

# NEWSLETTER – WA NETWORK



University of the Third Age

**OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019**

## **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

The end of another U3A year approaches and we turn our minds to annual meetings and annual festivities.

I like to mention again that being fully involved with your group is the best way to get the most out of it. This may seem obvious but is worthwhile reiterating. Whether it is putting your hand up for the committee, volunteering at the office or presenting a talk or a course, these are some of the things that make U3A so rewarding.

There has been a bit of discussion about the correct use of our U3A logo at a national and international level. It is important that we use the registered version of the logo which is owned by the Third Age Trust in the UK. The WA Network has a licence for its use in Western Australia. High quality images and guidelines for its use are available now from your secretary or from the Network Secretary.



*Peter Alcock with Jean Walker(U3A Online) in Tasmania*

*(Peter is currently the national chairman of U3AAA as well as U3A Network WA)*

It is important to note that this does not mean you need to discontinue use of existing artwork or suddenly scrap all your brochures, but I would ask that you include the registered version on publicity material and websites. It is also worth noting that the UK trust no longer insists on the words "University of the third age" being included in the logo.

During our current travels, Barbara and I were entertained by South Australian U3A secretary Claire Eglinton in Clare, SA, and today met up with Glenorchy U3A President Jean Walker. Jean is also an active representative of U3A Online. She tells me they still get people trying to join their local U3A via the U3A online website.

Finally I extend warm wishes to you all for a safe, healthy and enjoyable festive season.

Peter Alcock

## NATURALISTE U3A IN A NUTSHELL

*'We are up and running'*, - no, not a statement for this year, but from a newsletter on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009, for the revived Busselton U3A group. In July 2010 the organisation was registered for ABN status as Naturaliste University of the Third Age Inc. So up and running in 2009 with a Committee, potential course leaders, great enthusiasm and lots ideas! Actual courses commenced in February 2010. Membership was 67. The original Busselton U3A started 32 years ago but after a number of years went into recession; fortunately it was revived and currently we have a membership of 271. Naturaliste U3A incorporates the area of the City of Busselton through to Dunsborough. Geographically, located on the coast of the Indian Ocean, it includes the sweep of Geographe Bay and magnificent Cape Naturaliste.



*Cape Naturaliste*

From the beginning we have been a very Course-oriented group. Some of these courses are year-long, many are short courses that are usually between 4-8 weeks in length. This year we have also offered some half-day workshops, some being 'tasters' for longer courses, and Our region, in the south-west of WA, seems to be a magnet to U3A groups and our neighbouring U3A's are Bunbury to the North, Margaret River to the South! It is a region that attracts retirees so not only we do have those interested in the concept of life-long learning, we have an important role to play in providing social contact. We have members ranging from their mid - 50's to those who are nudging (or have nudged) the 90's!

We have 4 Topical Talks a year. We also have 4 'seasonal' Newsletters (The Crier) per year. All up, throughout this year, we have had some 60 courses or workshops offered, with some of our Leaders facilitating more than one course! These cover a range of areas including those that start with 'Let's Talk': Let's Walk and Talk, Let's Talk-TED Talks, Let's Talk - Philosophy! We love discussions! We have 2 Book Clubs, Science oriented Groups include those on Climate Change, Beauty in Science and Biodiversity. Creative Writing, Drama, Brain Games, Mah Jongg, Scrabble, Tap and Sacred Dance, Music Appreciation, Singing for Pleasure, Coffee Meet-Up, ... the list goes on with Art and various workshops.

It is the commitment of Course Leaders, a number of whom have been voluntarily presenting courses since those early years, the members who support the courses and come along to the Topical Talks, and those who, by word of mouth, promote us, who are also essential to our connection and contribution we make to the wider Community. Importantly, underlying this, of course, are the Committee members who meet, plan and do all the 'behind scenes' work that enables us to function as successfully as we do!

**OUR EXCITING NEWS** is that Naturaliste U3A will be hosting the U3A Network WA State Conference here October 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> 2020! The theme will be 'Connections'. Plans are already underway and further information will be forwarded as we proceed into next year.

We have beautiful beaches (and the iconic Busselton Jetty and Underwater Observatory), magnificent Tuart forests, stunning wildflowers and our renowned wineries abound! As our Conference finishes on a Friday we will be encouraging visitors to stay 'Connected', linger longer and build a few more days into their itinerary so they can get to see the highlights of this area.

Joan Parke (President)

# MEMORY

## The Strange Tale of Henry Molaison

Henry Molaison was a Canadian born in 1926. He had a bicycle accident at aged 7 which resulted in him developing epilepsy. The condition steadily got worse and at the age of 27 he was persuaded to have a brain operation. His neurosurgeon had heard about other cases of epilepsy where a small section of the brain called the hippocampus had been removed and some improvement had resulted.



*Henry Molaison 1926 - 2008*

There are two hippocampi – one on each side of the brain. Up until that time surgeons had only removed one from their patients. This time, however, Henry's surgeon decided that both should come out. The outcome was not what either expected. The epilepsy was much reduced but Henry's ability to form new memories was completely taken away.

He could recall things from his earlier life (he still had a full language facility) but was totally unable to form new long term memories. Henry lived on until 2008. Although he was unable to work and needed support to manage his life he was quite cheerful and enjoyed doing crossword puzzles among other things. He was the subject of much research in the memory field. He was an ideal subject because he never got tired of being interviewed. Every interview was like a totally new experience – he neither remembered the interviewer (one of them continued for 40 years) nor the fact that he had been interviewed before.

Neuroscience was much enriched by Henry's loss. Whereas the formation and retrieval of memories was still a mysterious process in the early 1950's, the role of the hippocampus was suddenly confirmed as a vital link in the chain. (The name hippocampus comes from the Greek for sea horse)



*A hippocampus (left) and a sea horse*

The modern understanding of memory is that long term memories – anything more than a minute or so – is processed through the hippocampus. Where there is an emotional component, a neighbouring part of the brain, the amygdala, is also involved. The actual storage of the memories involves thousands of neurons in many parts of the brain. Retrieval of memories also involves the hippocampus, although as Henry's case proved, long established memories can be retrieved in other ways.

The use of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI machines were invented in the 1990s) has further increased understanding of the processes involved. Functional MRI can show which parts of the brain are most active in the task of recalling memories. Unexpectedly, it has also been shown that planning or imagining future activities involves similar pathways and areas of the brain. Human beings seem to be the only animals to have this skill to any extent. It is clearly a vital part of our success as a species.

PF

## **U3A NORTH COAST VISITS ROTTNEST ISLAND**

Thirty-five members of U3A North Coast which meets in Hamersley had a memorable excursion to Rottnest on 25<sup>th</sup> September. For some it had been many, many years since they had visited the island - and for one couple, it was their first time ever!

With many years' guiding experience, Peter Alcock and Peter Merralls were able to explain the chequered history of "Rotto" and point out the interesting colonial architecture in the Settlement. Rottnest has the most colonial buildings in one small area anywhere in Australia. Fellow "new" guide, Nigel Ridgway, regaled members with stories of some of the terrible shipwrecks that occurred there.



*North Coast (Hamersley) trippers - Everyone apart from the quokkas!*

A two-hour coach trip around the whole island was really worthwhile with the aid of driver Ted, who is also a Rottnest guide. The itinerary included stops at Kingstown Barracks, Parker Point, the WWII guns at Oliver Hill, the Wadjemup Lighthouse, the West End, City of York Bay (site of the worst shipwreck) and Geordie Bay. Fascinating commentary ensured that everyone had a good understanding of the flora and fauna, the geology and the recent and ancient history of this unique limestone island.

June Barns

## U3A Armadale WA

The first speaker for the second semester of 2019, was Kay Whitely, on behalf of the newly formed "West Australian Assistance and Therapy Dogs". Kay spoke to us about the many ways dogs help humans. Kay had assisted at a previous talk in 2018, when Vision Australia included 'Seeing Eye' dogs as part of their talk. Kay specialises in training dogs for all needs, including seeing, that we humans need. It is hard to believe the sophistication of the assistance a dog can give. Pressure points, creating a protection barrier, awareness and warning of an impending panic attack – are just a few.

This photo shows the U3A Armadale main room we use, at Evelyn Gribble Community Centre in Armadale, with Kay speaking to a couple of Chocolate Labrador



puppies, who had just started their training. She asked us to clap to help get them used to noise – which in our case was very warm hearted clapping. Earlier she had walked in with her family dog that helps her son, a Golden Retriever.

Kay informed us that she has just completed getting approval to be a 'charity' so she can fulfil her dream of helping people train their own dogs, to help assist them in minor ways.

As well as highlighting the talk Kay gave, I now want to highlight the 'young' gentleman at the back of the auditorium, who is wearing a headset. He is linked to our new Hearing Augmentation equipment that we are now using successfully, after a few meetings to fine tune it. The transmitter is on the table behind Kay, and the receiver is hanging down below 'Bills' headset. Bill has chosen to boost his hearing

via the headset, but the system can assist directly to a person's hearing aid, or cochlear implant.

We have a 'looping' PowerPoint presentation, that runs continuously during members and visitors arriving, listing the next month's activities - and **specifically advising** that they can make use of our new Hearing Augmentation equipment, if they have trouble hearing at a meeting.

Keith Durrans

## THE NEW MUSEUM NEARS COMPLETION

The magnificent looking building in the heart of the Cultural Centre in Perth is almost finished. The builders will hand over to the Museum Staff within a few weeks and then the enormous task of moving thousands of exhibits into place will begin. First and foremost will be the blue whale skeleton so frequently requested by members of the public. This will go into one of the older parts, Hackett Hall. There is a raised gallery (the building was originally the State Library) from which viewers can get up close and personal. We will be able to walk about underneath it as well.

The architects had a seemingly impossible task - combine the new structure with a maze of heritage buildings all of different styles and on different levels that date back to the 1850's. How well they have achieved this will shortly become apparent but from what we can see now and from what we were told by Renae Woodhams from the WA Museum at a recent talk at North Coast, there will be few complaints.



*The new museum due to open in late 2020*

One of the features of the planning which goes back some seven years (at least) is the wide public consultation. Over 50,000 people from all walks of life and all parts of WA have had a say in what they think is the purpose of a museum and what should be displayed. It certainly

won't be everything – the WA Museum has some 8,000,000 plus items, the vast majority of which are kept in warehouses in Welshpool. But it will represent the whole state of WA. There will be a major temporary exhibition space, large enough to cater for blockbuster travelling exhibitions. This has an 8 metres high ceiling. Why is this? A T-Rex is eight metres high, that's why! (No, I don't know when that is coming!)

There has never been anything like it in Perth or elsewhere in WA. The opening is going to be a most exciting event and I, personally, can't wait.

Peter Flanigan

## **City Lecture Saturday 19 October 2019 - report by Janice Brooks, Swan Hills Region.**

Professor Ted Snell, Chief Cultural Officer UWA Cultural Precinct, Director, Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, UWA, was the speaker and **'Culture can Spark City Revival'** was the topic.

Imagine if Perth had its own Guggenheim Museum like Bilbao, Spain or Mona like Hobart, Tasmania. Places where imagination can get you everywhere. We are training our young people for jobs that are not here yet. They need to think creatively. Many learned folk know and tell that we need vibrancy to 'live' and to be globally relevant. Merlina Mercouri, Greek Minister for Culture in 1980s advocated the establishment of European Capital of Culture to increase people's cultural awareness for 'culture is the soul of a society'.



*Professor Ted Snell*

Prof Snell expanded this idea and spoke about what happened to the UK city of Liverpool when 2008 was their turn. Cultural stories increased and proved this quote from Robert Kennedy in 1969, 'GDP measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile.' Prof Snell said that Perth is a vibrant city with a lot of ground work on which we can build and that Perth could become 'The First Indian Ocean Capital of Culture'. While standing in front of the stage where Nellie Melba is reputed to have performed, Prof Snell quoted 'The arts are not the icing on the cake but need to be the yeast' from Mallika Sarabhai (the Indian classical dancer and activist who uses the arts for social change and transformation).

## U3A CHOIR IN CONCERT AT GWELUP

Over 200 people attended a concert at the Gwelup Church of Christ centre on Tuesday 28 November. They were well rewarded. The choir were in fine form as they sang through a varied program of modern songs. The range extended from The Beatles and Sound of Music to A Jazzy number from Gershwin and another, lesser known one from a Kurt Weill musical. The choice of program was very well suited to the audience. The choir performed in two halves with an interlude in which the Choir Leader and Conductor, Gioi (Joy) Papillion gave us a trio of songs demonstrating a beautiful soprano voice as she sang.



*The U3A Choir with Gioi at the piano (Picture Peter Brown)*

The concert was sponsored by the Friends of Christ Church, Gwelup, and concluded with a sumptuous morning tea.

PF

## Mandurah U3A Excursion to Alcoa

A group of Mandurah U3A members went on an excursion to the Alcoa bauxite mining operation last Wednesday.

Alcoa provided a bus and a tour guide and the day was cost free. The tour guide was very well informed about all the aspects of the mining operation and all the processes involved.



Revegetation at the mine site

We started at the main crusher plant in the Huntly Mine. The mine comprises a large number of small pockets of bauxite ore. In order to mine these areas the natural vegetation needs to be removed before the near-surface bauxite deposits can be exposed and loaded onto 250 ton dump trucks.



Mandurah U3A visitors

These trucks then take the ore to the crusher where it is reduced and sent by a 20 kilometre conveyor belt to the refinery near Pinjarra. There the ore passes through a series of additional processes until the final product, 'alumina' is stockpiled.

The alumina is then exported overseas to places with low cost electricity to be smelted and turned into aluminium that can be utilised in a large range of end products such as aircraft, rail coaches, cladding for buildings and cans among many others.

Many thanks to Alcoa for the tour.

Rory O'Brien

*FROM THE EDITOR*

*This is the final issue for 2019.*

*Many thanks to all contributors.*

*Next year should be even better!*

*Peter Flaniaan*



*Tasmanian rain forest (from Peter Alcock on his travels)*