

# U3A DUNEDIN Forum



No. 75 - September 2021

## Looking into future plans with U3A Board

Kia Ora koutou, welcome to the last *Forum* update for 2021. What a year! We felt almost 'back to normal' for Series 1 and 2. And didn't we enjoy these series and the catch-up with old friends and making of new friends. U3A does have an overt role in connecting people and this we do very well.

We have been very fortunate in the South Island to have not had cases of COVID-19, and although this has totally changed our plans for Series 3, I do count ourselves as very fortunate indeed.

### THE FUTURE

U3A continues to plan ahead and make the most of those excellent presenters who are willing to talk to you online with their expertise on a range of subjects.

After 2020, so many more of us are comfortable listening online. It feels at times like the 'good old days' with everyone sitting around the radio and listening to a great series, play or speeches. At least we can see pictures and screen shots of faraway places. It also feels like the travel opportunities we are missing; we see the world through others' cameras and lenses. Although not ideal for longer than one hour at a time,

**OUR WEBSITE**  
[u3adunedin.org.nz](http://u3adunedin.org.nz)



**Linda Kinniburgh**  
Chairperson, U3A Board

it is a great solution for helping keep us together.

Barrie Peake has been successful, as you are aware, (see page 2 -Ed) negotiating with the Wellington U3A branch to share their Zoom lectures. We will continue these for a while and will find a way to market them more successfully.

Alan Jackson is great at identifying and sharing online lectures from academic institutions across New Zealand (information on our website).

### LECTURE PLAN

Others in our team are working behind the scenes to gather resources and people for a potential one-off weekly lectures in October. This of course is dependent on our COVID-19 levels and health challenges.

I am informed in the Southern (Otago/Southland) 80% of those over 65 have had their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Well done to all those who have achieved this milestone. Vaccination is part of the solution for us all.

### INTEREST GROUPS

We welcome Trish Irvine to the Convenor's role for what we have called Discussion Groups. It is proposed to change this name to Interest groups to reflect more adequately this important aspect of U3A.

The Board does want to acknowledge the work of Ngaire Bates, our previous convenor, who set up the Groups in Dunedin, five years ago. These have gone from strength to strength, and we thank Ngaire for her perseverance and commitment to this part of U3A. Enjoy some relaxation and rest, Ngaire and thank you from all of us.

Our membership continues to grow. Welcome to new members, enjoy our course offerings and Interest Groups. There is something, we believe for everyone. Meantime, stay safe and stay well, noho ora, kia ora.

**Linda Kinniburgh**

**BRIEF HISTORY OF  
YOUR U3A**  
*Pages 5 - 7*

*'Success is not final, failure is not final; it is the courage to continue that counts. -Winston Churchill*

# New Zoom links with Wellington

**U3A Dunedin appears to be forging new links with Wellington U3A through Zoom lectures for computers.**

Faced with the cancellation of our Spring 2021 lecture series, the Programme Committee began considering what other educational options we might be able to offer our members at short notice. One option that sprang to my mind was to explore revisiting an offer made by the Wellington U3A during our first lockdown last year to share their Zoom lectures with us.

For various reasons, we did not take up that offer but this time decided to approach Wellington again. They were immediately agreeable to our idea..

As they already had attendances at their Zoom lectures in excess of 400, we agreed to pay for an extension to their Zoom licence to cater for up to 1000 participants from the combined two branch memberships.be shared between the two U3As.

## **DETAILS ON WEBSITE**

Details of the speaker(s) and content of future Zoom talks to be shared between the two U3As will be posted under the 'Magazine' section on our Dunedin website. You log in as a member and then select the third entry from the list on the left-hand side of the Home page.

The invitation to join a future Zoom talk (they start at 10.30 am on either Tuesday or Friday) will



**Barrie Peake**

be sent out to all Dunedin U3A members by email as soon as it is available - this is often only within a day or two of the lecture date.

## **NO CHARGES**

There is no cost for Dunedin U3A members to join any of these Zoom lectures shared with the Wellington U3A. 'Magazine' section on our Dunedin website. You just log in as a member and then select the third entry from the list on the left-hand side of the Home page.

The invitation to join a future Zoom talk (they start at 10.30 am on either Tuesday or Friday) will be sent out to all Dunedin U3A members by email as soon as it is available - this is often only within a day or two of the lecture date.

## **THE FUTURE?**

Based on the success of these Wellington-run talks, the Programme Committee is considering initiating our own

## *Four talks that were Zoomed*

In the first two weeks that we shared U3A Wellington's Zoom lectures, we had the following four interesting talks::

**August 31:** 'Built heritage challenges: neglect, earthquakes, and urban development plans' (Felicity Wong.)

**Sept. 3:** 'Migration of the Godwit' (Phil Battley).

**Sept. 7:** 'Around the world with a camera in 1926 : the travel photography of Joseph Divis' (Simon Nathan)..

**Sept. 10:** 'The Road to an Electric Car Future' (Ed Forsman).

series of weekly Zoom talks. The obvious time to run them would be on Wednesday afternoons which would not overlap with any of our face-to-face lecture series when they restart in the new year.

By establishing such Zoom lectures we would also be meeting a long-held need to offer single lectures as well as lecture series to our Dunedin members.

We would obviously invite the Wellington U3A members to join them but there would also be the possibility of inviting members of U3A branches in at least other parts of Otago and Southland to share them as well. So, watch the U3A Dunedin website for announcements of Dunedin-based Zoom talks!

- **Barrie Peake** (Zoom co-ordinator).



*Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up*

~ **Thomas Edison**

*Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world.*

- **Marilyn Monroe**

## **U3A DUNEDIN CHARITABLE TRUST**

**Website:** [u3adunedin.org.nz](http://u3adunedin.org.nz)

**Address:** Secretary to the Board,  
U3A Dunedin, PO Box 6491,  
North Dunedin, 9059.

**Email:** [contact@u3adunedin.org.nz](mailto:contact@u3adunedin.org.nz)

**Phone:** 476-1848

**Chair:** Linda Kinniburgh, Phone- 473-8443

Registered Charitable Institution - #CC22345

# ANNUS COVIDUS DELTA

## Programme Committee problems

**If we thought that last year, Annus Covidus, would see the last of our virus difficulties, then we were sadly mistaken.**

On 17 August the whole country went into sudden Level 4 lockdown following the detection of the new Delta variant of COVID-19 in the Auckland community.

As our Spring courses were due to begin 27 August and there was no knowing how events would unfold the Programme Committee and Board immediately met to plan options. What became quickly clear was that the courses could not begin as scheduled and that even postponement by two or three weeks was fraught.

There were simply too many variables—venue availability,

likely restrictions on capacity, presenter reluctance, and when levels would be relaxed.

All led to the decision to preserve the courses intact and reschedule them into next year's programme, and then to fill the void as best we could.

### MEMBERS IN CREDIT

With presenter agreement the first has now been largely achieved, so that *Sonnets and Whistleblowers* will now form part of our Autumn 2022 series; *Architects, Musical Journeys, and Medicine* part of our Winter series; and *Painters* part of our Spring series. Members paid up fees for these courses will be held to their credit, though refunds may be requested.



**Stuart Strachan**

Filling the void is being met in a number of ways. Separately (*on page 2 - Ed*) you can read about the twice-weekly, Tuesday and Thursday, Zoom lectures, which we are now sharing with the Wellington U3A as a result of a very good initiative by Barry Peake.

We are also looking at offering our own Zoom lectures, probably fortnightly on Wednesday afternoons. In addition, we are thinking of offering a series of face-to-face lectures at the Leith Bowling Club in October  
**Linda Kinniburgh & Stuart Strachan** - Programme Committee Co-Chairs

## Are you awake?

The incredible Wizard of Oz Retired from his business because  
Due to up-to-date science  
To most of his clients  
He wasn't the Wizard he was.

### Visiting the medical clinic:

Patient: 'I have an appointment at 1.30.'

Nurse: 'Which doctor?'

Patient: 'No. I want the regular doctor.'



'Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.'

- Mark Twain.

## Importance of deep sleep

All it takes is three consecutive nights of sleep loss to cause your mental and physical well-being to greatly deteriorate. A new study published in *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* looked at the consequences of sleeping fewer than six hours for eight consecutive nights -- the minimum duration of sleep that experts say is necessary to support optimal health in average adults.

Lead author Soomi Lee, assistant professor in the School of Aging Studies at the University of South Florida, found the biggest jump in symptoms appeared after just one night of sleep loss. The number of mental and physical problems steadily got worse. At that point, research shows the human body got relatively used to repeated sleep loss. But that all changed on day six, when participants reported that the severity of physical symptoms was at its worst.

"Many of us think that we can pay our sleep debt on weekends and be more productive on weekdays," Lee said. "However, results from this study show that having just one night of sleep loss can significantly impair your daily functioning."

About one-third of US adults sleep less than six hours per night. Lee says once that becomes a habit, it's increasingly difficult for your body to fully recover. previous study led by Lee found losing just 16 minutes of sleep could impact on job performance. Her previous findings also show that minor sleep loss can decrease daily mindfulness, which is a critical recourse for managing stress and maintaining healthy routines.

Lee says the best way to maintain a strong daily performance is to set aside more than six hours to sleep every night.

# WORD Wonders

by John Hale

Curious Words aka Wonder-Words (in sense of “weird and wonderful”:

**Yeste-** How come *yesterday* is such a mundane word but *yesteryear* smells so literary? And if you said *yesterweek* or *yestermorn* people would understand you but wonder about your wits.

The words all derive alike from *yester-*, adjective meaning “of yesterday.” The Scrabble Dictionary includes it; but then, Scrabble makes you desperate. It strikes me as more of a prefix, one no longer “productive,” that is, added at will to new expressions, like *yesternoon*, its usage is fading.

Usage is both gain and loss: we could restore “overmorrow,” German *übermorgen*, for the clumsy “day after tomorrow.” But where are the words of *yesteryear*, like *yestermorn*, *yesternoon*? Stored in the OED, like many another wonderful word.

In its heyday *yester-* had been highly expressive. The splendid plangent theme-word of the Beatles’ song *Yesterday* is well

## One for the money

An 84-year-old woman had just remarried for the fourth time, a reporter from the local news came to her house to interview her.

He asked what were the careers of all these husbands, she replied: “In my 20’s I married a banker, in my 40’s a circus performer, in my 60’s a preacher, and now a funeral director.”

The reporter was so amazed he asked her how come men from such diverse careers. With a twinkle in her eye, she replied: “One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, and four to go go go.”

matched in the omen of disaster in the *Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens*:  
*I saw the new moon late yestre’en*  
*Wi’ the auld moon in her arm*

**Doublets:** Fuddy-duddy namby-pamby hocus-pocus hoity-toity harum-scarum...

Such formations seem to be childish or contemptuous.

They form from some letters more than from others (like H-). Families make up their own: one of ours was dribbly-wibbles (pouring blackcurrant juice onto ice cream)

Someone ought to write a PhD thesis about it all, with best-selling book to crown a glorious career. Which is your favourite?

## Really Short Stories

There’s a vogue for really short stories, six words. Here’s one: “1968. Met at demonstration. Married. Still Protesting.”



**Trish Irvine is the new Convenor of U3A Discussion Groups, following Ngaire Bates. She has had many positions in the Otago University, Dunedin Teachers College, and as Advisor in the Ministry of Education. Before she retired, she was business manager for Barnados NZ. (Trish is also convenor of U3A’s Luncheon Group.)**

## Fairy’s wand

A married couple in their early 70s were out celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in a quiet, romantic little restaurant. Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table and said, “For being such an exemplary married couple and for being faithful to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish.”

“Ooh, I want to travel around the world with my darling husband” said the wife. The fairy moved her magic stick and - *abracadabra!* - two tickets for the new QM3 luxury liner appeared in her hands.

Now it was the husband’s turn. He thought for a moment and said: “Well this is all very romantic, but an opportunity like this only occurs once in a lifetime, so, I’m sorry my love, but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me”.

The wife, and the fairy, were deeply disappointed; but a wish is a wish. So the fairy made a circle with her magic wand and - *abracadabra!* - the husband became 102 years old.

## Letter to Editor

### BLUETOOTH

I don’t think there is or needs to be a plural for Bluetooth [*Forum* No.74] . Is there one for electricity? Or lightning? Think it’s the same sort of thing. “All modern phones have Bluetooth” - it’s a universal singular. However, what about the plural of (Nissan) Leaf? — **Rae Parker**

[John Hale agrees this answer is basically right. “Bluetooth” is a brand name and implies a following noun in the singular, something like wifi or wysiwyg. - Ed.]

# U3A's dynamic, modern growth

Within the U3A Dunedin is a modern, dynamic and bold organisation, which continues to have many successes. Our membership rocketed from 20 to 30 members at its conception 27 years ago to about 950 today — it's expected to reach 1,000 soon. We are blessed with a high calibre of volunteers among us.

Along the way problems have been met and conquered — dismantling a waiting-list of people wanting to be members, going in-house for our governance with most tasks, modernising our website to do a multitude of jobs for all our membership (only 50 of us do not use computers.)

RECIPE for our success: wide range of courses - educational, interesting and entertaining, with good speakers (and tea breaks) — no exams!

In 2014 U3A Dunedin celebrated its 20th birthday. It had been discussed first in July 1993. Then Lorraine Isaacs, Director of University Extension at the University of Otago, initiated the setting up of a 'University of the Third Age' in Dunedin. Early encouragement and assistance came from Brian O'Rourke, then Director of Continuing Education at Canterbury University.

With our pioneers working associated with the University of Otago It is not surprising that the format adopted for the first courses orientated towards what the University staff could offer.

## EARLY DAYS

Dunedin firm Rodgers Law (now Wilkinson Rodgers) was supportive. It managed the major secretarial role from 1996 and helped with our mailouts, membership records, course admissions and financial records. They also ran the ballots for courses as early as 2003, when some courses attracted more members than small lecture rooms used could accommodate.

For some years U3A was able to cope with the huge increase in workload as membership increased and this allowed the

Board to focus on other issues. U3A Dunedin became a Charitable Trust and made a formal agreement with the University of Otago. This was based around the University's Government funding for adult education, with U3A getting a major proportion of this funding. With secure funding, close co-operation with University and its staff, enthusiastic board members and a captive audience, we were popular from the start. The format of three sessions in the year (like universities and schools) was established. Functioning in our role as a charity we made many grants and donations (they totalled \$84,500 by 2015.)

Minutes were not recorded in the earliest days. But in 1996 we took up the offer by Katherine Dolby to be secretary and enjoyed Wilkinson Rodgers managing our financial services.

They served us well until 2013; then we moved to manage in-house and Marion Potter started her seven years as secretary for the Board.

## WAITING LIST

The ever-growing demand for membership resulted in opening a waiting-list In 2005. Initially courses used only small lecture rooms in two university colleges. They could accommodate no more than 50 seated. Larger venues were needed for bigger audiences. Successive Boards kept being

## HISTORY NOTES on the Rise of our U3A

- by Geoff Adams

embarrassed by the enlarging waiting-list. But with regular funding from the University and a growing membership, course fees were able to be decreased and then held for several years.

Then the Government decision in 2010 to withdraw university funding for community education by 2013 was a major blow. It meant the University was not able to continue funding to U3A after that date. But we negotiated keeping a remaining close relationship and invited a University nominee to attend Board meetings.

## 'BOOM YEAR'

Our popularity kept the waiting list growing in size. In 2015 Jane Higham ( who died, sadly, in December 2019) was elected as Board Chairperson (following Doug Holborow and Doug followed Sue Cathrow as chair of the Programme Committee.) Jane announced 2016 as a "boom year" — U3A Dunedin made the mammoth change to in-house administration (for economy and efficiency) and started modern communications through emails and our website,

Research had found that 60 percent of members did not attend courses at any one time, so it was decided to reduce the waiting list. The membership that had been static at 500 for some years was increased to 700 in 2016 although a smaller waiting list still remained. But momentous change had started.

We found the bigger venues to cope with larger classes for courses.

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## Continued from page 5

And In 2017 it was bravely decided to abolish the waiting list. There was no mad rush and we had grateful new members. Jane had two boom years while she was in the chair. Modern methods of using computers for a website and email connections, allowing internet banking, eased in.

### **STREAMLINING**

The boom continued with Gretchen Kivell in the chair.. More streamlining methods arrived after Alan Jackson became web editor in 2017 (brilliantly assisted by website manager John Shanks to take care of technical matters). Our website was developed to play many roles. (*Forum* is grateful for our new ability to have more pages and use of colour inks, since no printing charges are needed for the email readership of more than 900 members.}

The calibre of our lecturers, the presenters and their helpers has mostly been first-class and for that we must thank the team that decides on courses and manages finding the people to organise and deliver them. With its growth in membership, U3A management has also needed to grow.

We now have our governing Board of up to 15 members, with 16 valued assistants plus our trusty “engine room” for courses the Programme Committee, which has 30 members who “dream up,” organise and administer courses ( they also use other volunteers). Together the whole team does a wonderful job.

### **LANYARDS & ZOOMS**

Alan Jackson became our energetic Board Chairman in 2018 and was leading us for three busy years, including the difficult 2020 Covid lockdown when courses had to be halted. He also put our members into wearing lanyards to help course management and our socialising. In his busy term we were coaxed to use electronic solutions last year with the pandemic lockdown.

electronic solutions with the pandemic lockdown. Zoom did not prove too difficult for an at-home course for some of our members and has been used several times since for U3A Board meetings. But we value the big lecture halls, with screens, tea/coffee breaks and chats with friends.

### **U3A Dunedin Characteristics**

*(as listed on the first brochure in February 1994 )*

Learning topics are selected by the members.

In-depth courses are planned by members.

Opportunities for reading, research and discussion are provided.

Presenters/facilitators are usually members of the groups.

The company of others who enjoy learning is ensured.

The atmosphere for learning is informal and friendly.

There are no examinations.

There are no compulsory activities.

Courses take place during daylight hours.

Costs are minimal and within the reach of everybody.

Linda Kinniburgh as our present chairperson has also held Zoom board meetings and still shares the important role of chairing the Programme Committee with Stuart Strachan, so has a great understanding of all our U3A's workings — and having to cope with new worries about the world's pandemic.

### **MANAGEMENT**

Marion Potter had taken over the role of secretary for the Board in 2013. As our in-house activities grew we expanded and two more secretaries were appointed in 2015. They were a Programme Secretary (Phil Esplin) and Membership Secretary (Lynda Jackson). Marion was a good organiser as well as

minute-taker, and became a board member to contribute her advice. Sadly, she died after illness last April. Her post has now been taken up by Richard Higham.

Bill George was treasurer from 2003 to 2014. Evan Taylor took over that post then and still keeps us secure financially very capably.

The newsletter was started in 2004 by Brian O'Rourke. I (Geoff Adams) took over the job in 2006, joining the Board in 2013, and changing the title *Newsletter* to *Forum* last year.

### **ELEPHANT IN ROOM**

A major problem is now scarcity of halls in a handy place and large enough to seat more than 150 members for a course (the cause of the ballot for places depressing some members.) We can use Zoom on computers during a lockdown period, but that is not ideal.

Most big lecture rooms and halls in Dunedin are in use or not available at the dates and times we need them. We like the Otago Golf Club and Leith Bowling Club, and their morning and afternoon teas! But unfortunately they can only house a maximum of 150 people for courses. We have had up to 200 members wanting to enjoy popular courses recently. (And there are major problems for car parking at Leith.)

An embarrassing problem used to be the waiting lists — now it may be an increasing need for ballots to determine which members may be able to enter some very popular courses.

Please: let us know of any big hall, somewhere handy and with parking, that will easily seat many more than 150 and might be available during our course terms?

### **CHARITY AT HOME**

The U3A Charitable Trust is a non-profit entity and its purposes are to foster and develop education for people who form the Third Age population of Dunedin, to organise and present educational courses.

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**Continued from page 6**

The University helped us when it received Government funding for adult education.

This link was celebrated last year when we donated \$50,000 to the University for a scholarship and another \$5,000 to each of four deserving causes in the city. (The money was from surplus funds received via the University in our early years.)

**THE COURSES**

The Board's Programme Committee has the important job of compiling our fine courses and their presenters -- a challenging but vital task. The committee was set up by Sue Cathro, who was its chair from 2012-2015. Doug Holborow took over for 2016-2017 and Barrie Peake from 2018-2019. Linda Kinniburgh and Stuart Strachan have been joint chairs from 2020.

**SMALL GROUPS**

Small Group courses for our members were initiated in 2015 under the guiding hand of Judith Cowley. Four groups were set up at firai (often meeting in members' homes monthly) and the number has grown since then to as many as 15.

**U3A Board Chairpersons**

1994-8: David McKenzie  
 1998-01: Lin Phelan  
 2001-3: Brian Maguire  
 2003-4: Sam Sneyd  
 2004-5: Elizabeth Timms  
 2005-6: Wilson Daniel  
 2006-7: Honor Anderson  
 2007-8: Donald Feist  
 2008-9: Graham Mortimer  
 2009-10: Graham Batts  
 2010-11: Sue Cathro  
 2011-12: John Burton  
 2012-13: Dame Norma Restieaux  
 2013-14: Brian Robinson  
 2014-15: Doug Holborow  
 2015-17: Jane Higham  
 2017-18: Gretchen Kivell  
 2018-21: Alan Jackson  
 2021 - Linda Kinniburgh

The groups cover a variety of subjects and interests. They are run autonomously and independently of main courses — each one setting its own agenda, number of members, venues and financial commitment.

Their name was changed to Discussion Groups in 2017 and they have been promoted strongly by Ngaire Bates as the

recent Convenor. Some of the original half-dozen groups remain popular among the now 15 groups available, catering for members interested in a wide range of subjects or pursuits.

These range from art galleries and books to current affairs and Mah Jong. Luncheon fans and diners are catered for in small groups, as well as film-goers, walkers, singers and photographers, etc. Ngaire has retired after promoting the groups for the past five years and Trish Irvine has become her successor.

**LOCKDOWN WOES**

COVID-19 pandemic and the lock-downs scuttled our winter courses last year and again this year, forcing some novel trials of Zoom lectures and much work to replace all the plans that the Programme Committee had done. Let's hope that we can all beat the virus with jabs and good sense.

**Early history**

Seven years ago the October 24 edition of your *Newsletter* contained a resume of our founding early history — all the facts in 16 pages that were rigorously researched. Members are recommended to read them for more and interesting details about our early years.

**HOW TO FIND IT:** Visit our U3A website, click on the "Newsletter/Forum" tag on the home page. There the whole collection of *Newsletters* and *Forums* are available to view. Click on the "Show more" button to see the early dates and then on "October 2014/ 20th Anniversary History". ...You're there at issue No.43.

Did you hear any jokes about the coronavirus? Never mind, we don't want to spread it around —

I could tell you a coronavirus joke now, but you would have to wait two weeks . . . -

Hope COVID-19 is a job well done.

**Views in Victorian Web**

The Victorian Web (*victorianweb.org*) began in 1987 originated in hypermedia environments that existed long before the World Wide Web. One of the oldest academic and scholarly websites, it entered the Internet in 1994. and takes an approach that differs markedly from many Internet projects.

Unlike search engines like Google it does not find a single answer for the inquirer. It conceives of information existing within a complex ecology or set of connections, because they allow us to experience the richness of the texts and images it encounters. It searches out books,

paintings, political events, and eminent and not-so-eminent Victorians in multiple contexts, which we can examine when and if we wish to do so.

It differs fundamentally from websites like Wikipedia and reference books, such as *Britannica*, and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Each of these are renowned (and authors of material use frequently) but the Victorian Web presents multiple points of view and debate.



*An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.*

~ M.K. Gandhi

# Shedding problems of loneliness

In Western society, increasing numbers of people are living alone. While living alone does not cause loneliness, reports of loneliness are especially common among those who do. As people reach old age, they often find themselves without a partner; friends drop by the wayside; transportation gets more difficult, and contact with others is less frequent. These conditions invite feelings of loneliness.

Loneliness is not only an emotional burden, but much research associates loneliness with health problems - possibly equivalent to the effects of smoking.

## PROGRAMMES

The USA, and the UK have similar issues among their older population, and they have developed ways of counteracting it. A review by researchers at the University of Sheffield identified a number of successful programmes to counter loneli-

## Age benefit?

Bob, a 70-year-old, extremely wealthy widower, shows up at the Country Club with a beautiful 25-year-old blonde who knocks everyone's socks and hangs over Bob's arm and listens intently. His buddies at the club are all amazed.

. At the first chance, they corner him and ask, 'Bob, how'd you get the trophy girlfriend?' Bob replies, 'Girlfriend? —'She's my wife!'

They are knocked over, but ask. 'So, how'd you persuade her to marry you?'

'I lied about my age,' Bob replies.. 'What, did you tell her you were only 50?'

Bob smiles and says, 'No, I told her I was 90'.

ness among older people. The characteristics of the best are:

1. Adaptability to a local context, which means the interests and abilities of the local community.
2. A community development approach where older people are involved in the design and running of the programme.
3. Activities that support productive engagement, rather than passive activities or activities without a specific goal.

One success is the "men's shed" movement, offering men a place to meet together. They gather in "the shed" (a workshop setting) to do something productive. Some sheds offer opportunities for woodworking, metalworking, electronics, and mechanical jobs. The sheds provide men with a chance to use new skills, while increasing activity, and developing and sustaining relationships.

Other programmes provide computerised access for those who are geographically isolated or home-bound. In one study, researchers at a St. Louis University arranged for older people living in long term-care facilities to be given a dog to care for and enjoy. In some cases the dog was robotic, rather than alive. Both types of dogs reduced loneliness, although the living dog was somewhat more effective.

## TAKE INITIATIVE

Whatever the public sector and social services provide, it is clear that the most significant changes will result from grass-roots activities. The isolated must take the initiative. There are many opportunities

for action — volunteering, expanding relationships, renewing skills, developing new interests, fulfilling dreams, and so on.

## REACH OUT

Those who don't feel the pangs of loneliness can reach out to those who have been left behind in the rush of daily life. Phone calls, emails, letters, and personal visits — especially to family members and old friends — can make a significant difference. [Taos Institute]

From: "An Insidious Global Epidemic of Loneliness is Affecting the Mental Health of Older Adults" by Clare Gardiner, 'Aging Today.'

(U3A courses and discussion groups are another way of getting new friends and interests. - Ed'.}

## U3A Email Directory

Sending email correspondence to U3A Dunedin? Using addresses below will take your messages to the appropriate person and have quicker attention.

### General information:

*contact@u3adunedin.org.nz*

### Courses:

*courses@u3adunedin.org.nz*

### Membership:

*membership@u3adunedin.org*

**Forum:** *newsletter@u3adunedin.org.nz*

## U3A Phone Directory

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

**Chairperson:** Linda Kinniburgh  
473- 8443

**Board matters** Richard Highgam  
476-1848

**Membership :** Lynda Jackson  
473-6947

**Programme:Committee**  
Stuart Strachan 482-2339

**Discussion Groups:** Trish Irvine  
482 1651

**Courses:** Phyll Esplin 467-2594

# Why do we laugh?

- by John Hale

.Humour is not of one single type or origin. No one explanation will suffice. Theories of human behaviour should not single out one feature of a mixed phenomenon. What is the best explanation? What explains the most about laughter? Suddenness, or superiority, or delight, or incongruity, or something else?

Is it the shifting, hence exploitable, mixing of things? Otherwise, humour is a zero-sum game: the joy of winning must be at the expense of losers. People who always win, or always get the last word, are boring. Why do we laugh?

## Sudden glory

. The jokester “goes one up on” the target or subject of the jokes. It is gratifying to “get the last laugh,” and whole theories of laughing are built on this “sudden glory” [triumphing]. And yet, it misses Shakespeare’s point, that “A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it, never in the tongue of him that makes it.”

Trust the tale, not the teller. And in some cultures, people laugh from surprise, as well or instead. Or we laugh from simple delight, delight at absurdities or incongruities, or extremes, exaggerations...

Readers of *Forum*: what makes you laugh? And is it pointless to generalise or theorise about it? Psychologists have held whole conferences on the topic: did that make them laugh, or were they (like Queen Victoria) not amused?

## Roman humour

I heard a lecture recently on Roman humour. It was argued that among the ruling class humour was aimed (1) to affirm one’s superiority (2) to affirm solidarity with the people you joked with and (3) to be offensive



when the occasion was right. All three types of joke are put-downs, although the first two may seem to contradict each other.

## Putdowns

This view of humour and laughing has had great influence. Thomas Hobbes in the 17th century said laughter was “a sudden glory.” He meant that all of a sudden the joker has achieved a putdown, so as to “glory” or “triumph” over an opponent (in Latin, *gloriari*). In other words, putdowns, getting one over the opponent, and telling the world about it later (“bragging rights”).

## Rebelling

There’s something misguided about all of this. Is humour so competitive? I don’t deny that males in company often manifest the urge to get the last word, or that there is something competitive about wit or opinion. But in bulk, or when repeated and predictable, this is also one of the dreariest things, whether clubby or in real contestation (political or courtroom). In any case, it’s the hearers who decide what’s funny, by laughing or not. A wit is not the arbiter of his or her own wittiness.

## Suddenness

So what about the other part of Hobbes’s definition, the suddenness? For it seems to me that we don’t laugh when surprise is absent: repetition removes the humour, and so do too many jokes in a row. The suddenness is surprise, the effect when we see a situation or a person or an incident in a new light; or with a changed emphasis.



## Surprise

And I read somewhere that cultures not only laugh at different things, (obviously), but that some cultures laugh from the surprise itself. Surprise, startlement, something new or strange, tickles something. It intrigues, for sure; and captures attention; which delights us when we are bored—always assuming it is not seen as danger, and so swamped by fear (an even stronger seizure of the body than humour).

## Theorising

Humour is not of one single type or origin. No one explanation will suffice. Theories of human behaviour should not single out one feature of a mixed phenomenon. What is the best explanation? What explains the most about laughter? Suddenness, or superiority, or delight, or incongruity, or something else? Is it the shifting, hence exploitable, mixing of things?

Otherwise, humour is a zero-sum game: the joy of winning must be at the expense of losers. People who always win, or always get the last word, are boring.





Warm splendour at Olveston Historic Home,  
Above: grand piano in the drawing room,  
Below: Persian room.

Photos by Ann Trewern  
(Photography Discussion  
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