



University of the Third Age
The Age of Active Retirement: People Exchanging Knowledge

Newsletter January 2026

Our speaker for our first meeting of the year on Monday 16th February is Caroline Harvie-Teare who is the Chief Executive of Venues Otautahi, the organization that manages key Christchurch venues like the Christchurch Town Hall, Wolfbrook Arena, Hagley Oval and the new One New Zealand stadium (Te Kaha). She leads the strategic direction for these community-owned venues, focusing on fostering economic growth and delivering diverse event experiences for Canterbury. With so many exciting ventures on the go, we look forward to hearing about this challenging role which Caroline holds.

Message from the President



Happy New Year. I hope that you all had a good Christmas and were able to catch up with family and friends over the holiday season. After a break in routine, we should be able to face 2026 with renewed energy.

Little has happened on the U3A front since our December meeting, though we have helped the Community Centre buy an extra 20 chairs. If we can squeeze up the seating a little closer in the hall, we should be able to allow a few more people to join off our long waiting list. If you no longer want to be a member of Pegasus U3A, could you please let a committee member know so that your place may be reallocated.

We are still hoping for a few more nominations for the committee. Papers for the AGM will be sent out in a couple of weeks and nomination forms will be there, so please think hard whether you could help for a short while or know someone else who is suitable.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE!

Subscriptions of \$30 per member are now due for the 2026 financial year. We would be grateful if you could pay direct to U3A PEGASUS at ANZ Bank. 01-0811-0943061-00. Please enter your name in the reference field.

If you wish to pay by cash you can do so at the Meeting on 16th February.

We have over 50 people on the waiting list so if you are not renewing your membership please let us know as soon as possible.

Please note that our email address is now pegasusu3a@gmail.com.

Information about Previous Meeting

15th December

AI in Everyday Life, Benefits, Risks and Surprises

Elsamari Botha

There are new AI developments happening all the time. AI started 60 years ago in 1950 when they called it Thinking Machines. Now there are many versions, e.g. ChatGPT, which you can download and ask anything. Health questions are asked most.

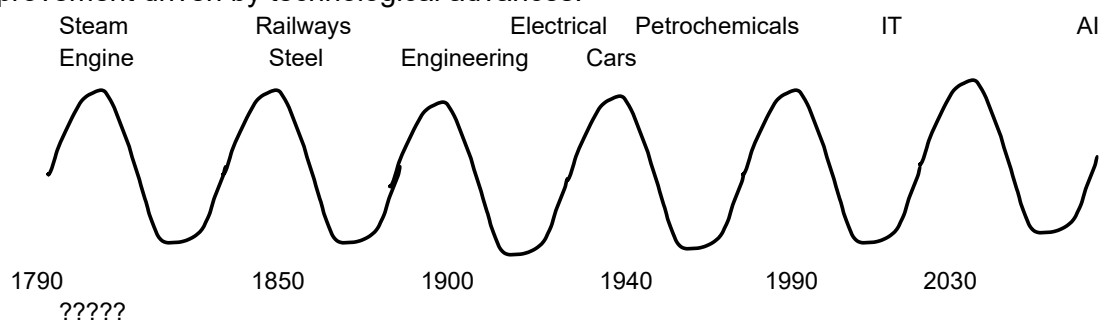
Really AI is a collection of tools. **Supervised AI** labels things, sorts spam from emails, gives the weather forecast, driving time for a journey.... **Generative AI** is creative, analyses, looks for patterns, coding, makes music or images.

There is a "jagged edge" of the technological frontier. It can generate wrong predictions if not given enough information. You need experience to know what is correct or useful. She quoted a useful example of a car used to go to work, which became a profitable driverless Uber during working hours and then collected her after work.

You need to beware of Hallucinations. Models will get improved, but when planning you need to give them instructions with steps of procedure to be checked after each stage. Guardrails. These are chosen after consultation with the public. Her example was that the Internet will give explicit methods to make a bomb, but you don't want it available to everyone.

There are Broad Foundational Models of AI, such as ChatGPT, Google, Gemoni, Microsoft, Copilot, Perplexity or Deepseek, which have an enormous range of ability, but also Narrow Single Models like Heidi, used by doctors.

Kondratieff's six K cycles. These are cycles of Prosperity, Recession, Depression and Improvement driven by technological advances.



The old ways of working don't fit with AI. AI has all the information and feeds you decisions to make. It can prioritise jobs like sorting 150 daily emails. One problem is that using AI means sacking staff who can't use it. However, some firms are realizing that this could be a mistake as the human touch is important. Some NZ companies are struggling to see the returns on their AI expenditure.

We were shown a graph of people's confidence or fear of using AI. Nigeria trusted it the most. New Zealand was bottom but one, just above Australia. When asked about how they felt about it, India, China and Nigeria were the most excited and optimistic with us near the bottom again, yet New Zealand uses it a lot.

It is essential that AI should be part of the school curriculum, but teachers need training first. Students are likely to be using it for their assignments already, so a different way of assessing their work is necessary.

There are many pitfalls to using AI. Don't give any information that you'd be unhappy to have published everywhere. Much of the generated data is very convincing, like the Jack Tame interview about a diabetes cure. It was AI generated and gave wrong information. To make sure you are talking to the person you think you are, you need a "safe" word to insert into the conversation. This must be known only to genuine friends and family.

For a perfect use of AI you need to give it a Role, a Goal or Task, Requirements or Criteria, a Context, Resources, Warnings and Examples of what is Good.

Use AI but with your eyes

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INTEREST GROUP DETAILS

Below is the list of U3A Pegasus Interest Groups, their convenors and contact details. If you would like to join any of the groups, please contact the convenor.

ADVENTURES IN TRAVEL	Meets monthly in members' homes on 1 st Tuesday of the month at 3pm in members' homes. Contact Lyn Russell 021 2388 788 Email: nylrus1951@gmail.com
ART APPRECIATION	Meets monthly, 2 nd Friday of the month. Contact Helen Harkness Ph 384 2890 Email helenharkness294@gmail.com
BOOK DISCUSSION	Meets monthly after the U3A lecture, 3 rd Monday of the month in the Mt Pleasant Community Centre. Contact Mary Lynch email granmarylynch12@gmail.com or Judy Eden edenjudith@xtra.co.nz (This group is now full.)
CAFÉ GROUP	Meets monthly, 2.30pm on Tuesday of the week following 3 rd Monday of the month. Contact Jenny Long jennylong@xtra.co.nz 384 8463.
CANTERBURY HISTORY	Meets monthly, 2 nd Monday of the month. Contact Judy Calder Ph 384 1269 Email judycalder@hotmail.com
CYCLING GROUP	Meets monthly, 2 nd Wednesday. Contact Jane Cowan-Harris Email: janechbythesea@gmail.com , Mob 021 043 5342
GARDEN GROUP	Meets 4 th Monday of the month. A mixture of speakers, garden visits and 'tea & cuttings'. Contact: Gaynor Button Email: buttonmg@gmail.com
GEOLOGY/BOTANY	Meets twice a month on 1 st Monday at Redcliffs Bowling Centre and 3 rd Wednesday for an outing. Contact Pat Whitman Ph 384 3475 Email patwandpate@gmail.com
SCRABBLE	Meets fortnightly Tuesdays 1.30pm. Contact Alison Harrington Ph 022 307 4039 Email: alison.harrington@outlook.co.nz
INTEREST GROUPS COORDINATOR	Mary Lynch Email: granmarylynch12@gmail.com

INTEREST GROUP UPDATES

Canterbury History Group

December 2025 – Our Visit to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS or Mormon)

Sited on a large block of land beside Mona Vale, this spreading white building is a main hub for the LDS church. Although a few of our group had attended an assortment of gatherings in parts of this building (rooms for hire), for most of us, this was the first time we were able to explore the interior and hear the story of the church in Fendalton. In 1855 the church established its first NZ branch and now claims a membership of nearly 120,000 people.

First we gathered in the large worship centre to hear from a 90 year old Dutch man about his arrival in New Zealand and his long connections to the Mormon Church. His story gave us a glimpse of when he fled war-torn Holland to begin a new life far from his homeland. Two enthusiastic young men, missionaries from USA on their two year posting, followed, and shared their stories, experiences and beliefs.

Our tour of the complex opened up for us just how large were the available spaces. An enormous sports centre, that doubles in size when folding doors are opened, teaching rooms, a research centre, kitchen, a deep baptismal pool, extensive outdoor areas and a car park are part of this enormous complex that has plenty of room for growth! An interesting visit for us all.

Online historical information of Interest -

'The LDS church bought Mona Vale in 1962 and planned to subdivide the land and demolish the historic homestead. This plan sparked significant public opposition. Community fund raising, led by the Mayor, involved the CCC and Riccarton Borough Council successfully purchasing the property in 1969 and opening it to the public as a park and venue.'



Cycling Group

I was a bit ambitious thinking that there would be anyone free for a ride mid January, and I was right! However, there were two of us who went on a beautiful ride up to Godley Head and back on a lovely, rare, windless day! The hills are looking very dry despite all this drizzle we've been having, but it was a great ride,



ending up with a cup of coffee at ocean – complete with seagull! We look forward to more during the year.

