

October 2025 Newsletter

From the President

Our October speaker, Sarah Anderson, provided a very interesting presentation on the formation and activities of Te Ahu Patiki Charitable Trust, which focuses its conservation work on a 500 hectare of land that includes the two highest peaks on Banks Peninsula – Mt Herbert and Mt Bradley. The land was purchased in 2021 to create a public park, adjacent to Orton Bradley Park and several farms. This purchase was facilitated by the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust and supported by donations of over \$900,000 from more than 3000 individuals and organisations.

Te Ahu Pātiki contains a wide diversity of habitats, mostly north facing, and ranging from 200m to over 900m above sea level. They include sub-alpine summits, bluffs, rocky outcrops, old growth remnants and regeneration through gorse and open pasture. Removal of grazing stock enables old growth remnants on the block to replenish and seed new trees. Natural regeneration through the gorse canopy that covers much of the land will transform to mature forest in time, as it has done at the successful Hinewai Reserve near Akaroa.

Sarah outlined the positive relationships that have been developed with kindred trusts, the adjacent land owners, and the local community. Challenges that the Trust has faced in its first few years has been the control/elimination of pigs, possums and invasive plants such as gorse and Spanish heath, much of which populates inaccessible places in the reserve. Spanish heath is an invasive exotic shrub that chokes out native plants, and is difficult to control. It has also been a major problem in Tasmania.

For more information check out the Te Ahu Patiki Trust web site: <https://www.teahupatiki.org/>

Here is the link which provides maps of walking tracks and other interesting information:

<https://www.teahupatiki.org/maps-1>

As already notified, our final meeting of the year on 26th November will conclude with a luncheon for members. The venue will be the same as last year, the Baylis Lounge.

If you haven't signed up for the luncheon yet, and intend coming along, please email us by the 14th.

Our next speaker

Wednesday 26nd November

The original speaker we arranged for November was Mark Rocket – a New Zealand entrepreneur, aerospace executive, and the founder and CEO of Kea Aerospace.

Unfortunately, Mark is now unavailable on that date, but will speak at our April 2026 meeting instead.

This month's speaker will now be a Christchurch historian, David Hodgson, who will speaker on the life and exploits of the outstanding New Zealander, Nancy Wake.

Science Interest Group report

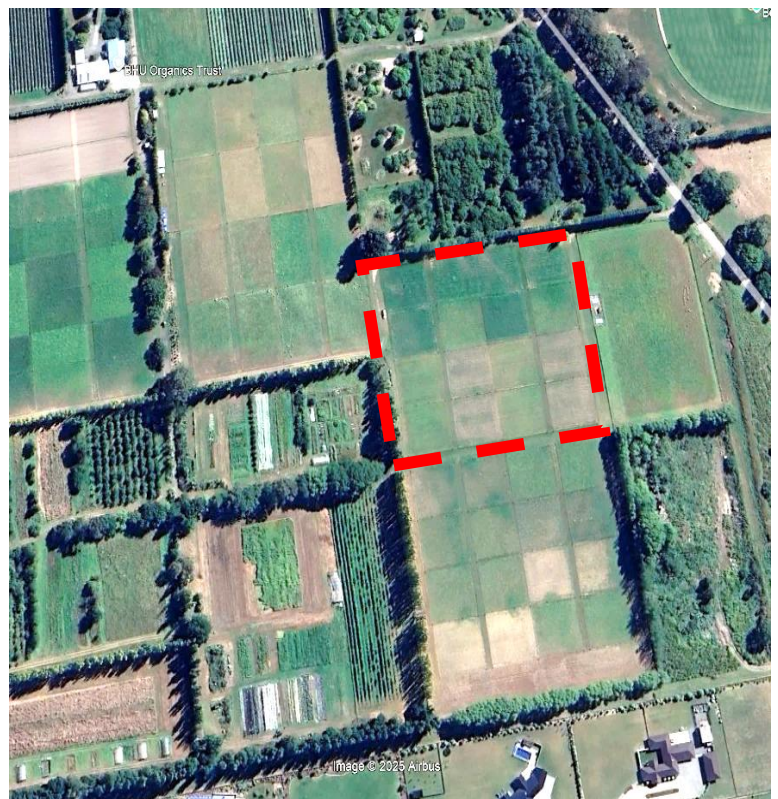
Following our September meeting, Derick Moot offered to host a visit of the Science Group to his experimental plots at Lincoln University on 22nd October. His invitation was accepted and 14 of us arrived there on a sunny, windy afternoon.

Here, four small mobs of sheep were rotationally grazed on 16 different plots (“mini-farms”) which offered a variety of feed regimes. This was a very interesting visit, and we gained a greater appreciation of the obstacles that scientists face when carrying out biological experiments outdoors. The vagaries in animal performance, climate, etc. provide significant challenges in obtaining worthwhile results and conclusions from such experiments, but Derrick appeared to have designed the grazing experiments to minimise the effects of these vagaries.

For example, just one breed is used – the Bopepe (an easy-care sheep, also called Pitt Island sheep, originating in the Chathams). While Derrick’s experiment still has several years to run, the feed types that he champions (ie, lucerne, cocksfoot/clover) are already showing significant, economic advantages. His principal objective is optimise the feeding regime to increase the live weight of lambs, and for the lambs to reach the desired weight for slaughter quicker than other regimes.

Below is a Google Earth view of Derrick’s research area, just over the fence from Verdecos Park. The 4x4 matrix of plots that Derrick is using is within the red box. The variation in grazing levels and plant growth between plots is evident.

Many thanks to Derrick for sharing with us his enthusiasm to improving the profitability of dry country sheep farming.



The newsletters of other U3A groups often report the activities of their interest groups, with photos. It would be great if our interest groups could report of their activities from time to time, to keep our members informed, and perhaps attract new members to their group. Please forward your contributions to Lyn or Errol.

The Last Word(s)

We celebrated our tenth anniversary mid-year, and the first president Lena Metcalf gave very informative address on the formation and the first years of U3A Ellesmere. In response to requests from members, Lena has kindly provided the text of her address as a record of our early years.

FORMATION OF U3A ELLESMERE & THE FIRST SIX YEARS

In the middle of 2012, I was able to join U3A Port Hills, one of the few Christchurch U3A's accepting members. By the middle of 2014, U3A Port Hills had a waiting list, and they asked if I would be willing to start a new U3A in Halswell, giving a small loan to assist the set up. I considered their request, and said I would be willing to set up a new U3A but it wouldn't be in Halswell, it would be in Lincoln.

There was no U3A in the Selwyn District, the new Lincoln Events Centre was an ideal venue, and membership would come from the wider community, so the name would not be Lincoln.

Port Hills U3A agreed, and on the 22nd September a joint meeting was held with 3 members from Port Hills, myself, Carol Bourdot, John Yarrall and Heather Simpson. We all agreed that U3A Ellesmere would be the name, and the yearly subscription would be \$25, the same as Port Hills. We proposed to call a public meeting at the end of October and set a starting date in February 2015. I had already approached the Lincoln Events Centre and set a monthly date for our meeting.

I then met with Noeline Ward, John Yarrall, Heather Simpson, Carol Bourdot and Lorraine Bampton, and all agreed that we should proceed, and they would assist. Two hours after that meeting ended, John Yarrall rang me to say he had done the website.

A Special General Meeting was held on the 26th November 2014. 19 attended, with 15 apologies.

It was moved that U3A Ellesmere apply to incorporate, and the annual subscription would be \$25.

The following were elected. President Lena Metcalf, Vice President Heather Simpson, Treasurer Noeline Ward, Secretary John Yarrall, Committee, Ann Collingwood, Carol Bourdot and Marsha Stevens. Ann served for 1 year, Marsha 2. Carole organised publicity.

I quote from the Minutes of the Committee meeting on 21st January, 2015," We have now been incorporated, opened a bank account, got an IRD number and have applied for a tax exemption certificate." Sincere thanks to John Yarrall for these achievements. U3A Port Hills had offered us an interest free loan of \$500, to be repaid in two instalments. We decided to charge members \$2 for attending our speaker meetings. Visitors \$5.

John and I had attended a U3A Network meeting and lunch. Possible Interest Groups were discussed, as well as publicity.

We met with Lisa Larkin, for a second time on the 13th February 2015. It was noted that we now had 65 members, and that Selwyn District Council will sponsor room hire and morning tea for 3 months.

At the first AGM on 11.4.2016 we had 150 members, 180 at our second AGM and the number continued to increase. Committee member Lorraine Bampton, a longtime resident of Leeston, was proactive, and we soon had many members from Springston, Leeston and Southbridge. Our membership now reflected our name.

Our Speaker meetings were held on the fourth Wednesday of the month, also with meetings on the 5th Wednesdays, giving a total of 13 meetings annually (February to November). This was very good value for our members. The Hon Amy Adams, MP for Selwyn, was our preferred first speaker, but she could only come when Parliament was not sitting, so she was booked for April, to speak on her Justice Portfolio. Lincoln Rotary Club members were invited to this meeting.

In future years we had the majority of our year's speakers arranged by October for the following year, so, our first year was more challenging. So we prevailed upon family members. My scientist daughter, Victoria, was the first speaker, her topic - Climate Change. My medical specialist daughter, Sarah, spoke in May on Antibiotic Resistance. Carol's husband Graeme, spoke in September on Biological Control of Weeds. The late Professor Steve Wratten spoke on April, 5th on Ecology and Monocultures. This was the first of many speakers from the Lincoln University academic staff and the University was very supportive. I note that on the two meetings in July, we had Neil Cox on the Restoration of the Isaac Theatre Royal, and Andre Lovatt on the Arts Centre Restoration. In November Dr Sue Bagshaw was the speaker on Youth Mental Health, and this was followed by a finger food lunch served by the Lincoln Women's Institute. This was a fund raiser for them and a delicious lunch for us. This became an end-of-year ritual. I made the Christmas cake, or two cakes as the membership grew!! A year later Dr Philip Bagshaw spoke at this meeting on 'The Charity Hospital'.

The committee would suggest topics for the year and then we endeavoured to find the best speaker for that topic. Over the years we had many outstanding speakers. In 2017 the speaker topics included, Science, Art, Music, Economics, Medicine, Agriculture and Water.

In 2018 Michelle Sharp of Kilmarnock Enterprises spoke. She was an inspiring speaker from New Zealand's leading social enterprise. Thereafter, each year we organised a speaker from another social enterprise, ie, The Champion Centre, Hohepa Homes, and the Laura Fergusson Trust

By 2018 we were financially stable, had cancelled the \$2 attendance fee, and we made the decision to invite a few higher profile speakers, pay a bigger fee, with airfares and accommodation if necessary.

In November Dr Jan Wright, ex Commissioner of the Environment spoke on New Zealand's Environment Challenges - 1080.

We wanted Sir Geoffrey Palmer to speak on The New Zealand Constitution. He wasn't available but recommended Andrew Butler from his Thorndon Chambers who in April 2019 gave a superb address in his Irish brogue. Investigative Journalist Amanda Miller, who had produced a video of the inspiring Celia Lashlie, just a few days before Celia's death, spoke in November 2019.

My thanks to Heather, and later Carole, for their efforts in assisting me in organising speakers.

The format of our Speaker meetings was important to the committee. They wanted members to mix, and communicate with each other, to be involved, as well as participate in Interest Groups. For our meetings I positioned myself at the back of the Baylis Lounge so that I could greet members as they arrived, (hopefully by name), I started the meetings at 10 am, spent 15 – 20 minutes giving information, often promoting interest groups and other activities in the region, before breaking for morning tea. This gave members opportunity to mix, mingle and talk to each other, which they did! The committee could also mix, or advise on Interest Groups. I was then able to meet the Speaker, and make sure the necessary IT support was available before morning tea ended. This format worked very well.

Interest groups were an important extra for members, but if there was an existing local group we didn't compete with an Interest group. So no Historical, Bridge or walking groups were established. The committee members convened many Interest Groups. Noeline – Movies, Ann – Art visiting galleries, John - Solving computer problems and later Introduction to croquet. Heather later took over Art Appreciation in a different format. Carole was our link to the Lincoln Historical Society and later took over the Travel Group. I convened a BDS Book group, and Natural History. Of the many original groups some are still going today, such a Gardening, Out to Lunch, Controversial Current Affairs, Book Club, Science, and Travel. All groups were important and provided variety, like cribbage, cycling, wine appreciation, food appreciation, and writing life stories.

I started the Natural History group in June 2015 with a programme of lectures and field trips. After the Christchurch Earthquakes, many people became extremely interested in geology, frequently checking their favourite websites, so it made sense to make geology an important component. My thanks to Dr Glenn Vallender for his many informative geology talks and field trips.

The Natural History group had a large membership, so with the committee's approval in 2017 I held an extra meeting, in January, for the Natural History group, but inviting all the U3A Membership. This was well attended.

At the end of January, 2020 Professor Jo Neal, from North Carolina University spoke about the latest research on Glyphosate -the active ingredient of Roundup. Jo had been here collaborating with Dr. Graeme Bourdot. We invited staff from the CRI's, Christchurch Parks and Reserves, and Christchurch Botanic Gardens to attend, with no charge. Many attended. Then Covid disrupted our lives, the AGM couldn't be held as an actual meeting, and many of the speaker meetings were cancelled. I couldn't continue Natural History in its current form either.

2021 was my last annual report which included eleven Interest group reports. I had decided to step down and John Smith became President.

In conclusion, my thanks to all the committee members. You were superb.

The support from the members was outstanding, many contributing in various ways. I always appreciated, your knowledge, enthusiasm, the help and support you gave me. Thank you.

Lena Metcalf 4.7.2025

Committee responsibilities for 2025/26 :

President – Errol Wood, **Vice-President** – John Prendergast, **Secretary** – Murray Allison,

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

Constitution Revision – Nancy Borrie **Membership Coordinator** – Dorothy Jordan

Morning Tea Team Leader – Nola Sutherland (not a committee member)

Our email address is u3aellesmere@gmail.com
