

U3A Wakatipu

Chairperson's Report 16th November 2015

It is a pleasure to present this the 6th annual general report for U3A Wakatipu from the chair (and also my last, having served a three year term).

The key to our success has been the extraordinarily high calibre of our speakers and the wide range of subjects covered. This has been due to our Programme Coordinator, Marion Borrell who has for the last five and a half years organised all our programmes, and ensured that we got the best speakers available for the subjects. This is no easy task as a lot of juggling has to happen to coordinate subject and speaker availability. We are also fortunate having so many talented people living locally who are good presenters.

Our speakers' genuine enthusiasm was obvious and catchy. They were all outstanding communicators, hugely knowledgeable, and always gave us something to think about – the whole point of U3A.

During the winter lecture recess U3A was active with study groups covering art, music, and English History. Marion Borrell led the English History Group, studying England in the 17th century with members presenting a topic of their choice from politics and major events, to the arts, science, music and literature. As a member of this group I found it fascinating especially the relevance of The Great Fire of London to the Christchurch earthquake.

The art group from last year continued, meeting most Tuesdays, led by Marion Marquand and Robin Stenning, visiting artists' homes and galleries throughout the region. They found the artists incredibly generous with their time, often explaining their techniques and their own personal backgrounds.

The music group led by Athol Dixon was hosted mostly by Jon and Robyn Bitcheno whose outstanding screen and sound system helped make the sessions a great success. The music was an eclectic mix ranging widely from classical, jazz, and popular.

We thank all the people who provided venues for these Study Groups.

Though U3A Wakatipu continues to be successful the committee has realized that financially we need to review our subscription charge and to look at increasing our membership. The membership fall-off is in part due to natural attrition, so it has become important to grow our U3A by promotion through local publications and other means. Members can play a large part in this by recruiting friends and acquaintances and new Queenstown residents. Reasons for increasing the subscription charge have been covered in Jon Bitcheno's financial report.

Now it is thank you time

Firstly, Marion Borrell our Programme Coordinator for her enormous amount of work in maintaining the high standard of our speakers and sorting out the programmes. Jon Bitcheno as our treasurer and Justine Cranfield as secretary.

Alan Townsend our techno wiz and keeper of the U3A website.

Jeanette Thompson and Janie Murdoch for buying and serving morning teas.

Athol Dixon for arranging members to introduce and thank our speakers .

Mary Stammers-Smith and Kirsty Sharpe who help where it is needed, such as collecting fees or with morning tea duties.

All the committee have been great to work with, and in addition to their various areas of responsibility, they have joined in to do anything else necessary, like setting out and putting away chairs – as have committee members' spouses.

This apart from their contribution of new ideas and/or speakers.

Thanks are also due to Bruce Morris for preparing our annual accounts.

Bob Cranfield.

The following is a synopsis of the year's programmes from November the 24th 2014 through to November the 9th 2015

Art was the theme for November – December with Jenny Harper from the Christchurch Art Gallery back-grounding the problems caused by the Christchurch earthquake and how art was kept alive by outdoor public art, especially murals on building walls. The mural paintings were most impressive. This was followed by Jane Malthus on the history of clothing. Ed Cruickshank a famous English furniture designer, now a Queenstown resident spoke about Meaningful Furniture and the importance of quality construction and good design.

The first subject grouping for 2015 was “Living Sustainably Here and Now” with four lectures in February through to the 2nd of March. Councillor Claire Higginson and Sophie Mander from the Central Otago District Council spoke on the Council's programme on sustainability and the importance of recycling and what their Council was doing to reduce waste. Sustainable businesses in the Wakatipu followed with Michael Sly and Mathurin Molgat founders of Wilding & Co speaking about their success in making money out of wilding pine pests by extracting highly desirable pine oil, a real plus for Queenstown. Pierre Poyet then talked about Skyline's actions to gain a QualMark Enviro Gold Award. One feature was crushing their glass bottles into powder and using the material on walking tracks. Dr Ella Lawton a QLDC councillor then spoke on Ecological Footprints and Food Sustainability with applications internationally, nationally and locally. Food wastage in the developed world is huge. The series was rounded off with Dr Mike Underhill CEO of Energy Efficiency & Conservation Authority talking about New Zealand's energy future – fossil fuels versus renewable versus economic growth versus environmental impacts.

March was health month starting with Professor Parry Guilford from the Otago Centre for Translational Cancer Research talking about how Genomic technology is transforming cancer treatments. This was followed with Professor Dirk De Ridder, Chair of Neurosurgery at Otago, talking about his work in surgery and research since coming to Otago. This lecture was organized by the Neurological Foundation, and sponsored by U3A.Wakatipu. Penney O'Connor, International health administrator and local resident spoke on child health and development in Papua New Guinea and health risks for the

world such as Ebola and other epidemics. Very interesting but rather depressing.

April was about New Zealand society. Dr Liz Craig from the Department of Women's and children's Health at Otago University School of Medicine, spoke on Poverty in Paradise. An impressive speaker giving an insight into NZ problems of which our region is not free. Dr Jen Moore from the Department of Social and Preventative Medicine spoke about Coroners and her research into their work and recommendations for the Law Commission.

May was about Beliefs and Values. Here Dr Greg Dawes from Otago University's Philosophy and Religious Studies Department gave a run down on Science and Religion and some of the difficulties between them. Dr Majid Ganeshgar from Otago's Religious Studies Department gave an interesting run down on Islam and Buddhism. The one on Islam couldn't be more topical. Unfortunately the last talk in the series by Professor Barbara Brookes from Otago's History Department was cancelled due to weather. As it was on 50 years of the Women's Movement it would have been an interesting follow on from the previous speaker. This talk has been rescheduled.

Winter recess.

September-October "International Issues and Experiences. Professor Richard Jackson from Otago University's National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies spoke on understanding Terrorism Today. An escalating problem. Dr Jason Young from Victoria University Wellington's International Relations and New Zealand contemporary China Research Centre spoke on the new age of Chinese engagement and its effect on New Zealand. An important topic as we are so reliant on Chinese trade, and the pressures that can ensue. Well known locals and U3A members Diane Hart and Marion Marquand gave a run down on Dubai - an Emirate of dreams. Each gave an interesting perspective as both had taught different groups of students. Next was Al Fastier from Glenorchy who works for the Antarctic Heritage Trust overseeing and working on restoring Scott and Shackleton's huts. I found this fascinating having been in both more than 55 years ago. A huge amount of work has been done restoring them since I saw them, and I take my hat off to the restoration team who had to work under extremely difficult conditions. Jon and Robyn Bitcheno, two

more well known locals and U3A members talked about their time living in India - an amazing experience in an important country. The Bitcheno and Fastier talks were a good juxtaposition – one on the Antarctic – the other the tropics. Can't get more extreme than that. Professor Robert Patman from the Department of Politics Otago, spoke on New Zealand's Surveillance Controversy and the impact of the GCSB Amendment Bill and how the Snowden revelations have changed everything. Who can you trust? Associate Professor Jenny Bryant-Tokalau from the School of Maori and Indigenous Studies at Otago gave a picture of Fiji, its community and the dire poverty there. A position that is worsening.

November is cultural month with Emeritus Professor John Drummond from Otago's Music Department talking about " Music for Kaiser and King" showing how important music can be in propaganda promoting war. Both sides using identical methods. Crazy stuff. It showed among other things how stupidly criminal war can be and is. Artist Shane Woolridge gave an illustrated talk on his sculptural work and his development as an artist. It was exciting stuff and I would suggest it is worth looking at his work on the end of Kelvin Peninsula. This was followed by Deidre Copeland with her well known giant lifelike portraits – warts and all – mainly of old men. Very impressive work from both artists.

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