

September 2026

Remuera, Auckland, New Zealand

Next Meeting:	Monday 14th September 2026 at 10am
Venue:	St Chads Church, 38 St Johns Road, Remuera
Principal Speaker:	Rob Harley, author and documentary-maker. "Life's most amazing people."
Mini Speaker:	Gillian West will talk about the various genres of music enjoyed by the Music Appreciation group which meets on the 4 th Thursday of every month at 10am at Remuera Gardens Village, Richard Farrell Avenue, Remuera. New members welcome.
Next Month's Speaker:	Susanne Burton Thompson, "A Life Full of Surprises."
Meeting Tasks:	Greeters: AAAA Morning Tea: Classic Movies

Rob Harley is one of New Zealand's most experienced journalists and communicators. He will be sharing stories from his fifty-year career in some of the world's most challenging places, among some of the bravest people you will ever hear about!

Rob will be well-known to many of you as one of New Zealand's most acclaimed journalists and writers.



His fifty-year career as a writer across all media has involved him telling dramatic stories in Aotearoa, and some of the most dangerous places in the world, from where he has constructed award-winning programmes seen by many.

Internationally his journalism has tracked down the murderer of a Kiwi photojournalist, uncovered the truth behind several airline disasters, and led to the establishment of

major aid programmes in the Third World.

He'll talk about his time in war zones, and solving some international mysteries. He'll also bring with him copies of his latest best-selling books 'The Courage of Women,' – eleven breath-taking stories of brave women who have helped change the world. Also, 'Relentless' – people who wouldn't quit, stories that wouldn't die – which is a celebration of the golden age of investigative journalism on New Zealand television.

You will be moved and inspired by Rob's talk 'Life's most Amazing people.'

"Journalism still, in a democracy, is the essential force to get the public educated and mobilized to take action on behalf of our ancient ideals." Doris Kearns Goodwin

President's Message

Greetings to all u3a members

At last Auckland has a functional railway system and with glamorous underground stations. Trains may come every 10 minutes, and it takes only 30 minutes from Karanga-a-Hape station to Swanson. What



a contrast to the old days. As a school holiday treat, mother would take us on the steam train to Ranui and Swanson. Chugging along, it would take most of the morning. The most exciting moments were in the tunnels; strange noises in the pitch dark with steam and soot swirling into the carriage.

I like to travel by train. Airplanes are faster but they are cramped and the crew get shirty if you walk around. Until you land, the scenery is non-existent. Your oxygen supply is reduced at high altitude. No wonder you feel groggy at the end of a long-haul flight. Ocean liners have considerable appeal unless you chance upon a typhoon or tsunami. I prefer to be close to solid ground should things go wrong.

Fancy a trip on *TranzAlpine Railway* across the Southern Alps in mid-winter? Or take the *Kingston Flyer* to Queenstown, pulled by an old-time steam engine. Who wouldn't want to travel on the *Orient Express* to Budapest. You might not identify an enemy agent, but you will see a Grande Dame. For the more hardy, the *Trans-Siberian*, 9,440km from Moscow to Vladivostok, could be an adventure of a lifetime. Take a heavy chain and padlock to secure your compartment during the night and watch out for drones. I know more than a few people who have crossed Australia on the *Indian-Pacific* or the *Ghan*, but I know nobody who has done a return trip. Even with a good Australian red there is only so much wilderness one can take.

The exhilarating speed of bullet trains thrills me. If you stand up on the French bullet train (TVG) on the way to Lyon, you don't feel safe. On the *Maglev* into Shanghai, you wouldn't dare stand up. At a maximum speed of 431 km/h it felt like you were in airplane without wings.

In 1967 we visited World's Fair Expo 67 in Montreal. It was so sophisticated and innovative to our eyes. Nothing like this had ever happened in safe, sleepy New Zealand. Rob Muldoon kept everything under control including prices. Then we spent three and half days crossing Canada on the *Canadian Pacific Railway* to arrive in the vibrant city of Vancouver. The train was smooth and fast; the track was wide gauge. It took two days and nights to cross the prairies. The rest of the scenery was spectacular. Extra observation cars were added for the Rockies and the British Columbia coast ranges; soaring snow laden peaks and wild rivers. It cost \$40 with a comfortable bunk and all meals included.

The *Wabash Cannon Ball*; what a name to conjure with. In the 1880s the first Cannon Ball train went from Chicago to El Paso, Texas. The locomotive was an outlandish monster with a flared smokestack and a massive cowcatcher. It snorted steam like an angry buffalo. The *Wabash Cannon Ball* ran on the Wabash Railway from 1950 to 1971. It is celebrated with its own song. However, probably the best-known railway song is the Rock Island Line, which was a staple of skiffle bands with their whomping tea-chest bases. The song was also a favourite of Johnny Cash. The *Rock Island Line* initially ran from Chicago to the trading post of Rock Island, on the Mississippi, and then steadily expanded to serve 14 middle and western states.

I was in Denver the day in 1983, when the *Denver Rio Grande* train left for the last time. The town was buzzing with middle-aged men. The spectacular scenery made it a favourite with railway buffs. It ran through the breathtaking Royal Gorge canyon and the mining town of Leadville (at one time the Silver Capital of the World), crossing the Rockies at the 10,240 ft Tennessee Pass to arrive at Ogden, Utah. It was also special because it was a narrow gauge (three feet) railway, which was unusual for North America. Every seat was taken.

Laurence Melton

u3a REMUERA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

u3a Remuera welcomes Wendy Brackstone as a new member. We hope you will explore one or more of the study groups and find your experience fulfilling as well as an opportunity to meet new friends.

REMUERA U3A NEEDS YOU!

UPCOMING COMMITTEE VACANCIES

The success of Remuera u3a is due to your attendance at our monthly meetings and your engagement in one or more of the 16 study groups. Coordinating all these activities is the elected committee who meet 4 times per year. At the AGM in November, you will be asked to elect a new committee for 2027. However, some of the present committee members are not standing for election. The new committee takes office in January 2027 for that calendar year.

PLEASE CONSIDER BECOMING A MEMBER OF OUR COMMITTEE – WE NEED:

Vice President – To arrange speakers for Monday meetings. 5 of the 11 for 2027 are already in place.

Director of Studies – Liaise and coordinate with all convenors of the study groups

Newsletter Editor – Use your creative skills to edit our monthly newsletters from February 2027.

BRING A FRIEND to grow this organisation, founded in 1989 as the first u3a group in New Zealand and still going strong.

Group Reports

Current Affairs

After meeting for many years at St Chads, the Current Affairs Group has changed its meeting venue to Remuera Gardens Retirement Village. The salubrious surroundings and pleasant coffee-break room have not reduced our zeal for discussing politics. And of course, there is plenty to talk about as the New Zealand election draws closer. You may also have noticed that internationally wars, and rumours of wars, continue unabated.

We all have the opportunity each meeting to introduce a topic of interest on any current affairs topic, and then discussion flows from everyone who wants to have had a say. We meet on the first and third Monday at 10.00 am.

New members are welcome.

Convenor: John Trainor 524 5907 johnval@slingshot.co.nz

Classic Movies

The Classic Movies study group was formed in November 2020 and we currently have 31 members. Our meetings were held at 7 St Vincents in Remuera until May this year and we were grateful for their hospitality. Our meetings are now being held at Remuera Gardens, 57 Richard Farrell Avenue, at 1. pm on the second Friday of the month and residents of this lovely retirement village are also invited to join us.

Each month, a different member will choose and introduce the film which certainly adds impact and colour to the story. After the screening we have afternoon tea. Members of the group are rostered to provide this. We have shown a variety of very enjoyable films so far this year, amongst them 'Gaslight' (1944), 'To Kill a Mockingbird' (1962), 'On the Beach' (1959) and 'Varian's War' (2001).

Convenor; Lynn Bartram 021 470 176

Deputy Convenor; Trish Clark 021 244 5545

At our previous meeting.....

Dr Maree Todd, a gerontologist, spoke to us about “A life course approach to ageing well.” It requires, starting well, having a good map for designing healthcare and it’s never too late to start.



The dimensions to wellbeing are founded on one’s place, land, and roots which supports our physical, spiritual, mental and emotional states as well as encompassing family and social dimensions. However, social determinants of health and wellbeing are significant influences. These include income and economic security, housing, education, employment, food security and nutrition, cultural identity and social inclusion. Nevertheless, all of these dimensions are affected by environmental factors such as chronic disease, access to health services, etc.

Life expectancy has increased sharply since 1900 as a result of improved public health measures such as sanitation. safe water, food safety, vaccinations, etc.

Dr Alex Comfort writes that adopting a positive vision of ageing for oneself, is essential.

In terms of dementia prevention, a Lancet commission, 2024, identified 14 reversible risk factors. Most of the risk factors, ten, occur during mid-life (45 to 65). In later life, social isolation, visual loss and air pollution are reversible factors. However, when applying the study in New Zealand, different factors are evident between the four main ethnic groups, with smoking, depression and diabetes being prominent. Therefore, identifying risk factors for dementia is a complicated process.

To counter the onset of dementia, it requires a build-up of cognitive or brain reserve and preserving it. It begins with a healthy pregnancy, good health through early childhood and the teenage years into early adulthood. The five simple things we can do in middle age is:

- Look after your heart,
- Be physically active,
- Follow a healthy diet,
- Challenge your brain and
- Enjoy social activity.



For older people, enjoy a higher protein diet, maintain muscle mass and watch your calcium intake. Watch out for hidden calories in alcohol, spreads, pre-prepared meals, etc.

In summary – be physically active, challenge your brain and maintain good social activity.

Editor’s comment – u3a Remuera offers all these anti-aging remedies.

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Our second speaker was Diane Blomfield, Project manager for Hanly House. This is the former home of Pat and Gil Hanly, an iconic artistic couple. Pat Hanly was a well-known New Zealand painter whose work is held in several New Zealand institutions including Te Papa and the Auckland Art Gallery. Gil was a noted social documentary photographer.

A charitable trust has been formed to preserve their house, which is alongside Gil’s bespoke Stanish and Green designed studio and extensive garden, to operate as a living House Museum and Artists’ Residency. It will support New Zealand and international practitioners of art, architecture, photography, and other creative or cultural pursuits through a residency program.



The Artists' Residency programme aims to support a mid-career artist for a year at a time, enabling them to live rent free in Mt Eden, to create work in Gil Hanly's studio, and to build relationships with local schools and community.

Following Diane's talk, a number of u3a members decided to visit Hanly House on Wednesday 26th August.

Notice Board

Future Speakers	12 th October 2026	Susanne Burton Thompson, "A Life Full of Surprises."	
	9 th November 2026	Shamubeel Eaquad, "Rebuilding New Zealand: From Fraying to Fairness."	
	14 th December 2026	Margo Knightbridge, "Heartsong Quartet."	
Meeting Tasks - October	Greeters	Classic Movies	
	Morning Tea	Genealogy	
	Newsletter Reports	NZ History and Foodies	
	Mini Talk	Poetry	
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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.

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"Try stepping outside your comfort zone. Talk to different people. Read news you would never normally read. The best possible future is almost certainly the one where we all let go of our unexamined assumptions."

— F.C. Quiles