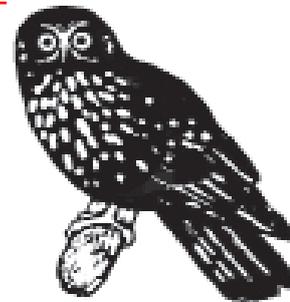


U3A DUNEDIN Forum



Newsletter No. 65 - November 2019

Memorial: Brian O'Rourke, U3A pioneer

A memorial service for U3A Dunedin life member Brian O'Rourke was held at Hope and Sons, Dunedin on September 30 — a sad but informative occasion with many U3A Dunedin members among the large attendance.

Brian, who died on September 8, was a champion for adult education throughout his life. He was credited with the founding of the U3A in Christchurch and was largely concerned in the formation of our U3A in Dunedin. From being the head of Continuing Education at the University of Otago he went to head the Centre for Continuing Education at Canterbury in the mid-1980s — that flourished under his leadership.

Alan Jackson, chairman of the U3A Dunedin board told the service that Brian came to Dunedin in July 1993 and persuaded Lorraine Isaacs, director of University Extension and Bill Webb from Continuing Education, to start a U3A in Dunedin.

The following month the first meeting of the U3A Dunedin working party took place at Salmond Hall (now College) and Brian visited again in December. On retirement in 1996 he came back to Dunedin to settle and became involved with U3A Dunedin and the University Club.

KEY LINK WITH UNIVERSITY

Brian was a member of the U3A Dunedin board from 1996 to 2002. He acted for it in 2002 when a Memorandum of Agreement was being negotiated with the Otago University. This was a key role in helping the University claim Government funding for adult education, which made money for us and the University.

Brian was also the founding editor of the U3A newsletter from January 2004 until issue 7 in November 2005. Also he was instrumental in getting the Southern Institute of Technology formed in Invercargill.

At our 20th anniversary celebrations in October 2014 Brian, with Katherine Dolby, David McKenzie and Lin Phelan were all made honorary life members of U3A

Dunedin (joining Emeritus Prof. Alan Horsman, who had been made the first life member in 2009.)

Lin Phelan remembers: 'Brian was a man of great warmth and intelligence who played a vital role in negotiating the relationship between the nascent U3A and the University of Otago.

'His administrative skills meant that the talks with the University were very successful. U3A has become an important addition to the education environment in Dunedin largely due to Brian's efforts . . . My memories of Brian are of a wise and entertaining human being always ready to help no matter what the task was.'

Funny business

See page 3 in this *Forum* for our article 'Laughter The Best Medicine' (written by U3A's own kleptomaniac — (when it gets too painful he takes something for it!))

There is a follow-up on the serious side of the subject on page 4 that delivers some news on recent research in Norway and confirms beneficial effects for those who enjoy putting some humour in their lives. So take your medicine folks.. . seriously.

George Bernard Shaw said this:

**YOU DON'T STOP
LAUGHING BECAUSE
YOU GROW OLD.
YOU GROW OLD
BECAUSE YOU STOP
LAUGHING**

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OUR WEBSITE
u3adunedin.org.nz

Art and toil designing U3A courses

Members have completed, and we hope did enjoy, the Series 3, Spring 2019, courses. There were 461 enrolled requesting 524 places, well over half our current membership of approximately 930. The most popular course was Ross Grimmett's *Every Picture Tells a Story* with 124 enrolments, followed by *Gardening and Landscaping* with 93. The others, *Otago Regional Council*, *Nanotechnology*, *Philosophy* and *Urban Design* occupied a narrow band between 50 and 70.

No ballot this time, fortunately. There seems to have been one of our broadly-spread offerings to suit most members. Although the formal evaluations are not available at time of writing, it appears these courses were well received and feedback is positive.

VARIETY OF INTERESTS

A broad spread is essential when designing a series. For our particular membership with its older demographic, health is invariably of interest. Literature, art and music, too, always have loyal followings. For the more materially minded, it is good to be able to present at least one science or technology course in a series. Historically based courses are generally popular too.

Then there are the large public interest themes, such as climate change, sustainable living, and equitable justice. And, every so often, members are given the opportunity to contribute from their own experience and interests, with courses such as *My Hobby* and *Off the Beaten Track*.

Variety is essential and a range of different levels, from the frankly academic, as with *Philosophy at Otago*, to the rather less exalted but still fascinating, *I Worked There* or *Formative Years*. It is important, too, that in any one series courses do not compete or duplicate too closely what has been recently presented.

SPEAKERS AND HELPERS

The main limiting factors for any one topic, no matter how appealing, are the availability of a suitable body of speakers, and of members with the interest and expertise to develop and convene courses; and that it can be sustained over six sessions.

It is no light task to put together a course, sometimes involving up to 12 speakers. However, we are very fortunate that Dunedin, with its University and Polytechnic, has a



Stuart Strachan and Linda Kinniburgh - Co-Chairs of U3A Dunedin's Programme Committee.

wealth of possible speakers, and even more so that some speakers, such as Chris Ackerley, Colin Gibson and Ross Grimmett have been prepared to develop and present a whole course, making implementation so much easier.

Putting all this together, and working about six months or more ahead, is the responsibility of your Programme Committee, which meets about five times a year, picking through ideas, including those submitted by members with their feedback. From these emerge series of courses that can be realistically developed and offered.

AUTUMN SERIES

What is coming up for Series 1 Autumn 2020? Well, we are planning one on the evergreen topic of ageing. Others include ones by John Drummond on opera composers and their singers, Doug Hart on 12 paintings, Ron Palenski on New Zealand sporting prowess, the Otago Peninsula organised by Doug Holborow, and Peter Brook on the development of computing.

MATTERS OF TASTE!

More mundanely, we can report that in response to popular demand club sandwiches will replace pinwheel ones at the Otago Golf Club. And of course the Leith Bowling Club scones are everybody's favourite.

- Stuart Strachan and Linda Kinniburgh

U3A DUNEDIN CHARITABLE TRUST

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U3A Dunedin, PO Box 6491,
North Dunedin, 9059.

Email: contact@u3adunedin.org.nz
Phone: 453-4721

Chair: Alan Jackson, 479-6347

Registered Charitable Institution - #CC22345

Word play

We have found four words that can be read the same way horizontally and vertically. Any other curiosities like this?

BORN
OBOE
ROSE
NEED

Busy year for U3A lectures

We have just come to the end of what seems to have been an especially good set of three series of lectures.

Hundreds of letters of thanks have been written during the year to the presenters and we also need to add our thanks to the good people who developed the courses and invited the presenters, those who did the background work convening the courses, and the course assistants who do far more than just ensuring the presenter gets a warm drink at half-time.

Three cheers to the countless folk who have made our further education such a success this year. They follow a remarkable tradition of dedication to the cause – set in 1994 when our organisation began. Long may it continue.

WORKSHOP

We plan to run a workshop for course convenors on Wednesday November 20 between 7pm and 9pm. If you are interested please contact Linda Kiniburgh (473 8443 or 021 735 614)

LOST PROPERTY

A quick look in our U3A Dunedin “boxes” at each venue reveals a few items of lost property – still unclaimed. I put a photo of some items left at Leith Valley on the ‘Lost and Found’ page on our website – but no-one has come to claim anything. The Board will have to decide what to do with these items – we can’t store them for ever. If you do realise that you have left something behind at a course, just contact the course convenor (details on the course brochure).

TEMPERATURES

Feedback from courses indicates that some members feel warm enough and others feel cold at the same venue on the same day in the same room. This is beyond our ability to fix but if people who are inclined to feel the cold bring travelling rugs that will help the situation. We do want our members to be comfortable at lectures – so bring a cushion also if it will help you.

- Alan Jackson,
Chairman, U3A Dunedin Board



Laughter is the physiological response to humour? Research has shown that laughter can have many great effects on our mind and body.

There is a wide range of health benefits that come from laughing, such as:

1. Enhanced mood.
2. Decrease in the stress hormone cortisol.
3. Lowered cholesterol.
4. Increased immunity.
5. Decrease in hunger hormones.
6. Lowered blood pressure.

Laughter consists of two parts – a set of gestures and the production of sound. When we laugh, the brain pressures us to conduct both these activities simultaneously and when

we truly laugh hard, changes occur in the body – even within the arms, legs and trunk muscles.

There are a number of variables to be aware of when analysing laughter:

1. We are 30 times more likely to laugh at something when we are with friends, as opposed to being alone.
2. Laughter signals safety; it evolved from social play to show that we were safe.
3. It’s universal – people from far and wide all understand its meaning.
4. Laughter needs to be authentic as the brain can tell when it’s fake. Even anticipating laughter reduces the stress hormone, so ensure you get plenty of laughter into your life!

Guaranteed for a giggle?

Two aerials meet on a roof – fall in love – get married. The ceremony was rubbish – but the reception was brilliant.

Three poems by Ogden Nash:

‘The cow is of the bovine ilk
One end is moo, the other milk.’

‘The camel has a single hump
The dromedary two;
Or else the other way around.
I’m never sure, are you?’

The turtle lives twixt plated decks
Which practically conceal its sex
I think it clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertile.’

‘He always wanted to be a procrastinator,
Never got around to it.’

‘The woman was trying hard to get the sauce to come out of the jar. During her struggle, the phone rang so she asked her four-year-old daughter to answer the phone. ‘It’s the minister, Mum,’”the child said to her mother Then she added, ‘Mum can’t come to the phone to talk to you right now. She’s hitting the bottle.’

The classic comedian W.C. Fields in his 1939 film “*You Can’t Cheat an Honest Man*” observed: “Some weasel took the cork out of my lunch.” He also is famous for saying “A woman drove me to drink and I never had the courtesy to thank her.”

They are not joking . . .

Is there actually a grain of truth in the old adage that “ ‘Laughter is the best medicine?’ ‘ The results of a 15-year study of over 53,000 people conducted by Sven Svebak and his colleagues in Norway provide some interesting support. They discovered that humour can delay or prevent certain life-threatening diseases.

The researchers measured the participants’ sense of humour with a question included in a large health survey.

Specifically they asked participants to estimate their ability to find something funny in most situations. Participants could then be categorized as high or low in this ability, and these groups compared on various health indicators. Results indicated that women who scored high on sense of humour experienced a reduced risk of premature death from cardiovascular and infectious diseases. Men who scored high had a reduced risk of early death from infections.

BENEFITS FADE

The benefits gradually faded with increasing age and disappeared after age 85 possibly because the frowny faces were no longer alive. In any case, as Svebak suggests, ‘This means that a higher than average sense of humour is no vaccine to protect you against death in the end, although it will increase your probability of getting old.’

There are many possible reasons for the correlation between humour and health. For example, ‘A friendly sense of humour will bless you with better social relations



as well as coping skills, and the reduced risk of dying early,’ says Svebak.

SHOCK ABSORBERS

And: ‘A friendly sense of humour acts like shock absorbers in a car, a mental shock absorber in everyday life to help us cope better with a range of frustrations, hassles and irritations.’

As Edward Creagan, professor of medical oncology at the Mayo Clinic proposes, ‘When people are funny, they attract other people, and community connectedness is the social currency for longevity... Nobody wants to be around negative, whiny people. It’s a drain. We’re attracted to funny people.’

So, if you can find humour in a given situation, be sure to share it. What a fun way to save lives, even your own.

[From: ‘*Laughter really is the best medicine? In many ways, that’s no joke*’ by Marlene Cimons, *Washington Post*, June 15, 2019.]

Dark chocolate cheers up?

Eating dark chocolate may positively affect mood and relieve depressive symptoms, finds a new study led by University College London, looking at whether different types of chocolate are associated with mood disorders.

The study, published in *Depression and Anxiety*, is the first to examine the association with depression according to the type of chocolate consumed.

Researchers from UCL worked in collaboration with scientists from the University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services Canada and assessed data from 13,626 adults from the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Participants’ chocolate consumption was assessed against their scores on the Patient Health Questionnaire, which assesses depressive symptoms.

U3A email directory

Sending email correspondence to U3A Dunedin? Using addresses below will take your messages to the appropriate people and have quicker attention. (If you contact the wrong person the

forward your message to the correct address.)

General information: contact@u3adunedin.org.nz

Re courses: courses@u3adunedin.org.nz

Re Membership: members@u3adunedin.org.nz

Re ‘Forum’: newsletter@u3adunedin.org.nz

*Einstein born
Quite unprepared
For E to equal
MC squared*

-Tom Stoppard



Keep in touch!

If there have been any changes in your contact details (new email address in particular) please do let Lynda Jackson, Membership Secretary, know — 473-6947 or jacksolynz2003@yahoo.co.nz

U3A phone directory

To discuss any problem with U3A Dunedin please phone the right person:

Chairman: Alan Jackson
473-6947

Board matters: Marion Potter
453-4721

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