

History of U3A Port Sorell

Chapter 1 BEGINNINGS

THE IDEA:

In 2011/12 Robin Garnett & Anne Lockett had discussed the idea of starting a U3A at Port Sorell. Robin had talked with Latrobe Mayor, Mike Gaffney about the idea & Anne had spoken to Dayna Dennison (local Councillor for Port Sorell area).

It was during 2013, that the idea was reignited when Mike (also a member of the Tasmanian Legislative Council) heard Kerry Finch (another MLC member) speak about a U3A that Kerry had assisted in starting up in the Tamar Valley. Mike talked with Robin (who at that time had just started a state-wide plant organisation) so Robin suggested that Anne might like to progress the idea further for Port Sorell.

Not really appreciating the workload ahead, Anne went ahead & invited Judith Chamberlain to assist (at the Mersey Book Group meeting on 21/11/2013).

It was suggested that Caroline Richardson (the Convenor of the Tamar Valley U3A) be contacted for assistance. Caroline promptly invited Judith & Anne to the break-up lunch in November for their organisation. Kerry Finch was also there & a future meeting (the first of many to come) was arranged.

17th Dec (2013) a meeting was held at Fitzpatrick Inn (Westbury) between Tamar Valley reps (Caroline & Kerry), Mike Gaffney, Anne & Judith. A Plan was devised to start the new U3A in 2014 (second term) to give enough time to bring the community up to speed with this very new idea in Northern Tasmania.

There had already been several groups in the South of the State for 20 years. Deloraine/Westbury had recently started as well as the Tamar Valley group. Ours was to be the first on the North West Coast. On the drive home, Anne & Judith talked about the possibilities for our community.

RECRUITMENT:

Anne & Judith used the Christmas period (functions) & Summer time to recruit extra people for a Steering Committee to plan for a launch in early 2014. As a result, Tony Harris, Tony Vaughan & Di Kelly came on-board. Dayna Dennison was invited to be Council's representative on the Steering Committee. Maryke van Tatenhove and Louisa Dawson joined the committee before the Public Meeting.

During January 2014, Anne campaigned for possible venues (as the Banksia Centre was being built but not yet complete). Judith campaigned & explained the concept to groups such as Church, PS Probus, PS Garden Club, WOTOS, Latrobe Rotary & PS Lions Club.

Warren Lockett (although not a member of the committee) completed a huge amount of work behind the scenes to ensure that the idea was on a solid grounding. Warren researched & completed important documents such as The Constitution, Mission Statement, insurance & advertising signs & flyers.

MEETINGS:

Were held fortnightly & then weekly as the small Steering Committee worked towards a Public meeting for Wednesday 19th March 2014. During this time, Colin Benbow, Maryke van Tatenhove & Louisa Dawson came into the group. Caroline Richardson was in attendance at most meetings to give advice & assistance with the planning program.

Funding:

Our first amount of funding came from Mike Gaffney (MLC) of \$250, followed by a seeding grand of \$500 at the opening of the Port Sorell Bendigo Bank on 6th March 2014

PUBLISHING:

With our small amount of funding we decided that signs & flyers were very important to inform the community of the upcoming Public Meeting (planned for March 19th). Six signs were erected at visible positions around the Port Sorell, Shearwater & Hawley areas. These signs were moved regularly to ensure that everyone knew about "U3A coming to Port Sorell". Flyers were distributed in the Shearwater Village & in local shops & community places (e.g. Doctor surgery, Nursing Home, churches etc.).

POLITICAL SUPPORT:

It was decided that reps from all levels of Govt be invited to the Public meeting. A State Govt election was happening the weekend before the Public meeting so permission was sought (& granted from the State Electoral Commission) to distribute flyers at the local election booth. The committee from the response that most members of the community were aware of the upcoming Public Meeting (and were planning to attend).

The Public Meeting was very well planned where we hoped that the community would approve the idea & join as a Member of the fledgling U3A. We were advised to expect approximately 50 attendees & that perhaps 20 people may join.

PUBLIC MEETING:

The local Port Sorell Primary School allowed us the use of their community room. 80 chairs were set up & extra people were invited to assist with the program. Donna & Dennis Bullock prepared the overheads, others assisted with ideas for courses & tutors.

The committee had already planned for the community to become members (on the day) & had prepared venues & tutors for 8 courses.

Program for the Meeting:

MC: Mike Gaffney (Mayor of Latrobe)

Guest Speaker: Caroline Richardson

We acknowledged the original owners of the land (Punnilerpanner)

The Philosophy of U3A Anne Lockett

Welcome & Ushers: Committee Members

The committee was overwhelmed by the attendance & response from the community. 250 people attended & approximately 100 people joined immediately. This expanded to 150 members by the end of the week (with more memberships & information given by committee members taking time to staff a stall in the street).

We collected information for tutors willing to design & run a course or activity.

It was clearly obvious that we needed more than 8 classes to begin second term. Maryka & Judith worked diligently to prepare 20 classes/activities in time to take enrolments at our first morning tea & information session on Tuesday 15th April.

VENUES:

Because the new Banksia Centre was still under construction, it was necessary to secure community venues for our first classes. Some are still being used today (see Chapter 2 under "Support & Venues").

Anne Lockett spent time over the summer break speaking to owners about the concept of U3A & encouraging their support (which was overwhelming).

Anne is really keen to find out who the tutors were in that first year so if you remember or you were one of them then please get in contact with her. annelockett4@bigpond.com

In the next edition of INFOCUS Anne will share Part 2 of the HISTORY OF U3A Port Sorell.

Chapter 2

THE OFFICIAL START

The inaugural classes were to begin on Monday 5th May 2014.

As more venues needed to be found, the committee members interviewed several local businesses & Dayna Dennison managed to secure an empty business property owned by Adam Brookes (State MP). This allowed for an office as well as classrooms to be used at a peppercorn rent.

Our successful beginning was attributed to the wonderful community response & support of local businesses & Not-for profit organisations.

SUPPORT & VENUES: The following were applauded:

- Port Sorell Community Bank (seeding grant, sponsorship of newsletter & piggies)
- Port Sorell School (meeting & Public meeting venue, kitchen for class)
- Rubicon Grove Nursing Home (class venue)
- George & Dave Cafe (class venue)
- Tranquilles B&B Class venue)
- Castaigni B & B (class venue)
- Hawley House (class venue)
- Ghost Rock Winery (classroom)
- Port Sorell Memorial Hall (meeting & class venue)
- Panatana Community Room (class venue)
- Port Sorell Fire Station (class venue)
- Port Sorell Golf Club (morning tea venue)
- Port Sorell Lifesaving Club (class venue)
- Port Sorell Bowls Club (morning Tea venue)
- Purple Pepper Café (class venue)
- Private Homes (venue)
- IGA (notice Board)
- Adam Brooks GROUP premises 23 Burgess Way
- (office & class rooms)
- Robert Tucker (Donated & tuned a piano)

Mayor Gaffney & Jo Holland donated funds so that we could provide morning tea at our first briefing for everyone.

Port Sorell Lions Club (donation for an end-of-year BBQ as well as volunteer members to cook).

Hawley House (class rooms & encouraged the Greens Party to print our first flyers)

STEERING COMMITTEE (2014)

Chairperson	Anne Lockett
Deputy Chairperson	Tony Harris
Secretary	Louisa Dawson
Treasurer & Data -base	Tony Vaughan
Tutor Coordinator	Maryke van Tatenhove
Course Coordinator	Judith Chamberlain
Venue Coordinator	Tony Harris
Membership	Tony Vaughan (Data-base) & Diane Kelly (badges)
Office Coordinator	Diane Kelly & Francis Rueff
Newsletter	Tony Harris & Diane Kelly

Publicity Coordinator
Social Coordinator
Member

Anne Lockett
Judith Chamberlain
Colin Benbow
Elaine Bramich
Jenny Connors
John Sumpton

Non – Committee Positions

Latrobe Council Liaison
Enrolment Officer
Public Officer
Fund Submission writer
Auditor

Dayna Dennison
TBA
Warren Lockett
Warren Lockett
TBA

During 2014, we welcomed Dianne McCleod as Enrolment Officer & Frances Rueff as Office Coordinator (as a three month position) replaced by Jenny Connors later in the year.

By September 2014 the following people had stood down

Louisa Dawson, Marayke Van Tatenhove, Colin Benbow & Francis Reuff

Latrobe Council formalised the position of Council Liaison (Lesley Young) with Dayna Dennison as Proxy.

Diane Kelly organised blue shirts for all committee members as a form of advertising & to be worn on official occasions.

By Mid-year our office in Burgess Way was officially opened by Mr Adam Brooks (MHA). This event was organised by Tony Harris.

By the end of 2014, PS U3A had 219 Members, 35 Tutors/Leaders, 14 venues (not including Council-owned). There were 37 individual courses (some having been delivered 2 or 3 times) meaning 65 activities in just 7 months of operation.

GRANTS

During our first year we secured \$2080 funding from Tas Community Fund (for equipment to transform any space into a classroom).

Latrobe Council granted \$1500 (for Emerging Needs) to cover the cost of the office computer & printer.

Bendigo Bank gave us a seeding grant of \$500 to help promote our concept.

The Port Sorell Lions Club provided \$200 towards our end-of year BBQ as well as supplying chefs (for sausage cooking). In-kind support was also provided by members such as Marie Barnes who supplied flowers weekly for the office as well as regular weeding outside the office. Robert Tucker provided a piano (including tuning). Robin Lawrence-Vick (Choir Tutor) was instrumental in organising this donation.

CHAPTER 3

OUR FIRST YEAR 2014

TERMS: We decided to run with 4 school terms (3 for year one as we did not commence until May).

The following streams were developed to cover all the aspects of the organisation. Committee members were assigned to a role as well as support people for specialties (e.g. Insurance, Strategic plan).

PUBLICITY

- Badges
- Flyers
- Newsletters
- Website

MEMBER INFORMATION SESSIONS

- Morning Teas
- Course Information
- Course bookings

TUTOR INFORMATION SESSIONS

TRAINING:

- Office staff
- Committee
- Tutors
- Venues

IT

- Web site
- Membership List
- Tutor List
- Venue list

PROGRAMMING

- Sub-committee
- Coordinators for each section (Tutor, Course, Venue, Enrolment)

FINANCE

- Treasury
- Funding
- Insurance
- Audit

MEMBERSHIP

- Data base
- Badges

POLICIES

- Strategic Plan
- Mission Statement
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Goals
- Meeting Procedure

MISSION: By the end of 2014, U3A was well on its way to fulfilling the Mission Statement evidenced by

- People buying into the area because we now had a U3A to offer
- Complete strangers making friends within their groups (some even becoming travel companions)
- People of all ages and abilities finding new interests
- Fulfilment of life-long ambitions to play a musical instrument

- Attraction of wide range of tutors (aged from 50's – 80's)

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Committee completed some very important work towards the end of 2014. Warren Lockett drafted a Strategic Plan, workshops were held & the plan was ratified at the committee meeting.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This very important documentation was also completed for all pivotal roles in the organisation.

WEBSITE

A basic website was developed by Warren Lockett early in the year.

To see the list of 22 classes offered in 2014 please click [here](#)

In addition, there were some one session deliveries/activities provided to stimulate the membership. They included: Native Orchids (Phil Collier), Motor Homes (Peter Little), Traveling in Japan (Murray Giles), Astronomy (Martin George & Peter Sayers).

CHAPTER 4

CONSOLIDATION IN 2015

The real success of 2015 was the consolidation, the commitment of the Tutors/Leaders, the generosity of local businesses and organisations, the Volunteers (Committee, Office Staff, Social), engagement of the local community and the numbers of people who took up the programs.

At our first AGM in March 2015, the following people were elected to the Committee:

President	Warren Lockett
Vice President	Diane Kelly
Treasurer and Public Officer	Mike McHugo
Operations	John Sumpton
Office Coordinator	Jenny Connors
Tutor/Course Research	Melissa Jemison
Programs	Anne Lockett
Tutors	Diane Kelly
Venues	Diane McCleod (resigned 10/11/15)
New & One-off Courses	Judith Chamberlain Wendy Sinfield

Non-Committee Positions:

Latrobe Council Liaison	Lesley Young
Council Proxy	Dayna Dennison
Sub-Committee:	
Newsletter Editor	Tony Harris
Social	Elaine Bramich

In order to celebrate Seniors' Week in October, an ambitious live play (Gert & Daisy) was offered in the Primary School auditorium. It was directed by Laurie Lewis, starring Robyn Lawrence-Vick and Alwyn Lewis (also on piano). It was a great success & well patronised by the U3A & local community.

To see the list of 57 classes offered in 2015 please click [here](#)

The following one session talks/activities were presented:

Waterloo -200th anniversary (David Jones), Visit to the Launceston Planetarium (Martin George), Veolia (recycling), Update on 2015 Federal Budget (Shadforth's), Estate Planning (Shadforth's), Tasmanian Electoral Matters (Electoral Commission), Pension Changes (Centrelink), Natural & Manmade Disasters (David Jones).

CHAPTER 5

A NEW HOME IN 2016

At Australia Day celebrations in Latrobe, Judith Chamberlain & Anne Lockett (founding members of U3A Port Sorell) accepted an award presented by Mayor Peter Freshney on behalf of our organisation.

In March, both Judith & Anne stepped down from the committee but continued to be very involved as tutors & sub-committee members.

We welcomed new members Ann Lewis and John Kun.

The 2016 Committee comprised the following Members:

President	Warren Lockett
Vice President & Programs	Diane Kelly
Treasurer & Publicity Officer	Mike McHugo
Secretary & Membership Secretary	Wendy Sinfield
Office Coordinator	Jenny Connors
Publicity	Ann Lewis (From 18/1/16)
Council Rep Melissa Jemison John Kun	Lesley Young
Non-Committee:	John Sumpton as IT & Enrolment Officer

Publicity Grant: Port Sorell and District Community Bank (Bendigo Bank), which had supported U3A from day one, supplied a grant of \$1,000 to enhance our publicity drive. This assisted us to get our message out to those seniors who were new to the area or had not realised the opportunity provided so close to home.

Piggies: Bendigo Bank supplied U3A with a box of piggy money boxes. These were (& still are) used to collect gold coins from every class to contribute towards the cost (or to cover cleaning, heating, supplies for owners) of venues.

A NEW HOME

Since the Banksia Centre had opened in 2014, U3A had used the meeting rooms for larger groups. The new challenge was to now create an environment that incorporated a Member contact and administration hub alongside our program activities i.e. something akin to what Burgess Way had become. Now this temporary accommodation was due to resume its commercial function, we required a new home.

The President (Warren Lockett) presented our challenge to Mayor Freshney and the Council's General Manager. This entailed a presentation & proposal to the whole council that led to an arrangement that subsequently reflected in a 4-year agreement with Council. This protected our low-cost business model to encourage participation of those on fixed incomes.

This arrangement gave us a "home" for the next 4 years at least, after which we can renew our agreement. We acknowledge our debt to Latrobe Council for their continuing support of Port Sorell U3A.

As part of the new arrangement we had an office space & storage area but it required an outfit. The Port Sorell Lions Club donated enough money to purchase a filing cabinet, storage cupboard and shelving for our storage bay.

Tony Dick, a retired joiner, installed the workbenches free of charge even though he was not a Member.

Burgess Way had been such an integral part of our journey as the Banksia Centre was just a building site at the time of overwhelming response to our Public meeting in March 2014, requiring us to find extra venues for the increased number of courses. Dayna Dennison had been instrumental in convincing Adam Brooks (MP for Braddon) to make his empty business centre available for our fledgling organisation. Adam made this facility

available for an initial period of 6 months (with a peppercorn rent) but happily extended it to 29 months before he again required the use of the building.

U3A and the Community and State:

As we grew, we also saw the need to give back to the wider community. This included having a representative on PSAC, Committee of the Banksia Centre, The State Group of U3A's and helping to develop other U3A's in the area. Just as Tamar Valley U3A (especially their President Caroline Richards) had supported our beginnings, so our committee assisted Wynyard & Kentish to get their own U3A's up and running (in 2016). Central Coast (Ulverstone) also called on us for advice during planning stages for their group to begin in 2017.

In September our members supported another theatre production when Rubicon River Regional Arts and Tasman and Forestier Arts Inc. presented three short plays.

To see the list of 56 classes offered in 2016 please click [here](#)

A Leap Year Treasure Hunt (Ray Tollefsen), as well as a Winery Tour (Melissa Jemison ?) brought innovation & inspiration to the main program. One-offs included Bird Presentation & Walks by Birdlife Tasmania (to celebrate World Environment Day), The Titanic & other Shipping Disasters (David Jones), The Battle of Fromelles - 100th anniversary (David Jones) and How LINC operates (Anne Apse).

Another great 'Find' was through our support of Wynyard U3A where we discovered a very talented presenter, Dr Alan Wright who in his professional life had been Chief Astronomer & Head of operations at Parkes Observatory in NSW. Alan also gives talks on cruise ships. We decided to try a full Saturday session as Alan was travelling from Wynyard. It drew a huge crowd & Members were encouraged to bring a friend.

The U3A Choir attended the Kentish Choir Festival. The workshop & evening concert were led by a famous Choral Director, Morris Stuart (of The film "Song Keepers" claim). On another occasion, The Choir participated in a Flood Relief Concert (following the devastating floods in June on the NW Coast).

CHAPTER 6

SHARING KNOWLEDGE 2017

One of the core principles behind our U3A (in fact all U3As) is that in every community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience that does not retire just because people do. It remains valuable especially where it can be shared with others and is voluntary.

In March our AGM delivered the following committee members:

President	Barrie Porch
Vice President	Unknown
Treasurer	Michael McHugo
Secretary	Wendy Sinfield
Programs	Diane Kelly
One-off Courses	Lesley Young
Office	Jenny Connors
Publicity & Venues	Ann Lewis
Enrolments	John Sumpton
Members:	Cheryl R Williams Gerald Chivers

As President Barrie brought a wealth of experience to the role as well as livening up meetings with his musical prowess.

U3A Port Sorell supports even more other communities – in early 2017, Anne & Warren visited Bridport to give a talk on the benefits of U3A to that community. A Local group were trying to save the memorial hall & had proposed to their council that it would make a great home for a U3A. A fourth group developed in the North under our guidance.

To see the list of 66 classes offered in 2017 please [click here](#)

Expanding our Tutor reach:

U3A Port Sorell was a member of the Tasmanian group of U3As who held quarterly meetings in Campbelltown. This exposed our committee representatives to groups from the South who had been operating for more that 20 years as well as newer groups like Meander Valley (Deloraine & Westbury).

From Meander we managed to encourage Michael O'Reilly to be one of our tutors. Michael became a much-loved member of our community once a week when he came to lead such topics as Geography (Planet Earth). David Jones (a resident of Devonport), a retired maritime chief engineer as well as an amateur historian delivered many talks on such things as Natural & Man-made Disasters, Titanic Disaster & Rescue (3 talks), Waterloo (200 year anniversary) & Gallipoli.

We also invited Dr Alan Wright who in his professional life had been Chief Astronomer & Head of operations at Parkes Observatory in NSW. Alan also gave talks on cruise ships. We decided to try a full Saturday session as Alan was travelling from Wynyard. It drew a huge crowd & Members were encouraged to bring a friend.

We branched out to Latrobe to run a Barista course at the Crowded Lounge Café with 2 sessions from Brian Wilson. Jenny Connors (as well as having the task of managing the U3A office) delivered a 5-week course on “Playing with Plants”. Participants were lucky enough to have excursions around Jenny’s amazing knowledge of the NW area in farming, food production & Landcare Tasmania.

The U3A Choir delivered another successful concert, this time in support of Youth Suicide (CORES). Amanda McKenna also introduced us to Circle Dancing - new to many people.

The U3A Choir (one of the first activities) went from strength to strength under the leadership of Robyn Lawrence-Vick and pianist Yvonne Yaxley. Each year the choir has presented at least one main concert with funds donated to a worthy charity. Also they have performed at our end-of-year function as well as Port Sorell's Carol night at the primary school.

CHAPTER 7

COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY 2018

Members of Committee elected at AGM in March:

President	Barrie Porch
Vice President	Gerald Chivers
Treasurer	Anne Turner
Secretary	Wendy Sinfield
IT & Enrolment	John Sumpton
Programs	Diane Kelly
Venues	Ann Lewis
Public Officer & Short Courses	Lesley Young
Office	Jenny Connors
Publicity	Jean McGrath

Opportunity to share with other groups arose as we became more embedded in our community. The Men's Shed (who had been very supportive in the early stages of our planning) – in fact had offered us an office space in their facility that was not realised in the end as Burgess Way became available instead. There was a shared meeting of the groups. The Men's Shed had contributed to the establishment of the Petanque Piste. We were also invited to have a member representative on PSAC (Port Sorell Advisory Committee – to Council).

To see the list of 72 classes offered in 2018 please [click here](#)

To this impressive list of activities were a number of one-offs provided throughout the year. They included German Army, Points to Ponder Prior to Passing Over (David Saner), Plastics in our Environment (Geoff Shannon), a Visit to Burnie Tip Wetlands (Rohan Sharman – Burnie City Council), Body Corporate (Bev Sienesi) and Gallipoli (David Jones).

Additional venues provide over the past 5 years (including a number of private homes):

1B Harmony Close
2 Shearwater Blvd
2/55 Haven Drive
22 Westwind Drive
23A Edward St
3 Haven Drive
37 Quinlan Cres
42 Quinlan Cres
59 Hawley Esp
The Banksia Centre
Banksia Piste
Crowded Lounge, Latrobe
Family History Centre, Latrobe
Latrobe Croquet Club
Tudor Cabins Pool

CHAPTER 8

2019

Watch this space!