



Taradale U3A Newsletter

November 2023

PRESIDENT KEITH PONDER:

A few days after the final game of the Rugby World Cup, while I was still coming to terms with the result (remember those days!), I read the description of an archery contest written by Zhuangzi, a Chinese philosopher who lived and taught in the fourth century BC during a difficult period in Chinese history:



“When the archers are playing for cheap tiles, they show top notch skill. When they play for fancy belt buckles, they lose confidence; and when playing for gold they become nervous wrecks. That’s because when the prize becomes more valuable, their goal orientation gets in the way, and they lose touch with the simple and spontaneous heart of life.”

It's as though Zhuangzi had been watching the games played at the Rugby World Cup, particularly the final and semi-finals! Each game was tense, the players were anxious to impress. Their natural spontaneity, the joy of running, passing, catching, kicking had been largely coached out of them. They seemed to play by numbers. Spirit was replaced by structure. The wonderful, carefree game they had once played in bare feet at primary school had become a battle to be won at all costs. It is now a professional sport, a career, a job with goals to be met, a salary to be earned, a coach to satisfy and a watching public expecting victory. A referee with a shrill whistle watches out for mistakes needing to be punished. If he overlooks even the smallest of errors, technologically savvy bureaucrats in the darkness under the grandstand pore over TV images searching for real or imagined misdemeanours. Punishment is never far away for those who fail to play according to the customs and conventions laid out in a large rule book. Free kicks, penalties, scrums and the dreaded yellow card are passed out to offenders. A red card, reserved for the very worst offenders, leads to imprisonment on a chair in full view of spectators. Every infringement has consequences, and the punishment must be endured in full view of one’s critics. When the game is over, sports writers and commentators pick over the performance of each player and some even give them a mark out of ten. What a world, what a way to live!

If the *Springboks* and the *All Blacks* were to play their finals match on a sunny Saturday afternoon at the Taradale Domain watched by the local kids and their parents, the game would - I am sure - be free-flowing, spontaneous, skilful and entertaining, tacklers might help the tackled to their feet, players would smile and may even applaud the skill of their opponents. Each player would be free to express his best gifts and to enjoy doing it. No one would miss the crime squad under the stand with the TV monitors. The ref might miss a few marginal knock-ons but his/her blind eye helps both teams, so nobody is too worried. The professionalisation of sport has financially enriched a few but, as a serious commercial

business, has stolen the simple joys of running, catching, passing, kicking, laughing and learning. Structure has triumphed over spirit. Yet again the money people have fouled the nest. As Zhuangzi wrote: "When playing for gold, they become nervous wrecks."

One thing I enjoy about senior years is that we no longer need to be archers, or rugby players, playing for gold. We no longer feel a need to win at all costs, we can relax, we have an opportunity to rediscover and enjoy the simple, spontaneous, less serious, freewheeling things of life. It's good to no longer be ruled by timetables, diaries, unreachable expectations, competitive workplaces. It's good to have more time to think, to learn, to explore questions large and small, to enjoy the company of loved ones, to know that friendship is more important than winning arguments, to live for who and what is most important for us, to smell the roses, to pick a flower or two.

Travel well for those who may be visiting family and friends over the festive season and for any who are facing difficulty, *Kia Kaha*.

Keith

What happens when you wear a watch on a plane? Time flies!



OUR CHRISTMAS GATHERING WILL BE HELD ON

December 4th at 10.00am in

THE SENIOR CITIZEN'S HALL, 10 WHITE STREET, TARADALE.



Our committee has given a lot of thought to the format of our quarterly U3A meetings post *Covid* and this is the second of our new-look combined gatherings!

The *Dipping into History* group will be our hosts and the programme will include contributions from a couple of our other groups and will feature the appointment of Eric Niania as an *Honorary Life Member*.

It will have a Christmassy theme and there will be opportunities to meet new friends and to enjoy conversation in table groups. A special Christmas morning tea/coffee will be served at our tables about 11.00. There is no charge for this function.

Even if your group normally meets on a Monday morning, why not come along and join your other U3A colleagues for what promises to be a happy occasion at the end of a year that has had its challenges.

Eric Niania, our newest and very worthy *Honorary Life Member*



Kaumatua Eric Niania (left) assisting with bridging the past staff with the present staff at William Colenso College recently.

Upon retiring from a career year of about forty years, as schoolteachers in the Waikato and Auckland regions, Eric Niania and his late wife, Ramari, felt the call to return to Hawke's Bay, their provincial *turangawaewae* (the place where one feels a sense of belonging); she originally having been from Nuhaka and he from Te Reinga.

The year was 2000 and Taradale seemed a favourable compromise for both of them, so they decided that would be a good place to settle. Having moved here, Eric was researching interesting things to do in the community in a Napier City Council brochure and happened upon the *U3A*, the first time he had heard of the organisation, and it wasn't long before he became a member.

There are a number of reasons why *U3A* is meaningful for him, not least because there is a very profound saying in the Māori world which, in his opinion, typifies the spirit of *U3A*:

'He aha te mea nui o te ao? ('What is the most important thing in this world?')
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata! ('Tis people! people! people!')

According to Eric, 'The *U3A* has flushed out of me, my Māori origins and has led me into the cultural world of the Pākehā.'

Through the *U3A*, Eric has met and befriended many people and, in turn, has been befriended by many people - too many to mention here.

It was Eric who inaugurated, and for many years convened, the very successful *Napier Secondary Schools Speech Competition* and, today, he leads the *Te Reo Māori* group.

The Taradale *U3A* committee is happy to report that they are planning to launch a new annual youth/age endeavour next year with a panel comprising students from *William Colenso College & Taradale High School*, the two leading contenders in the former *Speech Competition*, together with some of our own venerable Taradale *U3A* members - hopefully including Eric - discussing pressing issues of the day.

PLANNING WORKSHOP – the aftermath

Every organisation needs to sit down and reflect on how it's doing. On October 18th, the Taradale *U3A* Committee sat down with a group of invited members to reflect on how we are doing as an organisation. It was a very useful exercise, and the committee is working its way through a number of excellent suggestions. The focus was on three key issues: Our quarterly meetings, development of a variety of new groups, and publicity and interaction within the wider community. Thanks to those who gave a long morning to the workshop and shared their experience and wisdom.

POSSIBLE NEW GROUPS FOR 2024:

U3A is built around membership of groups that meet on a regular basis, usually monthly, around issues or activities of shared interest. Most of these groups and activities last for many years and become important parts of our friendship network.

There's also room for short-term groups, that focus on a particular question, activity or area of study or exploration. These may be led by a U3A member who has specific insights or knowledge to share and who acts as a primary resource person in the group. Such a group might last for up to six sessions or for as little as two sessions.

Currently, we are aware of three new group possibilities for 2024:

GARDENING GROUP



Christine Smith has offered to convene/coordinate a gardening group. She describes herself as a gardening enthusiast rather than an expert and envisages the group might share gardening wisdom, visit gardens, learn together from outside experts. If you are interested in attending a planning meeting early in the New Year, please contact her (027 632 6973)

NEW ZEALAND STUDIES

Bridget Williams publishes brief, inexpensive (\$15) books on important New Zealand topics. There's a possibility of a group being formed to meet on two or three occasions during the winter period to discuss a book of their choosing. We'll be seeking the cooperation of the publishers and a local bookshop. A tentative enquiry has been encouraging. Recent books have included *'The inequality debate - an introduction'* by Max Rashbrooke; *'Imagining Decolonisation'* by various writers including the late Moana Jackson; *'Time of useful Consciousness – acting urgently on climate change'* by Ralph Chapman; *'Mountains to sea - solving New Zealand's freshwater crisis'* edited by Mike Joy. We'd need a group of about six to eight in order to enable a stimulating exploration of these important NZ issues. If you're interested, please contact Tony Smith:

tontine.smith@gmail.com

RELIGION: A MULT-FACETED AND DIVERSE HUMAN PHENOMENA:

A six-session winter course led by Keith Rowe.

'Religion' and its institutional expressions was once a taken-for-granted part of each community's life. In the western world those institutions are under pressure, often distrusted or ignored.

Is 'religion' dead or does it continue in new forms?

This course will provide an open-ended opportunity to explore and discuss these and other questions. An initial outline for the course, waiting to be modified by the participant, might be:

1. What is religion? A diverse yet pervasive shaping of human life. Does 'religion' promote/justify violence?
2. Religion in human evolution – does it represent an enduring human capacity or is it past its use by date? Indigenous religions, including pre-settler Maori perspectives.
3. The Semitic family of religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam: broad brush similarities and significant differences.
4. The Asian religious experience: Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh: broad brush similarities and significant differences.
5. Secular religion: Nationalism, Communism, Capitalism, Rock culture, Rituals of secular religion - Anzac day, Sport....
6. The future of the religious impulse. Religion and AI. Regressive religion versus progressive religion, engaged religion and escapist religion, open religion and closed religion.

A continuing group could - but need not necessarily - emerge e.g.: visits to Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Anzac Day event, various 'Christian' expressions, along with reflection on the experience. Details of dates, venue, etc., to be finalised. If you're interested in being part of this short-term group please contact Keith, kkrowe@xtra.co.nz .

IF ONLY...THOUGHTS ON AN UNFOLDING TRAGEDY IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL by KEITH ROWE. Keith was asked to reflect on recent events in Palestine/Israel in a thousand words for an on-line magazine. His thoughts may be helpful as you endeavour to think your way through this complex and horrendous situation. You can access this essay on-line at: methodist.org.nz/whakapapa/news/touchstone - look for November edition, 'If only'), otherwise contact Keith to receive a printed copy of the article.



CONGRATULATIONS!



Two of our members, **Catherine Downes** and **Bob Denby**, recently became centenarians:



Catherine Downes (pictured centre during French Conversation group celebration)

Catherine Downes (contributed by Yvonne Hirst)

In October, the *French Conversation Group* - together with invited guest *Taradale U3A* President Keith Rowe - celebrated the 100th birthday of Catherine who majored in French,

her memory of that language remaining prodigious, her pronunciation exquisite. Catherine's involvement with *Taradale U3A* began some eight years ago, although it wasn't possible for her to join all the groups that interested her - mainly subjects she had studied as a child through British correspondence courses supervised by her mother at their Patoka farm. These include Astronomy and Mythology in which she enjoys expanding her knowledge and researching topics to present to other members of those groups. She also enjoys sharing some of her family's antiques and memorabilia with the Antiques group. And, about six years ago, Catherine offered to convene a Play Reading group which continued until only a few months ago. Her experience in acting and her in-depth knowledge of drama enabled her to source appropriate plays and cast them, ably matching the necessary characterisations according to the availability of members - no easy task! Her involvement with all these groups reflect her classical background. When she can, Catherine also attends meetings of the general *U3A* membership, enjoying the opportunities and variety of topics they offer. In addition to those activities, Catherine has a continuing interest in needlework, in which she displays beautiful workmanship, and she is also a regular attendee and contributor at meetings of the *Wharerangi WI*.

Bob Denby



Robert W.F. Denby, known as Bob, was born on 25th October 1923 at home, 192 Oriental Parade, Wellington. In 1931 the family moved to Kilbirnie in the Eastern suburbs, and he received his education at Kilbirnie School and Rongotai College. He joined the Public Service in 1942 as a cadet in the administration field. New Zealand being at war, Bob was conscripted into the army at age 18 and remained in the military forces, including overseas service, until he returned to NZ in 1946. He rejoined the Public Service in the office of the Public Service Commissioner, moving in 1954 to Education, positions in: Staff Section, Technical Correspondence School, Correspondence School, Examinations Division, School Transport, Child Welfare and Social Security Department (which became Social Welfare in 1972) and, finally, to Executive Officer Special Schools Education in 1976. He retired in 1982. Pauline and Bob were married in 1951 and lived in Khandallah with their two daughters and a son. They came to live in Napier in 1992 and have joined numerous organisations and enjoy their association with friends here in the Bay.

Our Groups

Community Affairs Group



Scam Savvy panel at recent combined meeting of Community Affairs & General Membership

The first combined meeting of the *Community Affairs* group together with the General Membership took place in the *Senior Citizens' Hall*, Taradale, on Monday 2nd October when a panel comprising a BNZ banking expert and three U3A members discussed being *Scam Savvy*. A show of hands at the start of the meeting - which was very well-attended - revealed that some 80% of those present had at some time been contacted by scammers either by phone, e-mail or letter. After listening to some of the situations experienced by our panellists, there was an opportunity to ask questions and a leaflet entitled ***Scam Savvy*** that has been published by the BNZ, was also made available to members.

The November ***Community Affairs*** group was addressed by **Peter Ward** who works for **SGS**, one of the world's largest certification companies for a wide range of consumer products. In December, there will again be a combined meeting with the General Membership for the Taradale U3A Christmas function, starting at 10.00am.

As is customary, there will be no meeting of the ***Community Affairs*** group in January but there will be a combined meeting with the General Membership for the **AGM on Monday, 5th February at 10.00am.**

CYCLING GROUP

The cycling group is developing a Taradale U3A logo to be worn on their cycling vests. It pays to advertise! What they're working on looks really good. The committee will pay the costs involved and we may have a logo that can be used in other ways. Great initiative, electrified peddlers!

A Word about Words, Words, Words

Janice Hambly is stepping down after some eight very capable years at the helm, so this group will be looking not only for a new convenor in the New Year but also some some new members. If you enjoy playing with words - creative writing (prose and poetry), word games, quizzes, acrostics & crosswords, dingbats and the like - why not come and join us on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 2-4pm in the Senior Citizens' Hall in Taradale. We really enjoy ourselves and we rarely utter a cross word!

There will be a planning session at Janet Turvey's home at 30a Osier Road, Greenmeadows on Wednesday, 17th January at 2pm. Hope to see you there!

With Christmas parties in mind.....

WHEN WE'RE YOUNG,
WE SNEAK OUT OF OUR
HOUSE TO GO TO
PARTIES.

WHEN WE'RE OLD, WE
SNEAK OUT OF PARTIES
TO GO HOME.

AGM

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2024 WILL BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 5th at 10.00am at the Senior Citizens Hall. Two of our current committee are retiring and will need to be replaced. If you would like to nominate someone for the committee or would like to be on the committee let our secretary know (Yvonne Huckson - 021 149 5415)

Also, Keith will be commencing his third year in the role of President. Our constitution limits a President to a three-year term so it is not too soon to nominate someone to the position of vice president with a view to them becoming president in 2025. Let our secretary know if you have someone in mind (contact number as above).

Please note: We need as many members as possible to come along to the AGM in order to ensure that an Extraordinary General Meeting does not need to be convened due to lack of numbers!

Annual Fees

Please note:

Members will receive an invoice for payment of fees for the 2024 year in December. The fee remains \$10 if paid before February 29th 2024 or \$15 if paid beyond that date.

Want to send an item for the next newsletter?

The newsletter email address is newsletters@taradaleu3a.org.nz

<i>U3A Committee 2023</i>			
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