



RINGWOOD



Newsletter Term 4

September 2024

U3A RINGWOOD IN 2025 WILL CELEBRATE ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Some of you may not be familiar with the U3A movement. It commenced at the University of Toulouse in France when the University decided to invite retired people to attend its lectures as a learning experience (no exams or awards). This concept spread to the UK where they took a more varied approach and it became a self-help educational organisation separate from the universities.

In 1984 U3A came to Australia with the creation of U3A Melbourne. Shortly after, the then Ringwood Council chaired a public meeting in an attempt to have a U3A established in the City of Ringwood. Subsequently, on 17 June 1985 U3A Ringwood held its first classes (being one of the first five U3As in Australia).

U3A Ringwood is unique in that it is the only U3A that was created as a result of a local government initiative. U3A Ringwood has actively contributed to the expansion of the U3A movement and initiated the establishment of a U3A in the then neighbouring City of Croydon. There are now over 100 U3As in Victoria.

In 2015 we celebrated our 30th Anniversary with a lovely lunch at Bram Leigh which was then located in Croydon, offered to us by the former Councillor Mary-Anne Lowe. Our Play Reading Class performed for us a play which they had learnt during that year and we had special guests from Council joining us and our Secretary's grandson, Michael, played the Grand Piano in the foyer as people arrived.

MEMORIES OF EARLIER DAYS FROM SOME OF OUR CURRENT MEMBERS

Pauline Ruse

There was a new class offered by U3A in the building shared by three different clubs, U3A, EPR and the Senior Citizens. We were excited to meet the new tutor and his wife who offered to run a class that would open our minds to the World Wide Web.

I apologise for not remembering their names, but we were assured we were privileged to have people who were of "Mensa" standard to introduce us to the new World of Dos. After a few weeks, the class members admitted to each other their failure to understand anything. We were saved by the introduction of Microsoft Windows 95.

We have come a long way Babe, I ran a class on how to control that elusive mouse, how to play games and send emails to younger family members.



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Jill Cowie

Some of my earlier memories of our U3A are when we had our Christmas Lunch in the Senior Citizens Hall where the lunch was catered for and members beautifully decorated the tables. We also had entertainment provided by members or groups that some of them knew. I was Secretary in 2003 and 2004 and then President in 2010.

For quite a few years Ray and I were responsible for folding, addressing and mailing the Newsletters, prior to them being distributed on line.

On other occasions we had a display by the Card and Art Groups of some of the things they had created or painted during the year. This was always followed by a lovely afternoon tea supplied by various members.

Jennie Harvie

In 1997, having only joined 3-4 months earlier, I got talked into becoming Secretary and then held the position again in 1998. Back in the earlier days of our U3A there was much more socialisation due to the kitchen at the Senior Citizens Hall being available to everyone which meant that not only your class but others as well were able to mix together.

The Newsletter back then was issued at the beginning of the term with a "Welcome to New Members" and at the end of the term would list those members who may be sick or a vale for any well-known members who had passed away. Hall Users Meetings were held each term with the Senior Citizens, U3A, EPR and the Art Society where a representative or two from each organization would attend. Gwen Horman was leader of the Armchair Travel Class for 25 years and organized speakers each week for 40 weeks of the year.

Some of the different classes I recall are Hydroponics, held off campus, a Knitting Class led by June Dobberstein where members made clothes and blankets for newly born babies in hospital. Dot Ward, a member of both Ringwood and Croydon U3As, ran a Walking Group and a few of the many places they went included the Maribyrnong River, Federation Square and Como House. There was also a Carpentry Class which was held off campus where members made simple things like small tables.

For our 25th Anniversary there was a Commemorative Recipe Book for sale which also included some photos of those members submitting their favourite recipes.

Marie Kenney

In 1997 my mother asked me to take her to Ringwood where, she had heard, there was a U3A where you could learn and do all sorts of wonderful things. Well, we went and I am still here. The number of classes has grown and some have changed but there are still many people out there who like to lead the classes.

There have been many changes in that time. The early classes at the Seniors Centre on Warrandyte Road, with its too small rooms, inadequate heating in winter and no air-con in summer, but a huge range of classes. We tried a good few of these, including Current Affairs (now at Kevin Pratt Pavilion).

We had some wonderful teachers. Andrew who told us about Islam in the Middle East (before all the trouble there), then we had John Salvaris who had huge knowledge of Greece, Turkey and many other countries in that region. There was Yvonne and her drama group who gave us some lovely performances. We had Wendy Richards with her vast knowledge of music, just to name a few.

After Wendy left, we got John Lawley who left a huge gap in our classes and lives when he suddenly passed away during Covid. As a high school teacher, he taught us a lot about English poetry and also took on the Art Appreciation Class and Music Class (his wife told him that was enough as he put so much preparation into each class that he had very little time left). There were too many classes to remember but it was always such a joy to attend. Apart from classes we had paper newsletters that had to be folded and sent out, there were meetings with other U3As in the City and committee meetings to attend.

With our move to bigger premises on Tortice Drive, we have also seen a growth in membership but have still a lot of the old classes that were started all those years ago.

Who could have guessed that U3A would become so popular. We all enjoy our classes and hope that it will go on for a very long time yet because I am not ready to give it up yet.

Ken Yelland

My association with U3A Ringwood commenced in 2003 so the organisation had already been operating for nearly 20 years.

My early recollection is that, before I had even attended any class, I was coerced by the very friendly and enthusiastic Secretary Mary Davies, to help with laying carpet tiles in the Marching Girls Annexe at Norwood Reserve. With other classes, this was to be the venue for the newly established Australian History Class.

After a couple of years to settle, Australian History became very popular. Along with the already in demand Music Appreciation, Create-a-Card, Armchair Travel and Table Tennis classes it had a very lengthy waiting list, much to the concern of the then Committee. As at present, class attendances were limited by the capacity of the venue and the nature of the activity.

Armchair Travel probably had the largest attendance at this time. Under 20 years of Gwen Horman's leadership it had quickly grown to 45. Gwen retired as leader in 2009.

Armchair Travel met in the hall of the Elderly Citizens building at Norwood Reserve. On a different day the Table Tennis and Public Speaking classes shared the same hall, separated by a folding concertina partition. The noise from the jollity of the Table Tennis players and often contact with the partition somewhat disturbed the presentation by the public speakers. Both survived amicably. Often the resting TT players were invited to attend presentations and offer critique.

The move to Parkwood and Kevin Pratt Pavilion was much appreciated.

WHAT SOME OF OUR CLASSES HAVE BEEN DOING IN TERM 3, 2024

Researching Your Family History

One interesting discussion we had a couple of weeks ago concerned a man who served in the Australian Army in WW1, and who was killed in the battle of Fromelles.

Pre COVID, his great niece contacted the project which was attempting to identify the men who had been buried in a mass grave via DNA.

The project stalled, and she recently reconnected, and was sent a kit to submit her saliva sample for analysis.

Elaine, the tutor, investigated his life, and found the most amazing amount of detail about him and his family. His service record is 81 pages long, the largest Elaine has ever read, but there is an incredible amount of detail available online, including Trove, the National Library of Australia database of scanned historical newspapers etc. and also the birth, death and marriage records of NSW.

His story was so interesting that the class ran over time, and had to be continued the following week.

Such a sad story of the repercussions of war that can affect a family for years.

Music Appreciation

We have watched DVDs of Classical Destinations covering Composers who lived and worked in St. Petersburg & Venice.

Continuing our lectures by the American Professor was the final series of the Solo Piano which was entitled "The A List" and this happened to be those pieces of classical music most played by amateurs. We then started on an Introduction to Music from the beginning, followed by an Introduction to the Classical Era.

We have had presentations by members on firstly Film Music, which we all knew but found some of the background interesting as well, then Beethoven's Piano Concertos, Peter & the Wolf, and the rather drunk Russian Composer, Mussorgsky.

We have also listened to a newly released recording in 2023 of Oklahoma celebrating the 80th anniversary of the musical, together with learning the story of it.

Book Club

One of the benefits of a book club is that it provides its members with introductions to writers who may not be otherwise encountered. This term, Realm has given us an interesting selection of novels with varied settings in time and place, from contemporary Australia, to war-torn Europe, to Shakespearean England.

We continue to note authors whose names appear on important literary prize lists and we also recommend and lend books to each other. Naturally, we enjoy hearing each other's views of each month's book; mostly, however, we seem to agree! Angela Thomas

Poetry for Pleasure

As I was overseas and came back sick and jet lagged, John Robertson very kindly took three of the classes for me. John brings a unique and musical flavour to what he presents, and his sessions are always greatly enjoyed by everyone. I am only sorry that I missed them! John has written the following section of this report:

"During Helen's absence, we explored the lyrical poetry of Paul Simon; first a nostalgic revisiting of years with Art Garfunkel in the 60s, then his rich and diverse solo years extending from the 70s right through to the 2020s! His reflective words came even more alive when we listened to them as the songs he intended them to be."

Upon my return, having left the highly personal and introspective poetry of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, we resumed our journey with the work of Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell. It was interesting to note the more introspective and psychological nature of the American poets, in contrast to the South African, Mexican and Australian poets we had been reading before these four.

We also compared a number of poems about fish, noting the distinctive poetic voices, each revealing the different personalities of each writer. We look at the poetry of the Welshman, Dylan Thomas, so much of which reflects the familiar voice of his 'Under Milkwood' and greatly enjoyed listening to excerpts of Richard Burton's reading of this famous and delightful story of life in a small Welsh village. By way of a change, we have now begun to explore the sonnet form, noting how it has endured and been expressed through the ages from Shakespeare to the present day.

As always in our sessions together, we are constantly enlightened by the perceptions and insight of other members of our group, and we share many laughs along the way.

Helen Kershaw

History of Germany & Vietnam

We began the course in July looking at how Vietnam was caught up in the chaos of the Cold War. The class numbers are down a little as "grey nomad-itis" struck down a few members, Cathy and Jim Pidoto are keeping up

watching specific YouTube videos, whilst Coralie is just enjoying Port Douglas or somewhere very north and much warmer. Bob has only just realised that the Vietnamese were not an insidious threat to the security of Australia and he was “completely taken in” by “All the Way with LBJ”. We have reached the Geneva Accords (1954) and await the next instalment.

Art Appreciation Wednesdays 9.30 to 11.00 am

We have a very engaged and diverse group of members and as we are a democratic class, members can suggest topics of interest, centred around differing art practices.

In term 3, as we understood very little about abstract art we dived right into “What is Abstract Art?” Not everybody was thrilled but With the help of very informative YouTube clips we explored the origins, progress, and diversity of abstract art, and as one class member said.

“I still do not like abstract art, but at least I understand it a lot better now!” As that is the aim of the class, I feel we covered off a new area of learning.

After the challenging start to the term, we changed our focus to sculpture. What it is, what types of sculpture there are, different processes and materials, and different sculptor’s practices and we are finding this fascinating. Sculpting large blocks of marble is a mammoth task, and our appreciation of sculptors is enormous.

So far, we know so little! There is always so much more to learn and enjoy.

What Cheeses Me Off – For Term 3 Newsletter

The Class is becoming concerned that we have so many things that ‘Cheese us Off’ that we are becoming ‘grumpy seniors’. Accordingly, we only conduct this class once a fortnight (2nd and 4th Monday of each month) as we find that we need 2 weeks to recover from the robust views expressed and debated at each class.

In Term 3 we have discussed many, things that ‘cheese us off’. For instance, we have:

- discussed the insidious ever-present gambling associated advertisements when we watch sporting events, whether on TV or at the events themselves, and their potential impact on our youth;
- questioned the hype about the airport rail link, as it is designed to actually be a commuter train service stopping at various stations along the way to and from Tullamarine.
- discussed the impact of family influence in their children’s choosing of life partners

This class is a ‘bit of fun’ but deals with real issues of the day. If you have got spare time on Monday mornings why not enroll in the class as you may find it stimulating and not too serious.

Film Appreciation – 12.30pm Fridays at Parkwood



We all go to the movies to be entertained, but it is interesting to look beyond just being ‘entertained’ and understand what the film directors are trying to convey and how they have actually gone about achieving that (or in some cases how they missed the mark completely).

In term 3 we have continued to study the works of English film director Sir Alfred [Hitchcock](#).

Hitchcock made over 50 feature films over a period of some 60 years and is today, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in the history of cinema.

The films that we have studied todate, during Term 3, include:

'Vertigo' (featuring James Stewart and Kim Novak) which is considered by some critics to be one of the greatest movies of all time as the plot is mysterious, suspenseful, romantic and hypnotizing and is devoid of today's visceral violence.

'North by North West' (featuring Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint) which is widely regarded as the classic Hitchcock film featuring taut suspense and black humor.

While we have been studying Hitchcock (with his little quirks, such as making a brief appearance in each film), there has been some tension in the air each week prior to Jim announcing the film for the day, as we all wonder whether this is the day for Alfred Hitchcock's 'Psycho', which is considered to be one of the greatest (and scary) horror movies ever made.

After a pretty good 'dose' of Hitchcock, we have put Hitchcock back on the shelf' (although there are still plenty of Hitchcock films that we haven't seen), while we look at the works of some other leading directors. Undoubtedly, we will revisit Hitchcock later in the year.

This class is a 'hidden gem'. Why not invest a couple of hours on Fridays, by joining Jim Moroney and learn about the art of 'FILM MAKING' – it may increase your enjoyment of a 'good film'

Daryl James

UNWELCOME GUESTS AT PARKWOOD

Yes, we have some unwelcome visitors to Parkwood

As a result, you may have noticed the recently introduced rodent bait stations strategically placed both inside and outside of Parkwood to hopefully reduce the rodent population.

The Council cleaners do not clean our rooms or empty our bins as they are engaged by Council to merely clean the shared spaces and empty the kitchen bin.

You can do your part by emptying the small rubbish bins currently located in each classroom, into the kitchen bin after your class, as this will not only help keep our rooms free from vermin but also keep it tidy.

Also, you may not be aware that there is a vacuuming roster which envisages each class vacuuming their classroom once each term.

Please check the roster to see when your class is scheduled to vacuum as we all like to have a clean classroom – it only takes 5 minutes and everyone benefits.

THINGS TO KNOW

- **26 Sept** 2024 is the date for the Dux Churchill Presentation / Morning Tea at 10:00AM. Address is 8 Bond Street Ringwood (parking at Costco or Eastland)
- **Term 4** starts on Monday 7th October and ends on Friday 6th December 2024.
- We will soon have vacuums in all Parkwood classrooms.