

March 2026

Remuera, Auckland, New Zealand

Next Meeting: Monday 9th March 2026 at 10am

Venue: St Chads Church, 38 St Johns Road, Remuera

Principal Speaker: **James Duncan**, "Always a Tram in Sight."
Part 2 of the story behind Auckland's much loved electric trams, told through a selection of historic images covering the glory years, then their fall from grace. The programme includes a ten-minute video, taking us through the declining years of the trams – these are the years that many of you will remember.

Mini Speaker: Barbara Smith from Monday History will speak on the history of communication. From tom-toms to digital, and communications between these.

Next Month's Speaker: **Dr Bruce Hayward**, "Volcanos of Auckland." Auckland is built over and out of a field of 53 young volcanoes, all of which have erupted just once within the last 200,000 years. A "hot topic" for all of us who live in Auckland.

Meeting Tasks: Greeters: Philosophy
Morning Tea: Music Appreciation.

James Duncan grew up in Auckland during the 1960s and 1970s when Auckland was served by a large



and extensive electric trolley bus system. These vehicles fascinated him as a child and thus began a passion for electric street transport. At age 15 he joined the Tramway Division at MOTAT and has now been an active volunteer member of the tramway for 49 years. He's packed a lot into his 49 years at MOTAT – he's been a tram conductor, managed MOTAT's tram system for many years, he's a motor examiner, issuing tram drivers' licences, and even wrote the guide by which all MOTAT tram drivers are trained.

Most of his working life was spent in retail, but in 2011 he was asked to take on managing the operation of the new tramway down in Wynyard Quarter. Today, together with this role, and a full-time position at MOTAT looking after the infrastructure for the MOTAT Tramway.

President's Message

Greetings to all u3a members



"To know the land is to know ourselves." James K. Baxter

Time to plan an overseas holiday to avoid the New Zealand winter. Time to reflect on the climate change with New Zealand having more weather disasters so far this year, than all last year. The thought comes to mind, that instead of an overseas trip perhaps it would be an idea to visit parts of New Zealand that may not be accessible in future, because the roads cannot be maintained. New Zealand has some splendid scenery, and the locals speak a language you can understand. The further south you go the friendlier the people. Tourists boost the local economy. There may not be a hot tropical sun to bask under, but there are hot springs aplenty.

"You cannot know who you are until you know where you are." Janet Frame

"To understand a nation, you must walk its soil and listen to its stories."

Laurence Melton

Director of Studies

Feedback on the February Convenors talks is positive with comments like 'Pleased to hear all the interesting activities our wide selection of study groups are involved in.' With several new members and the enthusiasm of convenor, Karen Yates, Earth Science has made a good start for 2026. New members are welcome to join them for meetings on the afternoons of the 3rd Wednesday of the month in the pleasant venue of Remuera Gardens.

To all Convenors, Co-Convenors and members of the Committee, a reminder of a joint meeting on Monday 30th March at 10am at St Chads church.

Wallis Walker. wallis.walker@xtra.co.nz

Group Reports

Current Affairs Study Group

We follow our own ways in Current Affairs.

We do not have presentations. Instead, we are all asked each meeting to bring along a topic we have picked up from the news that is relevant to Current Affairs, either from New Zealand or the wider world. This is not compulsory.

The topics are listed on a white board and are introduced by the presenter and then discussed in turn. Those who have brought along a topic usually start things off either by talking about it briefly or reading from an article – then it is thrown open for discussion. There is no time limit on how long each discussion takes and everyone can have their say or just listen in.



New Zealand has for a long time had a high level of risk from earthquakes and volcanoes – and now the weather. We should prepare. But how? For example, should we be kind or hard-nosed, and not compensate for uninsured property loss? This is the kind of issue we like to get our teeth into.

We still meet on the first and third Mondays each month at 10.00 am but have changed where we meet. We now meet in the more salubrious Remuera Gardens Retirement Village in Richard Farrell Avenue.

We welcome new members and are happy if you just come along once or twice to try us out.

John Trainor, Convenor. johnval@slingshot.co.nz

Travel Study Group

Members of Travel Group take exciting trips within NZ or anywhere in the world and sharing their



experiences which helps others to travel confidently and safely. At its February meeting, we heard about leaving a cell phone on a train in Holland. The help from a stranger, a Dutch train manager, police and easily traced NZ connections, their phone was eventually posted to them in New

Zealand. A tip learned was how to find your phone's unique serial number and to leave this with a trusted person will help your lost phone being reunited with you.

We discussed e-sims. Did you know that there are e-sims for phoning?

In 2026 members will be taken on 'virtual' tours of Stewart Island, S E Asia, South Korea and Dubai.

We meet 2pm on 4th Tuesday of the month at Logan Campbell Village, or member's homes. Refer to our Remuera u3a website for convenors contact details.

Wallis Walker, Convenor. wallis.walker@xtra.co.nz

Looking Back

Ross Blair presented an inciteful talk on "Nature and - or Nurture. The Dilemma." He focussed on the



role and influence of genes, explaining, Genotype is the genetic blueprint (DNA), while Phenotype is the outward expression of that blueprint. Since Francis Crick and James Watson identified the double helix structure in 1953, it is now understood that DNA is the fundamental molecule carrying genetic instructions (the code) for the development, functioning, growth, and reproduction of human beings, replicated through generations. Although radiation damages DNA, they are very resistant and traces can be found for many centuries after the death of the body.

Ross touched on the controversy of Eugenics, the unethical belief and practice of trying to "improve" the human race by controlling reproduction. This is morally indefensible.

Drawing on his distinguished career as a thoracic and vascular surgeon, he spoke about the history of abdominal aortic aneurysms and whether there might be a genetic link causing this condition. Approximately 20% of thoracic aortic aneurysms are caused by inherited genetic mutations.

Studies of DNA have endeavoured to identify individual characteristics which may be linked to intelligence, behaviour, etc. In particular, the “warrior gene” MAOA-L which may have links to increased aggression and risk-taking behaviour. While linked to behavioural traits in some studies, many people with this variant do not engage in violence, making the term “warrior gene” a significant oversimplification of complex human behaviour. It is estimated 33% of the population carry this gene. He concluded by looking at some causes of emotional concerns in surgeons. Surveys reveal that 84% of surgeons experience one or more of the following from time to time: anxiety 66%, guilt 60%, sadness 52%, shame/embarrassment 42%, anger 29%.

At the start of our February meeting, all study group convenors presented a brief summary of their group’s activities and subject material. Members of u3a are encouraged to consider joining more groups. One, Classic Movies, is unable to accept new members for the time being owing to limited space at their venue. For more information about study groups, visit <https://remuerau3a.org.nz/study-groups/>

Notice Board

Future Speakers

13th April 2026 - Dr Bruce Hayward, “Volcanos of Auckland.”

11th May 2026 – Dr Bruce Arrol, “From Everest to Empowerment.”
The Hillary Trust

8th June 2026 - Olaf Diegel, “3d Printing.”

Meeting Tasks for April

Greeters	Use It or Lose IT
Morning Tea	Monday History
Newsletter Group Reports	Foodies and NZ History
Mini Talk	AAAA

Key Contacts

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Study Groups

<https://remuerau3a.org.nz/study-groups/>



u3a Remuera meets at St Chads Church, Meadowbank on 2nd Monday of the month at 10am. u3a provides a place for those in the 3rd stage of their life journey, to come together in their local community, a chance to socialise, a chance to participate in interest groups, to learn something new and keep the mind active.