

2017 Maroondah Australia Day Awards



U3A Ringwood is extremely pleased that its nomination of Jill Cowie for a Maroondah Australia Day award, has resulted in her being announced as the Maroondah Citizen of the Year at a Maroondah Council ceremony held on 26 January 2017.

Jill has been actively involved with U3A Ringwood for many years as a class member, tutor, committee member (holding offices including Secretary and President) and along with her husband Ray, she continues to volunteer to undertake tasks that contribute to the smooth running of U3A Ringwood. Jill has made a valuable contribution not only to U3A Ringwood but the broader Maroondah community since the early 1960s when she raised funds for the creation of the Pleasant Drive Kindergarten in Heathmont and the second Heathmont Scout Hall.

She has been a member of the Heathmont Primary School Committee; a committee member (including president) of the Parents' Committee of Heathmont Uniting Netball Club; a committee member of the Ringwood Ballet Group (ticket secretary for more than 10 years); taught Sunday school for 17 years; and was a member of both the Ringwood Secondary School, Mothers Club, School Council and a member of the School Council Heritage Committee. Jill has delivered Meals on Wheels from Federation Estate for Maroondah for more than 14 years and has been Treasurer, Vice President and President of the Heathmont Ladies Probus Club.

Jill has also door knocked to raise funds for the Red Cross, an activity organised by late Councillor Anne Fraser and in recent years for various other charities, including the Heart Foundation.

Jill has made and continues to make a valuable contribution to U3A Ringwood and the broader Maroondah community.

Congratulations Jill

2017 Class Changes

New Classes

We have four new interesting classes for 2017:

- "Adventures at the end of a pen" with Viki Wright-Rivett
- "Racism & Prejudice" with Glen Chandler
- "Patchwork with Linda" with Linda Robertson
- "Mahjong" – a self-help group

Line Dancing's' New Home

Line Dancing now has a new home at 7th Ringwood Scout Hall in Evelyn Road, North Ringwood.

Thelma Hughes has kindly offered to lead the Line Dancing Class following the retirement of Jackie Green. Thelma originally learnt from Jackie.

Tai Chi

Jill Cowie is filling in as Leader following the retirement of Val Budds last year.

Know Your Tutors and Class Leaders

Over numerous sessions of U3A Newsletters we will feature articles about our Class Tutors and Leaders in order that you may get to know them a little better – some of their background, interests, classes they attend as well as how they like to conduct the classes they lead. We can only fit in a few articles each time, so stay tuned for all the future ones to come! In this issue we feature John Lawley, John Hogan, Alistair McCracken and Jennie Harvie.

Jennie Harvie

You have never heard of the word “Anachronistic” – and so you go to the dictionary for its meaning!

This aptly describes her early career says Jennie Harvie who trained and worked as a Stenographer, back in the good old days when many of our “third agers” did shorthand and typing – a somewhat now outdated occupation.

Just out of interest, Jennie’s mother had a shorthand speed of 175 words per minute (really, really fast) and was a Court Reporter, not the media kind, but of the kind that transcribed every word uttered in Court proceedings on a manual typewriter. The requirement for the job at the time was a speed of 150-160 words per minute. Wow! Of course, this was long before machines were used to do the same job.

Jennie initially worked as a stenographer for Thomas Nelson, Booksellers and later graduated to the exalted position of Executive Secretary/ Administration Officer for the Police Association. Like so many, Jennie started on the manual typewriter, then the electric typewriter, the word processor and finally the computer, like all of us, witnessing quite a change in that branch of technology.

Jennie has an avid interest in Mineralogy – crystal mineral collections - belonging to Nunawading Lapidary Club of which she is currently Treasurer. She researches and presents several talks a year at her Lapidary Club, a recent presentation being on the subject of “Mining Disasters”, a subject involving considerable research.

Reading is another of Jennie’s hobbies and she belongs to a Four Wheel Drive Club, being Treasurer of the Geelong Branch. She has also been involved in Neighbourhood Watch.

Now to U3A matters – Jennie joined Ringwood in 1997 and was only there for little more than two months before being talked into (as often happens) being Secretary followed by a further few years on the committee.

When founding member Gwen Horman retired from Convenor of Armchair Travel in 2005 after 22 years, Jennie & fellow member Ruth Seferth took over the position. More on Ruth in a later edition. Around 60% of their speakers are from outside U3A, many being professional speakers. Obviously “word of mouth” is the best recommendation, so Jennie keeps her ear to the ground for interesting speakers for the group.

About 40% of the speakers come from class members who do presentations to share with others on some of the interesting places they have travelled to. Some speakers still use Slides and Videos, whilst others use the more up to date Power point presentations, but the class is able to accommodate all of these mediums.

Jennie has a wide range of other classes she attends – Tai Chi, Exercise to Music, Shi-ba-shi and Line Dancing to keep her nice and fit and also Create-a-Card to bring out the creative side as well as Cosmology.

John Hogan

He bangs his gavel to get attention – now who could that possibly be – a judge? If you were to take a guess, of course you would be correct, for it is none other than our esteemed leader of National & International Affairs Classes, John Hogan, otherwise affectionately dubbed “Hoges”.

Perhaps you would like to know a little of his background before we learn about U3A matters.

John’s career started with a Science Degree majoring in Chemistry with Honours and initially he worked for the Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia & New Zealand, then for the Commission of Public Health, followed by moving in 1981 to the Environment Protection Authority of Victoria. After leaving the EPA in 1999 he worked for a number of years as a Consultant specialising in Hazardous Waste.

John’s other interests, apart from spending time with his two grandchildren, is Theatre, being a member of

Melbourne Theatre Company, Malthouse Theatre and Whitehorse Centre. He also belongs to Council of the Ageing and National Seniors.

National & International Affairs was previously run by Professor Andrew Ehrenkreutz and John initially felt a little overwhelmed at taking over from such a distinguished and learned leader, however, he achieves this admirably.

John became Tutor of the National & International Affairs Class in 2007, so now in his tenth year as leader his self-title of the class leader is “Dictator” says he with a big grin.

There appears to be no limit to the class numbers as long as we can all fit into the room, as John feels a semi-circle around the room is the friendliest way to form the class and have inclusive involvement; all members being able to view each other. Members wishing to contribute to the discussion indicate their desire by raising a hand and this, of course, helps to eliminate cross talk amongst smaller groups. John explains that there is no particular agenda for the class, purely a “see how the discussion goes” scenario on each particular topic.

John researches the material for the class over the preceding fortnight, since National Affairs is fortnightly, interspersed with International Affairs the alternate fortnight. Research is both on-line and printed matter, being largely the Age Newspaper.

John also attends various other U3A Ringwood classes, namely Speechcraft, Elders & the Law, and is this year enrolled in Racism & Prejudice following his completion of the Understanding Asia class. John’s time in Speechcraft has very much helped him overcome his initial fear of public speaking

John Lawley

A very familiar face around Ringwood U3A is the genial and talented John Lawley

John's involvement in our organisation goes back to 2003 and he has given it his all ever since. He is a member who has had a fascinating work career, firstly as an Anglican priest and subsequently as Head of English at Yarra Valley Grammar School..... and an equally fascinating history with U3A.

Ten years after arriving in Melbourne with his English family and after studying at Wesley College and Melbourne University, John obtained his degree in Commerce and Licentiate of Theology and his priesthood began. After 10 years of parish work in 1973 he was offered a teaching position at Yarra Valley on the initiative of the principal at the time, the Rev Ken Jago, and began to study for his Diploma of Education. In 1977 he obtained a Melbourne University Arts degree as well.

John's love of teaching was born and until his retirement in 1999, John worked as a group master in the Junior School at Yarra Valley, then moved to the Senior School where he taught English and English Literature, coached the senior hockey XI and eventually, his hard-working and conscientious attitude led to him becoming Head of English.

John loved the Yarra Valley Grammar ethic of establishing close bonds between students and staff and his experience there bode well for all that he was to do at Ringwood U3A. A fellow-teacher had passed on information about a good and popular U3A music class and John's life-long love of classical music and opera prompted him to put his name on the waiting list.

With his and others' names not quickly getting to the top of the music class waiting list, the tutor, Wendy Richards, decided to open another class on

Thursdays. So, in 2005, John's involvement began.

His reputation had preceded him and he was asked by the late Robert Baxter to edit the U3A newsletter. He took on the job in 2006, and worked on it for seven years. He also became a committee member. His keen interest in opera prompted an invitation from Wendy to join the Friday music class which was studying opera at the time. When Wendy Richards resigned she asked John to become the tutor to the Thursday and Friday classes.

John has been tutor of these classes for 9 years and has presented not only opera but the history of music, the music and biographies of great composers, the concerto and the symphony. Members share musical experiences and contribute their own music favourites to prompt discussion. There are expert talks on CDs or DVDs and all-in-all it is a very popular class. Both music classes are almost full – testament to the interest they inspire. Val Baxter and John are the sole members of the original Thursday class and Marie Kenney is the longest serving member of the Friday class which she has enjoyed for 20 years. Margaret Carter is also still in the class. John joined in 2005.

John is also a valued member of the Cryptic Crossword class and with his vast knowledge of the English language is the 'go-to' person when a clue is out of reach. John describes the class as 'pure fun,' and one that indulges his love of language and puzzle solving. He founded the Great Poems in English class in 2012 and loves sharing discussion of these poems with class members, some of whom are very experienced in literature and others who are, for the first time, seeking to learn the joys of good poetry. John is also a member of the Art Appreciation class.

ciation class.

John and his wife Robin, also a U3A member, have three children and six grandchildren. They have travelled to England and Europe, indulging their love of culture and travel and are keen supporters of the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Australian String Quartet and the Croydon Film Society. John is also a subscriber to Opera Australia.

In his inimitable, humble manner, John is full of praise for the U3A committee.

'The quality of our President and Committee in the last few years has, I am sure had a lot to do with the increase in class membership across the whole of U3A Ringwood and certainly in the Music Appreciation classes, so I would like to express my admiration and gratitude to them.'

In return, the President and the Committee thank John for his continued enthusiasm and dedication to our group.

But John has the final word as he sums up what U3A means to him:

'Being retired, I have time to devote to things I love and they are poetry, music, language and teaching. U3A gave me the opportunity to indulge all three AND it also gives me friendship with wonderful people. No more motivation is needed.'

Alastair McCracken

Now who else other than a lawyer would take a class entitled "Elders and the Law"? Are we really "elders"? Well, let's say we are in our 'Third Age' if that qualifies and the lawyer who leads us is none other than our 'more than six feet tall member – Alastair McCracken.

Alastair who is, by his own admission "an infamous name dropper", was born in Kooyong – around the corner from the

well-known tennis complex.

His father, like Alastair and his uncle, were all lawyers – for a combined period of more than 150 years.

McCracken and McCracken trace their origins back to the Great Depression – 1929-1933 – and is a mid-sized legal firm with offices in Melbourne’s CBD (Queen Street) and (Railway Avenue) Blackburn.

Alastair’s father and uncle conducted the business, bearing their names, until 1940 when, by agreement, Alastair’s father enlisted in the Australian Army – engaged in North Africa (Erwin Rommel) and, subsequently, on the orders of Prime Minister Curtin, being historically directed to return to Australia to defend Australia, primarily in New Guinea against the rapid Japanese advance.

Following his father’s return from World War II, he and uncle (Harold) agreed that Harold would continue the practice of McCracken and McCracken in Melbourne and his father went into a partnership in 1948 in Wangaratta – known to his father and his friend, Lindsay Hassett following a war-time ‘pass through’.

Accordingly, Alastair had two clear choices – practice with his father in Wangaratta or his uncle in Melbourne. Alastair chose to work with his father in Wangaratta – commencing there in 1969. In due course, Alastair took over the business and took in partners.

Alastair went to secondary school at Geelong Grammar and graduated with a Bachelor of Law at Melbourne University (boarding in Trinity College).

Whilst in Melbourne, Alastair undertook his articles (along with Ross How-

ie, a County Court Judge), with McCracken and McCracken. During Alastair’s time there, he met his lovely wife Heather – a stenographer at the firm and so began a lifetime romance. The firm undertook a wide range of legal matters – including Conveyancing, Probate and Wills and representing many people wishing to adopt children – frequent in those days. His uncle represented several of the main adoption agencies in Victoria. Because of this strong connection, he was known by many as ‘the Legal Gynaecologist’!

When Alastair returned to practice in Wangaratta, the firm engaged in a very broad range of legal matters – Contract Law, Conveyancing, Wills and Probate, Commercial Law, Trusts, Corporations, Consumer Protection, Employment Law. Personal Court appearances and engagement of barristers was commonplace and Alastair also had a reasonably strong relationship with Criminal Law – including the first marijuana case in Australia and the first case where post-natal depression was successfully used as a defence to a charge(s) of murder.

With Alastair, according to his ‘brutally honest’ wife, it is sometimes very difficult to ‘get in a word edgewise, as he can tell many tales – including stories of murder, so this is a good time to move on to more pleasant topics.

Alastair’s interests include tennis (where he achieved some success), cricket and public speaking.

He is active in community affairs – having been the Wangaratta Hardcourt Tennis President for 25 years, President of the Wangaratta YMCA for a decade and a Director of the State Board, as well as being President and regular Director of Wangaratta Rotary – as well as many other offices.

Alastair retired from practising law in 2001 and then taught law at Swinburne University for 12 years – writing a number of textbooks and creating numerous resources – over a wide range of subjects.

Prior to moving to Melbourne, Alastair took an Elders and the Law class at U3A Wangaratta, so was well acquainted with U3A matters before coming to Melbourne. Alastair and Heather moved to Melbourne approximately five years ago – where each of their two children and three grandchildren live.

In 2015 Heather and Alastair joined in U3A Ringwood and enrolled in National and International Affairs as well as Understanding Asia. In Semester 11 Alastair offered to take the Elders and the Law Class and, like National and International Affairs, it has flourished ever since. Alastair also does quite a bit of research for the National and International Classes which assists John Hogan with some very interesting facts at times about world leaders and situations.

Alastair, much like John Hogan, invites maximum contribution from all members, has a flexible Class outline, includes a very wide range of legal matters, provides a diverse range of handouts and booklets (including a regular source “The Senior”), strives to make all subjects as interesting as possible and has considerable enthusiasm for the subject – very important for a growing elder community.

Looking for the Course Timetable?

Our latest course calendar is available on our web site, on our notice boards and from our office at Parkwood

To get onto our web site enter the following address into your preferred browser.

www.u3aringwood.org.au