



## February 2025 Newsletter

### From the President

Greetings, especially to our new members Jillian Meredith, Barry Lancaster, Ravi Gooneratne, Graeme Savage, Mark Renton, Corrinne Renton, Kate Windsor, Ruth Wood, and Lynette Harris.

I am pleased to report that we are assembling a wide variety of interesting speakers for the year, but suggestions from members for future speakers are always welcomed. Our visit last month to the Drury's "museum" resulted from an offer made by a member, Eric Apperley, and this proved to be a highly successful event (see below). However, I must say that our approaches to potential speakers are not always successful, for a variety of reasons. This could be that they are too busy, or tired of speaking to other U3A and Probus groups. (Over the past year I have been asked to present my "woolly" talk to five other Christchurch groups, and have accepted all invitations.)

### The AGM – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March

**New committee members are very welcome.** The U3A Ellesmere Constitution provides for up to 9 committee members. Currently we have 7 members, so there is space for 2 more members. If you are interested in helping make U3A Ellesmere happen, then please talk to me, or one of the Committee members so your name can be put forward for election at the AGM in March. If you have secretarial skills you will be especially welcome.

**U3A Ellesmere Constitution:** The Societies Act 2022 (the Act) requires incorporated societies to re-register by April 2025. U3A Ellesmere therefore must re-register and, to meet the requirements of the new Act, some new sections must be added to our 2016 Constitution. For example, *Dispute Resolution*, while other sections must be expanded or altered slightly to comply with the Act. For example, we need to specify the number of **working** days rather than the number of days' notice given in various circumstances. We will email you a copy of our Proposed New Constitution and detail these changes so you have time to consider them. You will be able to raise any questions or concerns you have at our AGM, prior to voting on the Constitution.

### Subscriptions

Please remember that payment of the 2025 subscription (\$35 for current members, \$40 for new members) is due, prior to the AGM on 19 March. Please make your internet banking payment to:

- U3A Ellesmere Westpac Account **03-0767-0001025-000.**
  - For "Details on their statement" Please enter **Family Name** in the "Particulars" box and **Given Name** in the "Code" Box. Enter **U3A sub25** in the "Reference" box.  
(If your names are more than the available characters, enter just those that fit. This will be enough for the Treasurer to identify your payment.)
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## Our January meeting

For those of us who came to Ray and Nancy Drury's place we enjoyed a real treat, and I am grateful to Eric Apperley for making this event possible. The car display was awesome, and every exhibit had a story. Eric and Ray outlined the history and intricacies of the two Wurlitzer concert organs, and the labour of love that was involved in restoring them. The marvellous recital by Richard Hore brought back memories of popular music, both old and modern, and had our feet tapping. It is astounding that a blind musician can play these complex instruments so well.

Donations amount to \$625 were received, and these were passed on to Ray and Nancy for their chosen charity, The Neurological Foundation. Thank you for supporting this.



(More photos at the end of this newsletter.)

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## Upcoming speaker

### Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February

Dr Tim Williams – *“Conflict in the Middle East: why are they always fighting? What happens next?”*

Tim is a clinical psychologist, with an interest in working internationally, especially in Israel and Palestine (from 2006 to 2016). He has worked with Doctors Without Borders, the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs, and the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees.

Tim was born in Roxburgh, grew up in Gore and trained at Otago and Canterbury Universities. He has had an interest in working internationally and first worked with refugees in a refugee camp in Thailand in the 1980's. On returning to Christchurch, he was involved in the early days of refugee resettlement support, as well as working in various clinical settings in Christchurch.

In 2006 Tim volunteered with Doctors Without Borders and spent a year in the city of Nablus in the northern West Bank. Many of the clients of the service there were Palestinian refugees, and all had been subject to the violent conflict called the second *intifada*, as well as family violence. He went on to work in various UN roles in the West Bank and Gaza. This included working with the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and UNRWA, the UN agency with responsibility for Palestinians who had

become refugees in the wars of 1948 and others in the 1967 conflict. Tim then worked for 6 years in the Office of the Quartet Representative, an international body directly supporting and coordinating the work of Tony Blair when he was the Quartet Representative.

After 10 years in the Middle East, Tim spent six years in New York City. There he worked working on consultancies in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and the US Virgin Islands, as well as desk consultancies on Middle East issues. Tim returned to Christchurch in 2022 and now practices as a clinical psychologist in the city. He also has a contract providing psychology support to an agency working with the refugee community in Ashburton.

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## Our March meeting

Three important things to note:

- 1) Because of a prior booking for the Baylis Lounge, we have had to move our meeting one week earlier, on 19<sup>th</sup> March.
- 2) Our speaker Ian Lockhead has another engagement directly after our meeting, so he will need to leave earlier than usual. Therefore, we have decided that Ian should start his presentation at 10 am. It has yet to be decided if morning tea will be served.
- 3) The U3A Ellesmere Annual General Meeting will begin soon after 11 am. More details about the AGM, and Ian's talk, will be included in our next newsletter.

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## Interest Group update

One of our members, Pip Newman, is interested in starting a new group. It's called

### Metaphysical-Esoteric Discussion Group

- Have you ever asked yourself, 'What life and existence is all about?'
- What is existence and reality? What or who is God? and proof of the reality of God.
- What is the nature of space and time?

These questions are among the most popular and debated topics for most metaphysical-esoteric discussion groups. One definition states: 'Metaphysics refers to the studies of what cannot be reached through objective studies of material reality.' If you ponder on some of these topics and many more like them, come let us know.

If you are interested in joining this group, or more information, please contact Pip cell 027 404 0175.

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## Other notices that may be of interest to members

### Heritage Train Excursions

My name's Tommy Secker, and I work for Steam Incorporated based on the Kapiti Coast near Wellington, NZ. Formed in 1972 with the intention to restore, maintain & operate railway assets of the former New Zealand Railways, our trains take us nationwide. A registered charity, we pride ourselves on our ability to make up trains 'as they once were', and use our train to provide a platform to showcase heritage and provide an opportunity to educate the younger generation on the romance of rail.

I write to let you know of our exciting plans to bring our heritage diesel locomotive and 100-year-old carriages to Christchurch to operate an exciting quintet of heritage rail excursions.

*Our programme includes:*

- Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> March & Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March - **The Alpine Ranger** - A fantastic day excursion up the award-winning Midland line from Christchurch to Arthur's Pass.  
Adult \$169 | Child \$89 - <https://steaminc.org.nz/book-train-trip/the-alpine-ranger/>
- Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March - **The Kaikoura Explorer** - A cruise up the east coast, exploring North Canterbury's hilly terrain before it opens up to the Pacific Ocean, to the seaside town of Kaikoura. The first day excursion from Christchurch to Kaikoura in many years!  
Adult \$169 | Child \$89 - <https://steaminc.org.nz/book-train-trip/the-kaikoura-explorer/>
- Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March - **The Waikari Wanderer** - In a collaboration with North Canterbury's premier heritage railway, the Weka Pass Railway, join us for a sprint north from Christchurch, making our way off the KiwiRail network and through the windy Weka Pass!  
Adult \$79 | Child \$59 - <https://steaminc.org.nz/book-train-trip/the-waikari-express/>

As a community organisation indebted to providing New Zealanders with the unique opportunity to step back in time, we're pleased to offer yourselves the chance to ride these one-off trains. Larger groups can be accommodated at discounted rates, and we'd love to help tailor you and your team your day.

More details about these excursions and booking tickets can be found on the Steam Incorporated web site – <https://steaminc.org.nz>

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## The Last Word

An article about coffee in the 24 August 2024 issue of New Scientist caught my eye. Here is a much-condensed version, retaining its essential messages.

### ***Caffeine: The unfiltered truth***

#### *How worried should we be about our love for coffee?*

Coffee's best-known component, caffeine, is the most widely used psychoactive drug, but unlike other addictive substances it is largely unregulated. However, numerous recent studies have found that, taken in the right way, caffeine can provide many health benefits, especially with respect to your cognitive abilities and alertness.

But dosing is a concern because what is safe for some might not be for others. It only takes around 45 minutes after a cup of coffee to be absorbed in your circulatory system and travel to your brain. Here it blocks receptors for the neurotransmitter adenosine, making us more energetic and alert.

There are other benefits too. After consuming caffeine, people report being happier, and there are signs that it can cause an even longer-term mood boost. For example, studies consistently show that those who drink 3-4 cups (or shots) of caffeinated coffee a day are less likely to experience depression, and have a lower risk of suicide. However, the same relationship has not been shown with decaffeinated coffee (decaf), suggesting that the caffeine is responsible.

Furthermore, research conducted by Harvard University and other research institutions has found that drinkers of caffeinated coffee have a significantly lower risk of developing Parkinson's disease. But the reason is unclear at this stage.



The good news for coffee drinkers is that coffee brings benefits unrelated to caffeine. Purported heart benefits are a good example. It was thought that caffeine sped up your heart rate and caused palpitations, so coffee was bad for you. But recent research in Australia and the UK has revealed that people who drank 2-3 cups of coffee a day generally had a lower risk of developing coronary heart disease, heart failure or arrhythmias. Decaf drinkers saw the same benefits (except arrhythmias), suggesting that there is something else in coffee that is responsible for its heart protective benefits.

*“The sweet spot seems to be around three cups of coffee daily, which is associated with a 25% reduction in heart disease and a reduction in all-cause mortality.”*

If caffeine isn't behind the particular upside of consuming coffee, what is? Prior to roasting, coffee beans are fermented to produce polyphenols. These are chemicals made by plants to protect themselves from environmental stresses such as insect predation and extremes in temperature. They are thought to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects on the body. Coffee is also high in fibre, a beneficial dietary component associated with a healthy gut microbiome (the collection of bacteria, fungi and viruses that live in our digestive tract). A particular bacterium has been identified, *Lawsonibacter*, which is found almost exclusively in the guts of people who drink coffee, including decaf. It has been found that the average coffee drinker has five times the amount of this microbe compared to a tea drinker. The more coffee you drink, the more your gut microbiota will be dominated by *Lawsonibacter*. This is a good thing because when these bacteria feed on the fibres and polyphenols in coffee they release chemicals called short-chain fatty acids that are known to be anti-inflammatory, calming the immune system.

Chronic inflammation is thought to be the main cause of heart disease. Coffee consumption has also been associated with lowered risk of diabetes, obesity, and allergies. A leading scientist in this area says,

*“Virtually everything – even mental health – is probably related to low-level inflammation of some kind. The evidence suggests that if you are a coffee drinker, there is no reason to stop, and that all the data I have looked at shows that two to three cups of coffee per day should be part of a healthy diet”.*

While there have been fewer long-term studies of decaf, the few there are show it may be just as effective at warding off heart disease and diabetes. However, if you want to lower the risk of depression and Parkinson's then go for the real deal.

*The article warns that caffeine can pose a health risk in certain medical circumstances. If in doubt consult a doctor.*

Next month: What about tea and energy drinks?

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## Your committee for 2023/24 is:

**President** – Errol Wood, **Vice-President** – John Prendergast, **Secretary** – Nancy Borrie,

**Treasurer** – Neal Borrie, **Interest Groups Coordinator** - Lyn Minchington

**Tea Team Coordinator** – Warren Greenwood, **Membership Coordinator** – Dorothy Jordan

Our email address is [u3aellesmere@gmail.com](mailto:u3aellesmere@gmail.com)

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## More photos from our January meeting





