



WebLetter



20 February 2026



**EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!
NEW U3A TAURANGA WEBSITE
LAUNCHES TODAY!**

MESSAGE FROM THE (OUTGOING) PRESIDENT

Greetings.

A very special welcome to everyone as we leap into 2026. We can look back on 2025 as a positive year of growth and ongoing progress for U3A Tauranga and our current sub-group in Katikati. As I have travelled around Tauranga attending expos and speaking by invitation to a variety of groups about U3A Tauranga I have been humbled by the repeated comments received reiterating the experience of so many, that they have found U3A Tauranga to be a welcoming, friendly, stimulating and fun organization. So good to know that the image out there reflects the ongoing positivity of our current 800+ membership.



I trust that everyone has had a positive time over the festive season with family, and friends or just having time to catch up on some reading or attending movies along with over-eating all the luxury foods forbidden during the rest of the year.

Over 2025 we had some changes within the executive along with some convener movement. There have been some group closures while new ones have started, both situations reflecting changing interests and the flexibility within our organization to celebrate current times. An exciting change must be the move to appoint a Web Manager, namely Ian Howell, who is currently building a team to meet the ongoing progress and maintenance of our website. It is currently very exciting to be watching from the background the upgrading of our website under Ian's leadership accompanied by web developer Bruce Smith. Both have been working with others to upgrade our website to make it a more accessible site with constant information upgrades and stimulating colourful graphics. This special edition of the Newsletter celebrates and is being released on the day of the launch: a date which, at the time I write this, hasn't been set in stone. A big shout out to all who have stepped up to review current content, to join the website team or are seriously thinking of contributing their skills by joining the team.

In closing a big thank you to all the members who hold one or more of the roles that make our organization a joy and possible to be a member of.

Nga mihi nui.

Gail Moore

President

U3A Tauranga Inc.

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Computing Quiz!

- 1: Who was the Mathematician who provided the calculating power behind the world's first mechanical computer?
- 2: Who designed and built the first mechanical computer, a device known as the Analytical Machine?
- 3: Who, in 1943, said "I think there is a world market for maybe five computers"?
- 4: What did the first commercially successful PC, 1974's MITS Altair 8800, notably lack?
- 5: Which company released the PC that established the standards all others would follow?
- 6: When was Microsoft established?
- 7: When was Apple established?
- 8: What was the USSR's first commercially available PC called?
- 9: How much was Apple's ground-breaking Macintosh in New Zealand?
- 10: Who developed the new U3A Website?



CONTRIBUTORS

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Oceanside Music Group, Gail Moore, Al Mathews, Ian Howell, Bruce Smith.

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Computing Quiz

- 1: Anna Lovelace, 1815 – 1852. Trailblazing Mathematician and Clever Clogs.
- 2: Charles Babbage, 1791 – 1871. A Seriously Brainy Person.
- 3: Attributed to Thomas Watson, Chairman, IBM.
- 4: A screen. The user needed a teletype machine to display their work.
- 5: IBM, with their Model 5150, released on 12 August, 1981. Costing US \$1,565, (\$5,700 today) it did not have a disc drive.
- 6: 4th April 1975. The name is short for Micro-Computer Software.
- 7: 1st April, 1976.
- 8: Elektronika BK-0100, 1985.
- 9: Roughly \$5,500 (\$30,000 today).
- 10: Ian Howell and Bruce Smith



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Why A New Design?

The Tauranga U3A website has served us well for a number of years now – so why change it?

When Henry Ford gave his approval to the design of the Model T Ford in 1908 he thought it would last for a very long time – and he was right. Ford continued building them right through to 1927. By that time the design was old, tired, wheezing,

appallingly out-of-date – and being out-sold by its vastly improved competition. Our Website was a Model T: it worked, it was functional, but its design was inefficient. With a little effort it could be so much better.



As it turned out that “little effort” became rather a lot. We’ve gone from a Model T to a sleek Ferrari.

And the new look is now available at WWW.U3ATAURANGA.ORG.NZ

SO.... WHODUNNIT?

It’s been an awfully long time since something came from nothing: astrophysicists put the time and date at 11.32.17 am, 17 July, 13,800,000,005 years BCE (Approximately).

Very little happens in a vacuum. To redesign and rebuild our website we needed someone talented, someone who knew his or her oats, and who was prepared to put in the long hours. So... whodunnit?



When Ian Howell offered to take over the Webmaster’s role last October it was immediately obvious that he was the person we needed: qualified, capable, and with the time and abilities we all needed to get the job done and done well. Ian had Bruce Smith at his side, putting in the hours, coming up with and developing a brighter, sharper appearance.

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Introducing Our New Web Honchos:

Ian Howell



Ian Howell is a British-born engineer and project manager who has lived in New Zealand for over 30 years, accumulating plenty of experience—and no shortage of stories—about persuading technology to do as it's told. Ian returned to Tauranga in 2024, having spent time in Auckland, Malaysia and Oman. He joined U3A with innocent intentions: attend a few groups, meet some people, keep his brain active. Somehow this led to him becoming Web Manager. Whether he volunteered or was gently manoeuvred

into position remains a matter of folklore, but he has accepted his fate with admirable good grace. Ian's background includes decades of managing complex technical projects — the kind where something always goes wrong at precisely the wrong moment. Fortunately, he enjoys solving problems, simplifying chaos, and explaining technology in a way that doesn't make people want to run away.

The redevelopment of the U3A website has been a sizeable undertaking. Ian insists it be stated clearly — perhaps even in bold font — that **Bruce Smith**, our Web Developer, has done the real work, with help from the Web Development Group. Bruce built the new site from scratch and has repeatedly battled the technology on its more creative days. Ian's own role has involved coordinating, advising, diplomatically nudging, and occasionally offering suggestions beginning with, "I might be wrong, but..."

Ian considers himself a team player, largely because he genuinely enjoys working with people and partly because complex projects tend to behave better when tackled collectively. He believes websites thrive on shared input, clear communication, and at least one person who remembers where the passwords are hidden.

Looking ahead, Ian hopes to form a small volunteer **Web Team** to support the new website. No coding brilliance required — merely enthusiasm, steadiness under digital pressure, and the ability to laugh politely when the technology has "another moment."

Ian is also convening the new **Spanish for Beginners** group starting in February 2026. His language credentials include excelling in maths but failing French at school, qualifications he feels uniquely prepare him to reassure nervous learners. His approach is relaxed, practical, and entirely free of grammar-induced trauma.

Across his roles, Ian brings curiosity, dry humour, and a genuine enjoyment of helping others. His aim is simple: ensure U3A continues to run smoothly, look good online, and remain a place where learning is enjoyable — even when the technology isn't.

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Introducing Our New Web Honchos: Bruce Smith

The New Website



The new website is a bit like a duck gliding effortlessly across a calm lake. On the surface, everything looks simple and serene, but underneath there has been a huge amount of paddling to make it all work.

A lot has happened behind the scenes that you won't necessarily notice when you first begin using the site. We started by choosing the technology. WordPress—one of the world's most widely used website platforms—was selected because it offers

rapid development, strong flexibility, and the capacity to grow with U3A Tauranga over time.

Design choices came next. This involved more than picking colours, fonts, and layout. We focused on how people would *find* things, how easily new information could be added and updated, and how both existing and prospective members could navigate confidently. We may refresh the “look and feel” from time to time, but the goal will always be clarity and ease of use.

The development process has been a steep learning curve. Web technology changes quickly, and much of our time has been spent exploring, testing, and discovering. AI—a tool that sometimes gets an unfair reputation—proved invaluable. Nearly all of the graphics on the Group pages and elsewhere were produced with AI. Given a list of groups and a sense of the style and colours we needed, the images were generated in minutes rather than weeks.

I also turned to AI for help whenever I hit a stubborn WordPress challenge. As long as I phrased the question clearly, the answer was usually spot-on. Is that cheating? I don't think so. U3A is all about learning, exploring, and stretching ourselves—and this project certainly did that.

Now that the website is up and running, the real work begins. **Content is king.** For the site to stay useful and accurate, we all need to contribute—checking group pages for updates, submitting new articles, and offering feedback on what works well and what could be improved. As the site grows, we hope to build a small Web Team of members with experience in WordPress, writing, editing, or design, and we'd be delighted to hear from anyone who'd like to be involved.

If we've done our job properly, you'll only notice the duck gliding smoothly across the lake... and with luck, perhaps even a swan.

Bruce Smith

Web Developer

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PUBLIC NOTICES

New U3A Website – Help Needed

Our goal is to maintain our new website's the fresh new look, keeping it easy for members to use and appealing to potential new members.

We're looking for help from U3A members who have time and skills in any of the following areas:

- **Writing or editing** – to prepare, edit, and curate the site's content
- **Technical expertise with WordPress or similar** – to assist with website development and maintenance
- **Business systems** to help manage our other IT systems Microsoft Outlook, Infoodle and Xero

If you can help — even just a few hours — or know someone who might be interested, please contact **Ian Howell** at:

email: webmanager@u3atauranga.kiwi.nz

phone: **022 590 1234**

PACEMAKER ALERT!

If you have recently had a PACEMAKER installed,

DO NOT USE

YOUR MAGNETIC NAME-BADGE.

The magnet can interrupt your Pacemaker's functioning.



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Since We Last Got Together

OCEANSIDE MUSIC GROUP (OMG)



Our group underwent a lot of changes this year - 2025.

The group voluntarily split and there was a time when I did not think the ukulele players would survive.

Fortunately, one of our members, Mike Maassen stepped-up to take on the Music Director's role, and I took over as Convenor so a small group continued to meet twice monthly, on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays, at Mt Maunganui RSA between 10.30am and 12.30pm.

We are mainly playing



ukuleles, a banjo, a piano/accordion with an occasional guitar player who

attended. We sing along with Jane Rhode, Robyn Lewer-Warrender and Mike Maassen at the microphones leading the singing with Dirk Vreede providing the cool 'bass beats'.

Mike provides nicely presented song books, and we play a range of songs dating from the 50's to the 90's.

We are open to new members joining our group and would welcome and support them.



We had our final session with a Christmas theme and dressed accordingly.

We resumed on the 10th February 2026.

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COMING UP IN YOUR NEWSLETTER IN 2026

A Monthly On-Line Newsletter.

In order to keep you up-to-date with your U3A, we're going to be publishing our on-line Newsletter on a monthly basis, on the 10th of every month. This means you will be able to read about the previous month's meetings, see who was there and what was discussed – and see a report on the short and long talks that were presented. You'll also see who will be speaking at the next General Meeting – the get-togethers in Tauranga and Katikati that are open to all U3A Members from both centres. You'll also see which groups are looking for members, and new groups that are being proposed.

And there'll be timely notices of the many and various ways you can help and support your U3A grow and develop.

The Deadlines will change: for material to go into the next newsletter the new date will 5pm on the 1st of the Month.

The printed Newsletter will be published in a simpler form on a bi-monthly basis.

This means the message below will become even more relevant!

Your Newsletter Editor is always looking for new content to put into this publication. If your group has done anything interesting over the past month (and that means all groups...) please write the story in a hundred words or so, add a couple of pictures, and send it to newsletter@U3Atauranga.kiwi.nz or swethamnalla@gmail.com

Put U3A (Group Name) in the subject line, and I'll find the space to let your fellow U3A members know what they're missing out on!

PLEASE NOTE: THE NEW DEADLINE IS NOW THE 1st OF THE MONTH.

There will also be a number of new, regular features: A light-hearted look at historical dates, a look back into some old newspapers, and a series about U3A itself. Scroll ON!

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FROM THE SHED:

A New Series For 2026



My neighbour came to me a few months ago holding a dozen or so mouldy old newspapers that he'd found in his garden shed – ‘papers from the 1960s. – AKA The good old days.

I was immediately captivated. I've prowled through them a few times, done some Googling, and am going to be bringing you a year's worth of articles and adverts on From The Shed... and some direct comparisons. Here's a tiny taster from the very first edition of a brand-new tabloid:

The Dominion Sunday Times, June 6, 1965:

The department store **Farmers** were selling Golden Knight 23-inch black and white TV sets for just £129. My old friend Mr Google tells me this translates to **\$5,710** in today's money – which means a 1965 £1 note had the buying power of today's \$44!

The same issue had a feature on the June 6th 1944 Normandy landings, a front-page story on censorship shenanigans at the N.Z.B.C. (full-stops and all!), a great photo of Peter Snell winning Olympic gold in the 800 metres at Rome, ads for cruise-passenger liner travel to England, a “Teen Club” article about a bunch of teenagers at a Kilbirnie Church Group meeting, stories about U Thant having problems at the UN, the Viet Nam war, glamour on the ski-slopes, a Lift-Out book, “Full Circle”, about WW1 dogfighting aeroplane battles, a story and photograph showing that Cassius Clay's punch that floored Sonny Liston was, in fact, a karate blow. Then – oddly - there were many, many pages devoted to rugby and racing.



Last year I joined a support group for antisocial people. We haven't met yet.

MOST OF HER PLANS FOR WORLD DOMINATION CAME TO HER WHILE SHE WAS KNITTING



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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY: A Light-hearted Look Back in Time.

February - The End of the Year?

Pre-Christian Romans considered February to be the end of the year. It was one of the last months to be added to the calendar: the whole of winter was regarded as a single month in its own right. February's the Leap Month, growing by a day once every four years, then returning to an exact four-week length. February 15 marks the festival of Lupercalia, observing nature's purification and the advent of Spring. In New Zealand it marks the March into Autumn.

February 1st, 1981: a Day That Will Live In Cricketing Infamy! This was the day that Australian cricket player, Trevor Chappell, under instructions from his big brother Greg, delivered the final ball in a 50-over cricket match...

underarm. New Zealand politicians and sports commentators take delight in mentioning it to every Australian they meet, doubly so when those Australians are also politicians and / or sports commentators ..



February 6th, 1952: the day Queen Elizabeth the Tudor got a number. Up until that date, everyone knew who Queen Elizabeth was: a contemporary of William Shakespeare; the woman who had people's heads chopped off; the woman who has her sexual history enshrined in the name of an American colony – Virginia. But it was on February 6, 1952, that King George VI died, instantly making his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, the second Queen Elizabeth, and subsequently turning the Virgin Queen into Queen Elizabeth the First. Stonemasons had a great day, chiselling the numerical suffix into ancient memorials around the world.



February 11, 1847: Thomas Edison came into this world, only to leave it in 1931. Edison is well-remembered for inventing the lightbulb, even though he didn't. A Brit, Humphry Davy, designed and made the first lightbulb in 1806, but it wasn't efficient. Other scientists worked on the filament and vacuum aspects of the lightbulb, and it was Edison who (working with another Englishman, Joseph Swan) came up with a better vacuum and the carbon filament. Cartoonists who wished to indicate that their characters had just had a bright idea are eternally grateful.

February 15th, 1564: Galileo Galilei was born, and he went on to both invent the practical telescope and advance the theory that the Sun was the centre of the Solar System (something that Greek, Polynesian, meso-American, Chinese, and Persian observers had been chatting about for centuries). Galileo fell out with the Church, publicly recanted, died, and became a shrill line in "Bohemian Rhapsody", a magnificent pop song written by Freddy Mercury.



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