

January 2026 Newsletter

From the President

Welcome to the New Year. I hope that you have had a great Christmas and are ready to face the challenges and opportunities that 2026 may bring.

Meeting dates for 2026

We try to schedule our meetings for the **4th Wednesday** of the month. However, these preferred dates are not always possible, mostly because of clashes with other demands for the Baylis Lounge. So I am listing here the dates for 2026. To avoid later confusion, I suggest that you note the meeting dates (especially those highlighted in bold below) in your calendar or diary now:

January 28th, February 25th, **March 18th**, **April 29th**, May 27th, June 24th, **July 29th**, August 26th,
September 30th, **October 21st**, November 25th.

U3A Ellesmere Constitution

Every incorporated society must have a set of rules — under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 the rules document is called a constitution. This is an important legal requirement that sets out a society's purposes, what it does and how it operates. This provides certainty and consistency in the way the society is run and how disputes are handled.

As an incorporated society, under the new Act, U3A Ellesmere can only carry out lawful activities that align with the purposes outlined in its constitution. The committee and members are required to refer to this document for guidance on running our society.

The new 2022 Act and its regulations specify what must be covered in our constitution. There are different, and more detailed, minimum requirements than under the old Act of 1908. Consequently, the committee, notably Nancy with assistance from John, has been working for some time on drafting our new constitution. A final draft has now been prepared and is attached to this email for our members' approval. You all have a stake in U3A Ellesmere, so we ask that you check the document thoroughly, and forward any comments or suggestions to u3aellesmere@gmail.com, with "New U3A Constitution" in the subject line. Please attend to this promptly to give the committee time to consider members' submissions.

A special general meeting will be convened at the end of our regular on 25th February for members to vote for acceptance of the new constitution. Then it will be submitted to the Companies Office to meet the 5th April deadline.

Our next speaker

Wednesday 28th January

Our speaker will be Dr Judith Coullie and her topic will be “Charles Dickens – his early life and achievements.”

Judith obtained her MA in English literature from Syracuse University (USA) and PhD from the University of Natal (South Africa). For her doctorate, she studied the autobiographies of South Africans across racial, class and gender categories published during the apartheid period (1948-1994).

Before immigrating to New Zealand, she was Professor of English at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. From 2014-2023, she worked as a learning advisor at the University of Canterbury.

She has published several chapters in books, and articles in academic journals. Most recent are essays on the autobiography of Chief Albert Luthuli (2023 and 2025). Her book publications include a compilation of South African women’s life writing (*The Closest of Strangers*, 2004); an edited collection of critical essays on Breyten Breytenbach (2004); a CD on the poet Roy Campbell (2004); interviews on southern African auto/biography (2006); and the memoirs of Roy Campbell’s daughters (2011). She also co-edited *Antjie Krog: An Ethics of Body and Otherness* (2014).

Here are our speakers for the following months. More details in due course.

February	Neil Phillips, Curatorial Manager, Canterbury Museum
March	Sam Hampton, Department of Geological Sciences, University of Canterbury
April	Mark Rocket, founder and CEO of Kea Aerospace
May	Joe Bennett, regular columnist for The Christchurch Press and other publications

Interest groups

Happy New Year!

It would be great to have some new interest groups start up this year. If anyone has ideas for new interest groups, please fill out the form on the website, or email me wattle@xtra.co.nz. If you want to know how to set up an interest group, also please email me.

Many of the groups we used to have are now in recess, so there is an opportunity if anyone wants to restart these groups.

Some groups could have duplicates. For example, the Science group has a waiting list, so someone could start another one.

If any new members want to know what interest groups are currently in existence, please have a look at the interest group page on the website. To find the website go to <https://u3aellesmere.org/> then click on the interest groups tab (under the picture).

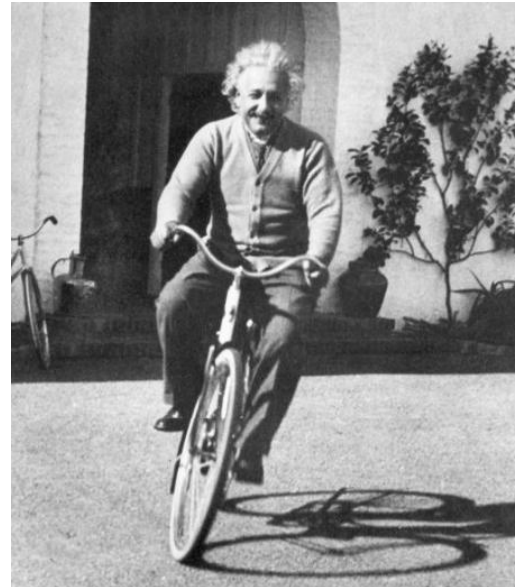
Looking forward to hearing your ideas

Lyn Minchington

Interest Groups Co-ordinator.

The Last Word(s)

Iconic photographs



In February 1933, Albert Einstein was photographed riding a bicycle in Santa Barbara, California. Despite Einstein having just emigrated to the USA to escape Nazi persecution, these photos captured a playful, carefree side of the famous physicist during his time as a visiting professor at the California Institute of Technology.

Einstein famously compared life to cycling in a letter to his son, Eduard, on February 5, 1930. He wrote:

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

He offered this advice to encourage his son during a difficult period, suggesting that forward momentum and persistence are essential for maintaining emotional and mental stability.

Beyond the quote, Einstein reportedly credited cycling with helping his scientific thinking. He is often quoted as saying he first thought of his Theory of General Relativity while riding his bicycle. He believed that mindless, repetitive activities like cycling allowed for what he called "diffused thinking", which often leads to major breakthroughs in knowledge.

Just like a bicycle, life is designed to move forward, to progress. It isn't constructed for backward movement; instead, it is geared towards forward motion. Similarly, our lives are meant to evolve, progress, and transform rather than regress or stagnate. In the journey of life, each of us is a rider. But, just as with life, cycling involves taking risks sometime:

A man was just about to cross a road when a cyclist knocked him down. He helped the pedestrian to his feet but then cheekily remarked, "You got lucky, mate."

The man responded angrily, "How is there anything lucky about that?"

The cyclist replied, "I usually drive a truck."

A police patrol stopped a vicar at night for not having a rear light on his bike.

The vicar said: "Constable, I don't need a rear light because the Lord is with me!"

"Ah, two on a bike as well, that's another offence," the policeman replied.

Throughout history, numerous famous people have praised the merits of cycling. Check out this link:

<https://www.welovecycling.com/wide/2020/03/31/the-best-cycling-quotes-from-famous-people/>

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)

* The committee for 2026/27 will be elected at our Annual General Meeting in March.

Our email address is u3aellesmere@gmail.com
