read books related to the Barbary Coast and Eastern Mediterranean. **Dianne Hill, Convener.**

Film Group 2

Film Group 2 meets on first Saturday of the month. Apart from January, we met every month except for November when there was not a suitable film, but we do intend to meet in December. Ideally the chosen film should start no earlier than 1pm and not later than 2.30pm. This allows us an opportunity to meet afterwards as a group to discuss it over a cup of coffee. Also it is important to choose a film which has not been running for a long time or some members may have already seen it. We tend to go to the Penthouse because of the type of film shown there. However that does pose problems for some of our members who do not drive. But then, the venues in town also are not easy for parking, although I remind members to use the buses and their gold cards.

I do have some members whose attendance has been poor and I intend to ask them if they are really interested in continuing. I have been using email to contact those with it, usually letting them know about the film two or three days beforehand, then ringing the others. We have room for others to join this group and would welcome them

Christabel Gibson, Convener

Current Issues Group

The U3A Current Issues Discussion Group meets almost every Second Thursday at our house, 75 Silverstream Road, Crofton Downs.

We have discussed the following topics in 2011:

February: Human Rights. March: Revolution. April: Transport Policy. May: State of the Nation.

June: Arthur Alan Thomas Case. July: Miscellaneous. October: Visit to Cuba.

November: World Crisis and the Election.

The membership has been rather small. We welcome anybody interested in discussing current issues which are difficult to fit in an annual programme and topics which are not treated much elsewhere or which are particular personal concerns.

Vincent Gray: Convener.

Literary Group

The Literary Group, now reduced to three, continues its monthly meetings on the last Friday of the month. We prepare a novel for discussion and assessment and comparison with other recent publications. Mostly we choose recent works but this year we included George Eliot's *Middlemarch* - a return to the great days of literary achievement. Most recently, we read *The Conductor* by Sarah Quigly, a New Zealand writer, and earlier in the year, we read Lloyd Jones' recent *Hand me down world*. Of particular interest to us, are the works of Julian Barnes, the latest Man Booker winner.

Jenny Lane: Convener

Poetry Group

The poetry group met for five sessions this year when we discussed war poets, the metaphysical poets, poetry on the theme of music and poetry about New Zealand. Unfortunately our numbers are now very small. We would like to increase this next year. With only two regular members and one whose attendance is a little infrequent we have not continued as a group for the last three months. Hopefully, more members may join us next year.

Joan Jarden: Convener

Music Group

The Music Group has had a change of convener this year with Dilys Jones taking over from Bruce Garton who has made a major contribution to the success of this group over many years.

The group meets on alternate Thursdays at St Ninian's Lounge Karori. Members are invited to give a presentation on anything musical that they enjoy and want to share with others, eg Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* with sound and sight of the art works, or the story behind Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. New members are always welcome to listen or participate.

Dilys Jones: Convener, phone 4783 275

Writing Group

This new group has gone very well, with some quite remarkable writing coming out of it, reports the tutor, John Bonallack. John is willing to continue the group next year and, depending on the number of current members who wish to continue, will accept up to six new people for 2012. Three of these places have already been taken, so anyone wishing to join should contact Committee member, Gaynor Stewart gaynorstewart@hotmail.com or phone 494 0102 for details. The group meets in John's home in Johnsonville on Thursday afternoons.

Play reading Group

This year we changed our meeting day to the first Wednesday of each month. We meet at 1.30 at Margaret Bowater's house. As usual we have read a wide variety of plays. Notable were *The Disorderly Women* by John Bowen; *The Philanthropist* by Christopher Hampton; *Ghosts* by Ibsen; *Translations* by Brian Friel.

Several new members, male and female, joined the group. I have to congratulate everyone on the standard of their reading. It has been a very enjoyable year.

Margaret Bowater: Convener

Shakespeare Group

Thanks to the hospitality of Shirley and Fergus Fergusson the Shakespeare Group has been able to meet this year in comfort and with plenty of room for its eleven members. The group has been meeting for a number of years and we are now returning to the History plays once again having read all the Works and all the major poems and a selection of the sonnets. We started the year with *Henry IV part 1* and are now in the depths of the bloody War of the Roses in *Henry VI part 2*. The readings are occasionally augmented with sequences of favourite scenes or scenes that need visual or aural clarification taken from DVDs or CD recordings. The emphasis, however, is on our reading the plays. The group meets every other Wednesday and next year we will be looking for a new venue.

Laurie Atkinson, convener.

U3A WELLINGTON CITY INC

Committee Members 2011/12

Karen Palmer	176 Barnard Street Wadestown 6012 katyp@xtra.co.nz	499-1381
Val Fergusson	18 Upland Road Kelburn 6012 upland18@xtra.co.nz	475-7424
Shona Spencer	2/11 Upland Road Kelburn 6012 m Spencer@paradise.net.nz	970-8170
Gavin Mickell	29 Naughton Tce Kilbirnie 6022 gmickell@paradise.net.nz	387-3402
Laurie Atkinson	9 Westhill Road Point Howard 5013 westhill@globe.net.nz	568-5883
Allison Cattanach	174 Mitchell Street Brooklyn 6021 allisonc@actrix.co.nz	384-3150
Rosemary Ralston	15 Homebush Road Khandallah 6035 srralston@actrix.co.nz	479-6500
Gaynor Stewart	196B The Terrace City 6011 gaynorstewart@hotmail.com	494-0102
Blair Treadwell	9 Tui Road Days Bay 5013 btreadwell@clear.net.nz	562-7410
Sheila Williams	6/25 Madras Street Khandallah 6035 sheila.williams@clear.net.nz	479-2226