

March 2025 Newsletter

From the President

Last month's speaker – Dr Tim Williams “The Current Conflict in the Middle East”

I received numerous very positive comments following Tim Williams' enlightening presentation last month, despite his sombre message about the prospects of peace in the Middle East. There are too many historical animosities and competing interests for us to be optimistic that a lasting peace will arrive any time soon. But we learned a lot from Tim, including some new terms including the euphemism “mowing the grass.” These are short, sharp, military operations, initiated these days by the Government of Israel, to maintain a certain level of control over occupied areas without committing to a long-term political solution, like how we mow a lawn to keep it neat and tidy.

Many people take the side of Israel in the current conflict, given their history of persecution through the ages, but one must feel some sympathy for the desire of the Palestinian people to have a permanent place to call home, and the massive destruction in Gaza. We heard from Tim that the Middle East is an intractable problem with global implications. (And seemingly, with recent news, the Ukraine situation will not improve any time soon either. Very depressing!)

The AGM – Wednesday 19th March

Note that our next meeting is a week earlier, because there is a prior booking for the Baylis Lounge on 26th March.

Our speaker, Dr Ian Lochhead (see Upcoming Speakers) will start his presentation at 10am because he has another engagement after the meeting.

The AGM will commence at the conclusion of Ian's talk, at about 11am.

Morning tea will be served after the AGM has concluded, around 11.30.

New committee members are very welcome.

The U3A Ellesmere Constitution allows up to 9 committee members. For the past year we have had 7 members, but there is space for 2 more. Currently, six of the 2024 committee have been nominated to stand again, so there is an opportunity for others to join the 2025 committee.

If you are interested in helping U3A Ellesmere to continue to operate well, then please talk to me, or one of the Committee members so your name can be put forward for election at the AGM. If you have secretarial skills, or expertise in web site maintenance, you will be especially welcome.

There is a nomination form at the end of this newsletter that can be used to nominate yourself or someone else who is willing to be nominated. The completed form can be emailed to u3aellesmere@gmail.com.

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. 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.)

PLEASE: If you have decided to not renew your subscription, be sure to email us to resign soon at (u3aellesmere@gmail.com). This will enable someone on our waiting list to become a member.

Last year, a significant number of members failed to meet the March deadline we set for paying their subscriptions, and we were left not knowing whether they were resigning, or just tardy. We want to be fair to people on the waiting list.

Upcoming speakers

Wednesday 19th March

Dr Ian Lochhead, retired Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Canterbury, will be speaking prior to the AGM. He will speak on the architect, Benjamin Mountfort, because it is the 200th anniversary of his birth in March 2025. Mountfort was the architect of, among other buildings, the Canterbury Provincial Council Buildings, the first Canterbury College buildings (now the Christchurch Arts Centre), and the Canterbury Museum. He also designed St Stephen's Anglican Church in Lincoln, as well as churches at Sedgemere and Brookside, and elsewhere in the district.

Wednesday 23rd April

Des Lines, a retired airline pilot will talk about his life in aviation. He made his first solo flight at age 16, progressed through the NAC and Air New Zealand ranks over the next 40 years, and eventually became a B747-400 captain for five years before his retirement. He has a small collection of vintage planes, and is now involved in mentoring young pilots as they embark on careers in aviation. No doubt Des will have some interesting stories to tell.

Wednesday 28th May

Alex Tan is Professor of Political Science at the University of Canterbury. He will speak on international politics, which is very topical at this time.

News from Interest Groups

As we welcome several new members, it seems timely to inform you about our Interest Groups, and how to access them on the website.

Look up the website which is u3aellesmere.org and click on Interest Groups on the black bar at the top. You will see a list of interest groups, convenors and meeting times.

Most groups meet once a month. The groups that currently have spaces are Gardening, Travel, Movies and Ted Talks.

We would welcome anyone who would like to start another group, either of the same topic, or a new interest. Please let a committee member know if you have any ideas.

There is currently one proposed group: Metaphysical-Esoteric Discussion Group. If you are interested, or would like more information, please contact Pip 027 404 0175.

Lyn Minchington, Coordinator

The Last Word(s)

Continuing from last month's message about caffeine and coffee:

Time for Tea?

Tea has long been considered a healthy drink, with proponents claiming that it could boost your immune system, reduce inflammation, and even ward off cancer and heart disease. But does the evidence stack up?

Where better to find out than in the UK, renowned as a nation of tea lovers? One recent UK study tracked 500,000 tea drinkers over 11 years. It showed that drinking 2-3 cups of regular (ie, black tea) per day was associated with a modest 9-13 per cent lower risk of death. (I have a problem interpreting this statement because everyone has a 100% risk of dying sometime, but presumably, drinking black tea regularly could increase your life expectancy)

However, green tea, which is made from unfermented leaves, may be even better. It is richer in polyphenols, which act as powerful antioxidants, and these neutralise free radicals which destroy our cells and DNA.

Here is a quote from Dr Tim Spector, an eminent epidemiologist from Kings College London: "Based on the current evidence, black tea – which most English people drink – is not as healthy as coffee, and doesn't have the same benefits particularly on the heart"

But if coffee isn't your "cup of tea", you might consider green tea instead to reap similar health benefits.

EV or not to be?

New Scientist magazine includes a column where its readers can submit questions on all sorts of topics, and other readers, who think they know a lot about the subject, can respond.

In a recent issue, a reader asked if he should keep his 23-year-old petrol car or scrap it and buy a new electric vehicle. He said he is elderly and drives about 8,000 km a year. Responses from the readers included the following advice:

- While going from an old petrol car to an electric car has environmental benefits, in this case it is unlikely to be a wise decision. A new electric car requires 6 tonnes of carbon for its manufacture and when running produces about 94 grams less carbon per kilometre than a petrol car. So, to recover the carbon burden of the electric car's production, the reader would to drive their new car 65,000 kilometres (ie, for around 8 years).
- The rare earth metals used in electric car batteries are extracted by strip mining, which has a detrimental effect on about 500 square kilometres of adjacent land. Furthermore, these mines are often in countries with dubious records on pollution and employee rights (and responsible disposal of old batteries is likely to be problematic too.)
- The mining of essential elements such as lithium, copper, and cobalt cause serious environmental, political, and worker harm at every stage of their extraction and refinement.
- To help the environment the best transportation change we can make is to use mass transport wherever possible, use bicycles and electric bicycles for short trips, and plan our car trips to include as many of our weekly errands in a single trip as possible.

(PS – Ruth and I have decided to retain our reliable, 18-year-old VW Golf indefinitely because it has travelled less than 80,000 km in that time, and achieves around 5 litre per 100 km on trips. And our e-bikes serve us well around Lincoln and beyond.)

U3A Ellesmere Nomination for Committee Member

I, _____ nominate

_____ who is a member of U3A Ellesmere

to join the U3A Ellesmere committee for the 2025/2026 year.

Proposer's name: _____

Proposer's signature: _____ Date _____

Nominee's name: _____

Nominee's signature: _____ Date _____