

**U3A**

**Dunedin Charitable Trust**

A LEARNING OPTION FOR THE RETIRED

**in association with**



**Series 2 2011**

**RADICAL RELIGION IN CROMWELL'S ENGLAND**

**Dates: Thursday, 26 May – Thursday, 23 June 2011**

**Time: 2.15 pm – 4.15 pm**

**Venue: Knox College, Arden Street, Opoho**

**Enrolments for this course will be limited to 50**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Tea and Coffee provided**

**Course Organiser: John Burton (477 7371)**

**Course Assistant: Judith Gray (471 9913)**

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You may apply to enrol in more than one course in each series (subject to numbers). If you wish to do so, you must indicate your choice preference on the application form, and include payment of the appropriate fee(s).

All applications must be received by noon on Wednesday, 11 May 2011, and you may expect to receive a response to your application on or about 20 May.

**Please note that this course starts and finishes earlier than usual as Professor Bradstock will be on leave immediately after the last session. Members will be notified as early as possible of their acceptance.**

Any questions about these courses after 20 May should be made to the Secretary, U3A Dunedin, telephone 471 9913 or on email at [graysinn@clear.net.nz](mailto:graysinn@clear.net.nz)

***Please keep this brochure as a reminder of venue, dates, and times for the courses for which you apply.***

## **RADICAL RELIGION IN CROMWELL'S ENGLAND**

'The present state of the old world is running up like parchment in the fire': so declaimed Gerrard Winstanley, leader and main theorist of the Digger movement in April 1649.

And you could see what he meant, given that he was writing just weeks after King Charles I had been publicly put to death, and while the execution of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the disestablishment of the Church, the abolition of the House of Lords and the unceremonious removal of other longstanding institutions were still recent memories. Not without reason have the 1640s and 1650s been described as the most turbulent decades in England's history, and as three civil wars divided and slaughtered families and communities, and failing harvests and land reforms forced many to the edge of starvation, so a feverish sense of living on the cusp of a new age gripped the nation.

A rich variety of movements and groupings arose. Names like the 'Ranters', 'Seekers', 'Levellers' and 'Muggletonians' convey something of the exoticism of these associations.

This course looks at seven of the best-known groups – Baptists, Quakers, Levellers, Diggers, Ranters, Fifth Monarchists and Muggletonians – and critically appraises each and its ideas. Input through lectures will be supplemented by film, music and discussion.

The programme will be presented by Professor Andrew Bradstock, Professor of Public Theology in the University of Otago and author of *Radical Religion in Cromwell's England: A Concise History from the English Civil War to the End of the Commonwealth* (London: I B Tauris, 2011).

### **The Programme**

- 26 May**      **Putting it in context**  
What made the years 1640 to 1660 so unique? A discussion of some of the political, economic and social factors which throw light on the context of the groups and the ideas those groups espoused.
- 2 June**        **Baptists and Quakers**  
Baptists flourished during the 1640s and 50s and played an important role in fostering religious and political dissent. Beginning in the early 1650s, Quakers grew even more rapidly, and were also widely seen as a major threat to political stability. Of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century 'radical' movements, these are the only two which survive today – why?
- 9 June**        **Levellers and Diggers**  
Levellers were the most 'politically organized' group of their day, and their programme for extending the franchise and protecting liberties was so far-sighted much of it was not implemented until several centuries later. Diggers advocated an even more far-reaching solution to the crisis they confronted – money-less, property-less communism.
- 16 June**      **Ranters, Fifth Monarchists and Muggletonians**  
On one level, these groups seem decidedly wacky; but was there more to them than it might seem? How did one of the three last until the 1970s?
- 23 June**      **What does it all mean for us?**  
What's the point of studying these movements – and indeed this period? It's always interesting to know what people did in the past – but are there lessons for us today? Do the ideas and convictions which drove these groups resurface in every generation – and if so, why? What does the treatment that these groups received, both in their own time and subsequently, tell us about how we define 'orthodoxy', 'heresy' and 'extremism'?