

University of the Third Age Plettenberg Bay

Newsletter May 2023

Dear Members

The motto of u3a is 'Learn, laugh and live'. It's about coming together and learning for fun. Our outings provide great opportunities for members to get together, laugh and enjoy life. All our outings have a learning component, for example, getting to know more about the flora of our beautiful fynbos, astronomy, bronze casting or learning about the wines of our surrounding areas.

Our focus on 'learning for fun' is also reflected in the various documentaries shown every Monday morning, where we try to address different subjects, specifically those which interest most of our members (such as travel, nature, history, music, art) in terms of the topics they checked on their membership forms. Similarly, our monthly talks cover various topical subjects, such as the Plettenberg Bay sharks.

Interest groups generally provide members with an opportunity to be more active and learn by doing. For example, language conversation groups enable people to practice their language skills and learn by talking to others. Poetry group members select poems for group discussion. Plett u3a is trying to expand its range of interest groups, but it will never be able to match those of the larger U3A branches in South Africa, such as Cape Town.

As previously mentioned, one of the great U3A membership benefits is that you will generally be able to attend the events of any other South African U3A free of charge if you wear your name tag. You can also attend online webinars offered by U3As all over South Africa, and view their recordings via Zoom (U3A South Africa - Google Drive) or YouTube afterwards. Note that not all SA U3A branches record and share their courses and lectures online.

A good example of a forthcoming online webinar is the three-part lecture series on 'Special relativity' being offered by U3A Cape Town in early June. More information is provided under 'Interest groups/Science' below. You will need to contact Ken Buchanan, the coordinator, to get the links. Enjoy!

Best wishes
Plett u3a committee

Welcome

A very warm welcome to our new members: Doris Engelhardt, Alice Spence, Pippa and Peter van Noppen.

Plett u3a events programme

The calendar of upcoming events is sent as a separate document together with the newsletter. The programme calendar covers the next two months. Overviews of future events are included in the calendar document. More detailed information regarding future talks and outings is sent to all members as 'Upcoming events' email notifications about two weeks prior to the event. A reminder is sent approximately 24 hours before the event.

Outings

Please note that there will be **no outing in July.**

All outings need to be booked through u3aplett@gmail.com as attendance numbers are restricted.

Visitors

We welcome all visitors at R30 per person. In the case of **outings visitors must accompany Plett u3a members**. This to ensure that non-members do not take places that would otherwise be available to our members.

General

Attendance register checks

As you have noticed, before all events we check every person's name against our list of members. It seems we may be ticking some of you off in more ways than one! This exercise is not intended to be a precursor to some form of punishment for not wearing your name tag.

You may recollect that the March newsletter (pp. 3-4) provided an analysis of members' interests. We also stated that, while the aim of Plett u3a is to provide stimulating programmes conducive to learning and social interaction, we obviously cannot please all of the people all of the time. One way of finding out who likes what is to record what events they regularly attend – which is what the name checking at the door is all about. It's too early for us to provide you with an analysis of this exercise, but so far we have found that many of our members attend the Monday documentaries, but not necessarily the outings and/or talks and vice versa. As we would like to ensure that our programmes address most of our members' interests, we would appreciate your feedback on which of our events make you (un)happy. As you know, happiness is something you make happen for yourself, which means that the Plett u3a committee needs your input to be able to make you happy.

Photo policy

Plett u3a may make use of images of events and members to illustrate communications and to assist in marketing the organisation to expand membership. Still and video images of people attending any talk, interest group, event, or outing may be used to illustrate publicity material via newsletters, social media, website, posters or printed brochures, which may be distributed in public places, or through advertising, editorial content or broadcasting distribution.

In South Africa any person may photograph any other person, without their permission, in public spaces. However, you are entitled to your privacy in terms of South African privacy law, specifically the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA).

Should any Plett u3a member, or guest, not wish to be photographed at our events please ensure that you seclude yourself to a place where you cannot be photographed.

Interest groups

Beginners' Bridge

Currently we have only three people who are interested. Unless we can get at least four people it will not be possible to get this group underway. If you are interested in learning about bridge please contact Chrissy Hay (christinehay@worldonline.co.za).

French Conversation Group

Plett u3a has for many years had a French Conversation Group, which is unfortunately closed to newcomers. We are extremely fortunate to have a very well-qualified person who is willing to establish and lead a new French conversation group.

Ingrid James studied French at school and at Stellenbosch University for four years. She spent a year teaching French to foreigners in Grenoble. She then taught French for many years, initially at several schools, then at university level and at the Alliance Française in Pietermaritzburg.

The inaugural meeting will probably be after mid-July. If you wish to participate in this French conversation group please send an email to u3aplett@gmail.com and indicate whether you have some French skills or whether you are a beginner.

Italian Conversation Group

Although there is interest in this topic we still do not as yet have anyone to lead an Italian conversation group, despite several attempts to find someone. If you know of an Italian-speaking

person who might be interested in helping people who want to practice their Italian language skills please contact us. Ideally the person will have been either a teacher or university lecturer, but that's not essential. It's more about helping to correct pronunciation and perhaps helping with grammatical issues. Otherwise the meetings are informal. The focus is on learning by speaking.

Poetry Interest Group

This group met for the first time at Chrissy Hay's house on the 11th of May. Ruth Everson read several of her poems, starting with 'Poetry is dangerous', which was written pre-1994, when the Apartheid government considered poetry to be 'more dangerous than a hand grenade'.

The format of future meetings will be that the leader of that month's meeting will choose a specific poet. Each group member will select one of the poet's poems and will research the background and context of the chosen poem. Every member will read their selected poem and present their research findings and interpretation of the poem to the group, which will then discuss the poem further.

Monday Music Memos: subscription confirmations required

On the 28th March Peter Grube starting sending to all Plett u3a members weekly alerts about 'something worthwhile in the music world'. From June onwards these will only be sent to those interested in the alerts. Should you wish to continue receiving the MMMs please confirm your 'subscription' by sending an email to either u3aplett@gmail.com or petergrube@outlook.com.

Science Interest Group

Our Science Group coordinator, Henry Timme, forwarded the information below, which may be of interest to Plett u3a members outside of the Science Group.

U3A Cape Town Science Group Zoom Meeting

Title: "**Special Relativity**" - three-part lecture series.

Time & Date: 09h45 for 10h00 (SA time) / 08h45 for 09h00 (UK time) on each of:
Monday 05-Jun-2023;
Tuesday 06-Jun-2023, and;
Wednesday 07-Jun-2023.

Speaker: Rob Louw, M.Sc. (Chem. Eng.) (UCT)
U3A UK and U3A SA physics lecturer
University of Cape Town Summer School science lecturer
Retired Commercial Director, Huntsman Pigments.

Summary
In this series of three lectures, Rob Louw will cover special relativity as first discovered by Albert Einstein at the beginning of the last century. Starting with the concept of reference frames, the lectures will illustrate how Einstein's postulates of the constancy of the speed of light and the invariance of physical laws explain the phenomena of time dilation and length contraction and ultimately to the discovery that $E = mc^2$.

A summary of the content of each Zoom lecture, as well as the three Zoom links, will be emailed 12-24 hours before the first lecture.

Enquiries:
Ken J Buchanan
Co-ordinator: U3A Cape Town Science Group
Cell: +27 83 700 8095
Email: BuchananKJ2@gmail.com

Past activities

Monday 8 May: Blue Planet 1: E4 – Frozen seas



Fittingly, we watched this episode on David Attenborough's 97th birthday. It portrays life and survival techniques in the Arctic and Antarctica, where for much of the year it is dark and cripplingly cold (minus 70°C). The Arctic is a frozen ocean surrounded by continents. Polynyas (open patches of water free of ice due the pressure of tidal currents between islands) provide refuge for some species, like the walrus, and beluga and bowhead whales. In spring, with the retreating ice, life begins again and migrating visitors return.



Pregnant female polar bears den during winter and do not eat until they emerge with their cub in spring five months later. It is essential that she successfully hunts a seal pup so that her cub can survive. If she identifies a seal birth lair (caves built under snow drifts next to a hole in the ice) she raises up on her hind legs and crashes down with her front paws to break through the lair's roof. Sometimes the seal pup manages to escape through the ice hole.

Antarctica is the coldest, driest, windiest and highest continent (5 000m) on Earth and is almost entirely covered by ice. Here the winter is even harsher, but emperor penguins and Weddell seals stay throughout. Under the sea ice, krill (small shrimp-like creatures) feed by scraping algae off the ice. In winter they shrink in size and revert to their juvenile form to save energy. As the sea ice breaks up, humpback and minke whales appear to feed on the abundant krill. Whales can eat up to two tons of krill in 24 hours. In just four months they accumulate enough fat to provide energy for the rest of the year



Chinstrap penguins overwinter to the north, but return during the spring to breed. Having managed to get ashore, they have to walk a great distance to find a nest site, and the most favoured is Zavodovski Island, where an active volcano prevents ice from forming. The leopard seal is the Antarctic's top predator and it is most effective underwater. Although emperor penguins propel themselves underwater at speed (like torpedoes) through its territory, the leopard seal invariably makes a kill.









Monday 15 May: Blue Planet 1: E6 – Coral seas

Coral reefs have the highest biodiversity of any ecosystem on the planet—even more than a tropical rainforest. Occupying less than one percent of the ocean floor, they are home to more than 25% of all marine life**.** There is a never-ending fierce rivalry for food, territory and mates. We watched the formation of a coral reef and its ultimate dramatic destruction by stormy seas.

Coral starts life as a free-swimming larva that becomes an anemone-like polyp. After establishing itself on the seabed the cells multiply and a limestone skeleton grows, which ultimately forms a reef. Sunlight is vital because, even though they are animals, each coral contains millions of single-celled algae, which provide the corals with up to 90% of their food. At night the polyps use their tentacles to feed on plankton.

Coral colonies can continue to grow for centuries, unless they are destroyed, either by other competing corals, fish or violent storms – and warming seas. Humphead parrotfish feed off the algae in the corals and their jaws are so powerful that they erode much of the reef into the fine sand we find on tropical beaches. Algae also grow on the top of the reef and a battle for grazing rights between shoals of powder blue and convict tangs is shown.



At night several predators, such as eels, rays and white tip sharks prowl around and under the coral structures to find their prey. Humpback whales visit coral reefs for calving and mating. Males establish their seniority by the loudness and strength of their song. Being fixed to the seabed, corals must synchronise their reproduction with lunar phases and the rising spring temperatures. Entire reefs release clouds of sperm and eggs and billions of fertilised eggs drift away on the ocean currents, ready to settle on a vacant site and start a new coral colony.

Monday 22 May: Blue Planet 1: How the series was filmed







The series took almost five years to make, involving nearly 200 filming locations. All footage was captured in real time, with a combination of patience, fortitude, and technology. All of the locations were challenging, but the open ocean proved more difficult. Its very vastness means that finding your subject can be a daunting task and over 400 days were spent in often unsuccessful filming trips. Many of the series' most striking sequences were the result of weeks, months or even years of patient waiting for shots that would in the end take up, at most, just a few minutes of screen time.

Mostly the photographers filmed the scenes whilst swimming underwater, whether in the frozen or coral seas. In the Arctic a cameraman spent hours standing on the ice to film a polar bear with her cub hunting for seals. The same photographer went down a hole in the Antarctic ice to film a Weddell seal underwater.

Filming whales and dolphins required boats and planes to track the animals. On occasion they used a microlight to land on the water nearby. Sometimes the photographer jumped into the water before landing so that he could film the whale approaching. When diving with sharks they had electronic shark shockers, or otherwise simply bumped back when bumped by a shark.

Remote cameras attached to sticks underwater filmed unknown behaviours of salmon sharks. For very deep sea photography they used submersibles or remotely operated vehicles, with cameras rigged to the outside of the vehicle. Filming the coral reef at night was challenging, in terms of providing enough light for photography, but not too much, which could either scare away the predators, or affect coral reproduction, as moonrise timing is key for synchronised coral spawning.

The cameramen witnessed and captured many behaviours that were new to science, such as the predatory orgy following migrating sardines off South Africa's coast, where dolphins, working in packs, release air bubbles to marshal the sardines into ever tighter 'bait balls' within bubble 'nets' before gorging themselves on their helpless prey.

Talks

Wednesday 17 May: Robert Berry – Walking the Southwest Coast path in England



On his 30th birthday in 1984 Rob decided to not go to work, but to instead hike the Southwest Coast Path. Thus began an addiction to this hike that continued every year for another 30 years. The Southwest Coast Path is Britain's longest national trail. It stretches along the beautiful coast of Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, and Somerset for 1 014 km, hugging the coast all the way. The Path is usually walked in an anti-clockwise direction, from Minehead to Poole, but as he then lived in New Forest, Rob's first hike started in Poole harbour. Over the years he has walked different sections many times.

The Path offers a range of geology, vegetation, and dramatic coastal scenery and wildlife and visits some of Britain's most idyllic fishing villages and coves, which Rob illustrated with many photos. Despite increased usage over the last three decades, especially in summer, the Path can still often be remote. Hiking the entire trail involves a cumulative climb of over 35,000 metres, four times the height of Everest. For the most part the path is along cliff tops, but it may switch up and down before it descends to the coastal villages. Beaches and estuaries can be easy to cross at low tide, but as tidal waters can reach 10 metres, ferries or boats are often required for crossings. The Path is

maintained by the South West Coast Path Association, a registered charity, which also publishes trail guides and supports the interests of its users.

Rob peppered his talk with anecdotes and snippets of information. Some examples: Thomas Hardy's country in Wessex; Burgh Island, a tidal island in South Devon, home of the Art Deco Burgh Island Hotel, where Agatha Christie wrote two of her novels; and an isolated cove in Cornwall, said to be the place where Daphne du Maurier's fictitious 'Rebecca' drowned. Quite a few of the idyllic coastal villages have unaffordable real estate prices. We learned that Dartmouth is not only home to the naval academy of the United Kingdom, but it's also a town where thousands in fancy dress crowd the streets and pubs to see the New Year in together. A recurring theme of Rob's talk was beer and memorable village pubs! Hiking from Poole to Land's End formed Part 1 of Rob's talk. We look forward to Part 2!





Committee		
Chair	Jan Hough	084-674-4235
Vice Chair	Lorna van der Merwe	082-784-9903
Secretary	Beth Hackland	072-266-1821
Facebook	Beth Hackland	072-266-1821
Finance & DVD library	Ian Hogan	072 940 7298
Marketing & communications	Felicity (Flick) Grube	082-557-7779
Membership	Peter Grube	083-381-5929
Newsletter	Felicity (Flick) Grube	082-557-7779
Outings	Beth Hackland	072-266-1821
Programme coordinator	Lynette Timme	079-313-9641
Special interest groups		
Bridge for beginners	Chrissy Hay	083-648-0306
Computer basics	Peter Grube	083-381-5929
Poetry group	Chrissy Hay	083-648-0306
Science group	Henry Timme	078-877-5829
French conversation (full)	Merle Decot	
General enquiries	u3aplett@gmail.com	