

Epsom U3A, 2026

Interest Groups Guide Book

EPSOM **U3A** Inc.

Welcome Aboard

*'A ship in port is safe, but that is not what ships are for,
Sail out to sea and do new things'*

(Rear admiral Dr Grace Hopper, computer scientist)

Monthly Meetings:

- * Monthly meetings of the Epsom U3A are held at Royal Oak Bowls, 146 Selwyn Street, Onehunga, on the second Thursday of each month, from 10am-12.00. Meetings include interesting speakers and morning tea, with a chance to socialise and meet new people.
- * Parking is available on site, or in the street. The Number 30 Onehunga Bus via Manukau Rd, will drop you off in Trafalgar St, near Inkerman St, leaving just a short walk to the venue. Disabled access is easy.

Epsom U3A's Interest Groups

The University of the Third age (U3A) began at the University of Toulouse in France in 1972 and rapidly spread worldwide. It now has thousands of members. NZ it began in 1989 and is called U3A to differentiate it from degree-granting universities, which it is not.

Initially U3A NZ followed the Toulouse model which recognised the huge pool of brain power, knowledge and experiences held by retired people and ran lectures based on various topics.

Cambridge University in the UK then encouraged people to actively participate in selecting topics, researching, planning and presenting information, as they believed this promotes increased personal learning, confidence and enjoyment by being involved in reading, researching discussion and field trips.

Building on from this philosophy, U3A Epsom has developed interest groups which are the lifeblood of U3A.

Each group is led by a Convenor or Convenors. Groups meet regularly (This can be weekly or once or twice each month, depending on the group) See enclosed current timetable.

A typical group has 5-15 members but some have up to 30 enthusiasts.

Venues are usually members' homes, in the community, or at retirement villages.

There is no set timescale for each group to operate. If the topic is very specific it may run for 3-4 sessions, then disband. Alternatively, an active interest group can run for many years.

Currently Epsom U3A, which formed in 1989, has 26 Interest Groups several of which have been operating for many years.

Epsom U3A encourages members to join at least one, if not more groups. Some members belong to several. Each group operates as its members wish and there is no special format.

The Interest Group Coordinator from the committee, provides support and guidance to the convenor of each interest group. The convenors will email members prior to the meetings to remind them of dates, times, trips etc or to clarify who is speaking/presenting or bringing any refreshments.

Please phone the Interest Group Convenor or the Interest Group Coordinator prior to joining, to determine the location, time, format of the group and any special needs/equipment you may need to take.

. If you are unsure if the group may be exactly what you are looking for, ask the Convenor if you could sit in on a meeting.

Each February we suggest you confirm your membership of the group/s you belong to, with the Coordinator or the Convenor.

Lists will be placed out on tables at the February and March main meetings.

Note: Details of phone and email contacts for convenors and the Interest Group Co-ordinator are on the newsletters and on our website.

Kaye Buchanan has the data projector at home. If you wish to use it for a presentation, please phone or email a couple of days

prior, to arrange when to pick it up or drop it back after your meeting. The Deaf Centre has IT equipment available.

Please inform the membership secretary of any changes in email addresses or phone contact numbers. We would prefer mobile numbers so convenors can text or email their members

Roles and Contact Details of Epsom U3A Committee		
President Ian Jost	First point of contact on U3A website Runs meetings and committee meetings Represents the branch officially	027-4887037 president.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Past President Duncan Macdonald	Stands in for the president, if unavailable, liaises with new president	021-316661 dunju46@gmail.com
Secretary Jenny Whatman	Keeps records, Maintains the Epsom U3A Website Writes and sends out meeting agenda Deals with correspondence ,mail and email	027-3532487 secretary.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Treasurer Thomas Tam	Collects and banks subs, Keeps asset register Co-ordinates with secretary re membership applications Reports to committee on financial situation	021-2503178 treasurer.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Almoner	Collects & disseminates news about members'	Charmaine Strang 027-4177556

Charmaine Strang	health problems Sends Get Well or Sympathy cards as appropriate.	cpstrang@xtra.co.nz
Newsletter Editor (Co-opted) Jeanette Grant	Organizes past records into secure and accessible form, Created a history of the past 25 years Writes and arranges circulation of the monthly newsletter Acts as a collection point form members' information	638-8566 jeanette.john.grant@gmail.com
Interest Groups Co-Ordinators Joslyn Squire Bill Hagan	Organises group contributions to meetings Encourages analysis and feedback on success of programmes Encourages formation of new groups Liaises with the convenors of various groups Books venues	021-1680680 joslynmsquire@gmail.com 021-611247 biju.cedar@gmail.com
Membership Thomas Tam	Keeps an up-to-date list of members complete with Address and phone numbers Co-ordinates with the Treasurer to keep it up to date Helps with Technology and IT for meetings	021-2503178 membership.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Speaker co-ordinator, for	Keeps record of past and prospective speakers	Ian Jost 027-4887037 ianmarionj@gmail.com

Main Meetings Ian Jost other committee members	Approaches main speakers and arranges a time for their talk Organises any equipment they may need Organises parking for them & welcomes them.	027-4887037 ianmarionj@gmail.com
Technical officer Thomas Tam	In charge of equipment; bringing it along and making sure it works. 1] speaker system 2] overhead projector, pointer and screen 3) Advises on new purchases eg. DVD, Laptop 4) Assist convenors as required	021-2503178 treasurer.u3aepsom@gmail.com
Morning tea supplies; liaison with tea ladies Kaye Buchanan	Checks morning tea ladies know what to provide for main meetings and the AGM. Checks payments and forwards receipts to Treasurer	021-2990709 lovvain16@gmail.com
Minutes secretary Jeanette Saunders	Takes minutes at Committee meetings and AGM and sends to Secretary and President for approval and archiving.	021-0462186 jeanettesaunders21@gmail.com
Main meeting reports for newsletter	Write reports of speakers' talks held at main monthly meetings, and send for newsletter publication.	Joslyn Squire 021-1680680 joslynmsquire@gmail.com

Interest Groups

Attending Performing Arts

Convenor: Phone Shirin Caldwell or Carleen Edwards for information

Phone : 630-1662, or 624-6298

Email: shirincaldwell@gmail.com

Meeting time: 10.00 – 12.00

Meeting Day: 4th Friday of the month.

Venue: Either at 39 Marsden Avenue Mt Eden

The convenor will let the Group know of the venue/outing each month.

Usually as a group, members attend plays, including the Auckland Theatre Company and Silo Theatre productions, National Theatre simultaneous live streaming at either the Rialto or the Academy, and notable films. We also go to a number of the Auckland Festival productions. Some members attend NZSO or Auckland Philharmonia or NZ Chamber Music concerts, although these are booked separately by members.

At the monthly meeting, each person discusses a particular event they have seen that has entranced them (or not) and why. Other group members who have also seen or heard the same production then comment. The idea is that everyone has an opportunity to share their experiences. The group meets every second Friday of the month February to November. No meeting in December but in January of following year we have lunch at a restaurant and select Silo plays (the programme is not available till then).

Most members book for Auckland Theatre Company productions at the end of the previous year and for Silo productions in January, to make the most of early-bird prices. As a Group, we prefer to go to matinee performances if they are available.

If you enjoy live theatre, do come and join us.

Architecture Group

Convenor: Shared between members. Contact is Brian Murray

Phone : 021-02668396

Email: hap101dx@gmail.com

Meeting time: 9.45 – 11.45

Meeting Day: 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Venue: Deaf Centre , 16 Hillsborough Road

Kia ora!

This Architecture group operates on a shared leadership model. Each member takes a turn to facilitate a 90minute session each month. Usually, the participants only organise ONE session a year. Support is always available.

The four very broad headings that participants choose a topic from, are ***International Architecture, NZ Architecture, Architects, and Elements of Architecture*** (materials, design, elevators, windows, landscape etc - whatever floats your boat). These 4 areas cover anything and everything!

No expertise is required. Most participants have little expertise but love design in relation to spaces and buildings and want to learn something from outside their comfort zone.

Participants might use their 90minute opportunity to invite speakers in, organise a visit to a site in Auckland or share a personal, local or overseas experience in a presentation. Google is a wonderful resource! Haere Mai!

500 Cards

Convenor: Betty Townley (Ring to check venue)

Phone: 626-6673 or 02108039023 bettytownley@icloud.co.nz

Time: Saturday -Last Saturday of the month 7pm

Venue: Pinesong Retirement Village, Green Bay

A chance to play 500 with a sociable group of people.

Art Appreciation

Convenor: Kaye Buchanan

Phone: 021-2990709

Email:lovvain16@gmail.com

Meeting time: 10.00am-

12.00

Meeting day: 3rd Friday of each month.

Venue: Various venues to be advised by the convenor, via email

The Art Appreciation group has been in existence for over 15 years. It began as a home group but grew into one which visits galleries to see the wide range of exhibitions available across Auckland.

Members have had a number of very interesting visits over the years to such shows as "Degas to Dali", 'Angels and Aristocrats' to selected creations in the Wearable Art competition, to name a few.

Members are encouraged to suggest venues and after each visit, many stay for coffee and discuss what has been viewed.

Art History

Venue: Deaf Centre ,16 Hillsborough Rd,

Convenor: Emily Flynn

Contact: xeflynn@earthlight.co.nz Phone: 021-09025094

Day: Tuesdays Week 2 of each month

Time: 10am-12.00

We will view and discuss a series of Art History videos by a Professor in America. His lectures are fascinating and introduce ways to view and interpret art with examples from each of the major periods of art history, beginning in 800 CE up to the end of the 1900s.

Book Chat

Convenor: Helen Holdem

Phone: 021-2603510

Email: clanholdem@gmail.com

Meeting time: 1.30 – 3.30pm

Meeting day: 2nd Wednesday of month

Venue: Epsom/ Remuera Croquet Club, 259 Gillies Avenue, Epsom

History and Social Change

Convenor: Helen Holdem

Venue: 55 Lloyd Avenue, Mt Albert

Time: Third Thursday of the month at 10am-12.00

Contact: 63021-2603510 Email: clanholdem@gmail.com

This lively, keen group focuses on researching and sharing presentations about historical movements and their causes and effects(eg the “isms”) leading to change over time and across many areas of the world. You don’t need to be an expert and can use You Tube, videos, DVDs etc. In 2026 we are beginning the year by focussing on major historical movements such as Marxism, Communism, Feminism, Conservatism, Liberalism , Atheism, Fascism, Authoritarianism etc to name a few.

Current Affairs for Lively Debates

Convenor: Shirley McConville

Phone: 022-5021415

Email: shirleymcconville@xtra.co.nz

Meeting time: 10am-12.00

Meeting day: 4th Friday of the month.

Venue: Onehunga Community House, 83 Selwyn St, Onehunga

Members arrive at this interest group prepared to speak for 5 minutes maximum about at least one item of news that has interested them in the last month and these range from environmental concerns to local issues or worldwide events. The members rarely agree with what politicians are doing world-wide or in our neck of the woods. Perspectives are diverse so debates can be very interesting.

Classical Music Appreciation

Convenor: Carleen Edwards

Phone: 624-6298

Email: carleenpe@gmail.com

Meeting time: 10.00am – 12.00

Meeting day: 1st Wednesday of month.

Venue: Theatre at Ranfurly Retirement Village, 539 Mt Albert Rd, Three Kings

The group has been going for 27 years. All gatherings start with tea, coffee and biscuits.

Judy Green, who ran this group for about 7 years very kindly offered to loan the group an appropriate DVD for each session. She has a wonderful selection of DVDs from the BBC in London. Members can also play one of their own if they prefer.

The group chooses a topic for each year, e.g. Early Music, History of Music, Instruments, etc. and participants take turns to give a brief talk on their chosen item and play an appropriate DVD.

Comparative Religions

Convenors: Duncan MacDonald and John Locke

Venue: Rotating venues to be advised by email monthly.

Time: Fridays, Week 2, 10.00-12.00

Contact: Duncan 021-316661 or John 021-1878061

Email: dunju46@gmail.com, or allanlocke@gmail.com

This group studies the history of religions and compares their origins and beliefs. Previously we have focussed on Christianity, Judaism, Islam and some of the eastern religions.

It is not intended to be for religious practice but to broaden our understanding of the many issues that have led to political conflict and social disruption. It also is an opportunity to discuss controversies and answer questions you may have, while making links to cultural practices. Visits may be included.

Famous and Infamous

Convenor: Shirley McConville

Phone: 022-5021415

Email: shirleymcconville@xtra.co.nz

Meeting time: 10.00am-12.00

Meeting day: 4th Wednesday of month.

Venue: Theatre at Ryman Logan Campbell Village, Campbell Rd, Greenlane

(Meet in the foyer)

This group has been in existence for almost twenty years and several of the original members are still active in the group. The group explores people who have made contributions to society in both positive and negative ways .

We begin each meeting with a general knowledge quiz, all members bringing along one or two questions with short answers they can talk about.

One or two people will present a talk, in more detail, based on their research of their famous or infamous person. Tea and coffee are available and morning tea food is provided on a rostered basis. Parking is available in visitor labelled parking lots, under the main building.

Fabric and Fibre Crafts

(CLOSED due to limitations on numbers at the venue)

Convenor: Charmaine Strang

Phone: 6348238 , 027-4177556

Email: cpstrang@xtra.co.nz

Meeting Time: Friday , Week 4 of the month

Time: 10 am-12.00

Venue: Ryman Logan Campbell Retirement Village, Campbell Rd, Greenlane

This group focuses on knitting, sewing, crocheting, embroidery or making hand-crafted items with fabric and fibres, while socializing. Members decide how to make the group function best for them. They bring along their ideas, patterns or current projects to share. They will exhibit work at a U3A meeting/sale later in the year. Morning tea is also shared.

Foodies Group

Convenor: Graham Gunn

Phone: 630 2991

Email: topgunn@xtra.co.nz

Meeting time: 6.00pm – 9.00pm

Meeting day: 1st Tuesday of month

Venue: A chosen Auckland cafe or restaurant

As we have a good variety of ethnic restaurants available in Auckland, there are endless opportunities to dine out and try different culinary experiences while enjoying an interesting social outing each month. Your taste buds will face a whole new adventure!

Gardening Appreciation

Convenor Betty Townley Phone:626-6673 or 021-08039023

email: bettytownley@icloud.com

Venue:10A Liverpool St, Epsom(Carol Evans) 027-4447996 or 625-5517

Time: 1.30-3.30pm Friday Week 4

We aim to share gardening experiences and make visits when appropriate.

Family History Research

Convenor: Bryn Smith

Phone: 6388814

Email: bryns@xtra.co.nz

Meeting time: 10am-12.00

Meeting day: First Thursday of the month

Venue: Ryman Logan Campbell Retirement Village, Campbell Rd, Greenlane

This group started in 2017 and consists of beginners as well as others who are knowledgeable and have compiled their own family histories or are still in the process of doing so.

There will be time spent each session sharing one's skills and knowledge, and offering guidance in your research.

Useful web sites and databases will be discussed.

Latin

Note: As this group has been going for some time, it is not intended for beginners of Latin. A tutor will facilitate the group's learning.

Latin Convenor: Kaye Buchanan

Phone: 021-2990709

Email: lovvain16@gmail.com

Tutor: Geoff Sheehan

Meeting time: 10.00am - 12.00

Meeting day: 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month

Venue: 10A Invermay Rd, Mt Roskill

Each meeting begins with a Latin phrase for which members discuss a possible meaning following which the Tutor provides some formal input.

Members are now working through The Cambridge Latin course Book 2 with the tutor. This course focuses first on life in Roman Britain before moving to Egypt. With texts and adaptations of Roman authors, accompanied by key language points, the course provides an enjoyable introduction to the Latin language and is also complemented by background information on Roman culture and civilisation. Members find this an enjoyable group.

New Zealand History Group

Convenor: Kaye Buchanan

Phone: 021-2990709

Email: lovvain16@gmail.com

Meeting time: 1.30pm - 3.15

Meeting day: 2nd Tuesday of the month

Venue: Ryman Logan Campbell Retirement Village, Campbell Rd, Greenlane

Members enjoy a mix of outings to places of historic interest and meetings at which one or more members present their research into a topic or event.

Some activities require early starts so meeting times can vary and when appropriate we carpool. Learning about our past helps us understand the way we are today.

Lunch Bunch

This was a new group in 2023, for people who enjoy eating out and socialising, but prefer not to go out at night. A different café is chosen each month and members are advised by email in advance. Members need to confirm attendance by the given deadline, so the convenor can book for the exact number attending. Please advise if cancelling after you have booked.

Convenor: Shirley McConville Phone: 022-5021415
email: shirleymcconville@xtra.co.nz

Meeting Time and Place: 4th Tuesday of each month, at about 11.30am-1.30pm -To be advised by email.

Philosophy

Convenor: Jocelyn Hewin Phone: 634-1552

Email: jocelynhewin@gmail.com , winstonwilliamsjr@gmail.com

Meeting time: 10am-12.00

Meeting day: 4th Thursday of the month. Venue: • Lynne Lindberg's home

Phone 027-4928282 Apt. 702/223B Greenlane West Rd, Epsom.

This group has no experts but they all share an interest in asking and discussing the hard questions of life. The book titled "50 philosophy ideas you really need to know!" by Ben Dupre is a main reference tool.

Just to give you an idea, a quote by Ben Dupre, "Have you ever lain awake at night fretting over how we can be sure of the reality of the external world? Perhaps we are in fact disembodied brains floating in vats at the whim of some deranged master scientist?" If so you are not alone.

One member each meeting presents on a particular philosopher whose ideas have interested them.

Chess Club

Time: Wednesdays, Week 4, 1.30pm

Venue: Rotate around members' houses

Convenor: John Locke and Ian Jost 027-4887037

Phone: 021-1878061

Email: allanlocke@gmail.com. ianmarionj@gmail.com

Greetings to all potential chess grandmasters in U3A! Epsom U3A would like to set up a chess club for interested members. Come along and exercise your mind, and have fun. Games will likely be held on an afternoon. (Venue, date and time to be confirmed at the monthly meeting on 9 February, 2026.).

Scrabble (Closed due to maximum numbers and venue size)

Note: A new second Scrabble group can be formed if members wish to organise it among themselves.

Convenor: Joslyn Squire

Phone: 021-1680680

Email: joslynmsquire@gmail.com

Meeting time: 1.30pm-3.30pm

Meeting Day: Friday, Week 3 of each month

Venue: Rotate around member's houses

(Shared afternoon tea included, on rostered basis.)

You don't have to be an expert, but if you love words and board games, this sociable group welcomes you to join in. Bring your own Scrabble set if you like.

Big History

Convenor: Emily Flynn

Phone: 021-09025094

Email: xeflynn@earthlight.co.nz

Meeting Time: 10am-12.00

Meeting Day: Tuesday, Week 1 of each month

Venue: Deaf Centre, 16 Hillsborough Rd.

This group uses a series of DVD lectures by an American professor, then discusses the topic. After morning tea, one member elaborates on the same theme after doing their own research.

Te Reo

Convenor Jenny Whatman, Tutor: Susan Sotheran

Mondays- Weeks 2 and 4

Venue: 1/45 Turama Rd, Royal Oak

Time: 10am-12.00

Contact: jennywhat@gmail.com Phone 027-3532487

This group is comprised of people who have studied Te Reo for one to three years, to improve their basic knowledge of Te Reo Maori. This includes common greetings, vocabulary, numbers, colours, days, months, and understanding protocols etc. If you feel you have these things already in your grasp, this group could help you extend your competence. You don't have to be an expert to join. They use a basic text to assist their learning.

Travel Group

Convenor: Diana Hart/ Shared responsibility on a monthly basis.

(An email contact list will be supplied by the Interest Group Co-ordinator in February)

Contact: 021-1680680 to join and after that see the email list for monthly convenors.

Meeting time: 1.30-3.30pm Venue: Deaf Centre, 16 Hillsborough Rd.

Meeting day: First Thursday of the month

This group has members who have travelled extensively in New Zealand and overseas, as well as others less travelled but equally interested in learning more about our world.

studying ancient civilizations and the reformation and enlightenment. We have now decided to look at history in a different way, exploring the past over spans of time and place, using themes, trends and developments. A multidisciplinary approach can unlock new understandings of our civilizations since the end of the ice age 13,000 years ago. We will be using a lecture series of DVDs as well as supplementing our sessions with member research and discussion of the chosen topics.

You don't need any prior knowledge, just curiosity, and a willingness to learn about them. There will be a roster for contributing to the meetings and for bringing refreshments.

All members have the opportunity to share their experiences and travel hints, as well as their rants and raves via photos, brochures, books, magazines, etc. Some members may want to present using digital media, You Tube, film, use a data projector etc, but this is not an expectation. Sometimes, outside speakers may attend (eg. Travel agents)

The enthusiasm of this group is infectious. Afternoon tea is provided.

Applied Science:

This was a new Group beginning 6th August 2025

Convenor: Venue: Peter Parsons

Time: Week 2, Wednesday 10am-12.00

Venue: Deaf Centre, 16 Hillsborough Rd.

This group explores many of the practical applications of science, which we use in everyday life.

(eg. Electric cars and batteries, wine making, solar or wind power, manufactured products, new technologies, robotics, AI, pharmaceuticals, food technology, new inventions, how the internet works, or anything else you may want to explore.)

The convenor has a science background, but members do not need any prior knowledge to learn and discover.

Come along and expand your knowledge at this popular group.

Walkers and Talkers

Convenor: Don Buchanan

Phone: 027-5928131

Email : lovvain16@gmail.com

Meeting time: 9.30am -11.30am

Meeting day: Every Monday.

Venue: Advised by the convenor by email, a few days ahead of the meeting

Walks include the foreshores of both the Manukau and Waitemata Harbours, Cornwall park and many other Auckland parks, various boardwalks along streams and other places of interest that members may not know about or don't visit on their own. We are not "fitness freaks" but reasonable level of fitness is desirable.

We always have coffee and a chat at the conclusion.

For Many More Interest Group opportunities

Are you interested in learning about a new subject? There may be others with similar thoughts who relish a new interest? Talk to U3A Epsom's President or our Interest Group

Co-ordinators who will help in every way possible. to determine interest and help set the wheels in motion to start a new group. Feel free to offer to convene a group or use your home as a meeting place.

Interest groups can meet for a short or long term.(ie. for one or several weeks or months or many years). The topics may be well-defined or evolve as the group decides its objectives.

U3A ONLINE STUDY (Based in Australia)

For a modest annual membership fee, U3A Online provides online courses of study for members on a wide range of interesting topics.

For more information visit <https://www.u3aonline.org.au/>

Join "U3A Online" and you have access to independent study courses and courses with a leader including subjects in the following areas:

World Affairs and History

Nature

Writing and Creativity

Lifestyle

Science

EPSOM U3A WEBSITE:

Open our website <https://u3aepsom.nz> to get access to contact details and the PDF notice board, which contains a membership form, the latest 3 newsletters and the Epsom U3A Interest Groups Guide Book.

AUCKLAND REGIONAL U3A NETWORK

Web site address: <https://u3aauckland.net>

The Auckland U3A network consists of representatives from the 25 autonomous branches of U3A in the Auckland area who meet 3 times a year to share.