U3A BAW BAW: the First Ten Years

By Jim Connelly (a Foundation Member) in 2024

U3A Baw Baw has three parents, two godparents, and one fairy godmother.

The first parent is the international University of the Third Age movement which stems from 1972 when the first U3A group formed in Toulouse, France.

The second parent is the Victorian State organisation, U3A Network, which draws together a web of local branches and seeks to establish new ones.

The third parent – the feminine element if you like – is the receptive body of older West Gippslanders seeking to express and develop the finer side of themselves in company with others of similar inclination.

The first godparent is Baw Baw Shire Council, which, like most godparents, took a kindly interest in the baby without coming too close.

And the second godparent consists of the two earlier attempts to bring U3A to birth in Warragul, which, while ending in failure, at least had the name of the organisation bandied around town.

The fairy godmother was Elizabeth Fraser, the Shire’s Community Health and Outreach Officer, who, on her own initiative, picked up the pieces of the previous failed attempt and saw U3A to a safe and permanent beginning.

Elizabeth had been instrumental in bringing Ingrid Carlson from U3A Network in Melbourne to speak at a function during Adult Learners Week in September, 1997. A smallish number of people attended the Lunch at the McMillan Campus of VCAH in South Road, Warragul. The names of those present were taken, but unfortunately later lost.

When Elizabeth made her second attempt to get U3A off the ground eighteen months later she relied on her memory of those who had attended the earlier gathering.

So it was that five people responded to Elizabeth’s invitation to meet at the Baw Baw Health and Community Services Centre (Old Shire Offices) in Young Street, Drouin. They were:

Audrie Hamilton

Brian Kilner

Olive Lyon

Anne and Jim Connelly.

The date was 19 March, 1999 and the time 2.00 pm.

At that meeting it was decided to call a further open meeting for Tuesday, 13 April, at 2.00 pm., at the same venue. A poster was put out advertising the meeting, the theme subject for discussion being 'What did our Grandparents do for us?' The name of the group was shown as ‘Drouin/Warragul U3A.'

To the delight of the organisers, twenty-two people attended this meeting, which was chaired by Jim Connelly. They could be called our Founding Fathers and Mothers. They were:

Norma Bayliss

Mary Brown

Anne and Jim Connelly

Dulcie Dent

Joyce and Ray Elliot

Dawn and John Gough

Cedric and Merrill Johnston

Brian Kilner

Olive Lyon

Jean Marler

Gill Mitra

Ethel Orchard

Alan and Judith Pugh

Kevin and Marion Richardson

Terry Synan

Jean Rookwood

(Apologies were received from Tom and Frances McGrath, Joan Nelson, Ron Oliver, and Joan Polson).

Olive Lyon, Anne Connelly, and Alan Pugh gave short talks on the arranged topic, and we duly discussed what our grandparents had done for us. In the ensuing discussion about future plans, seventeen of those present volunteered to lead various courses, and a total of thirty-one topics was offered. It was agreed to hold general meetings fortnightly. At these meetings, we had 'Travellers' Tales' from various people, and much discussion of future plans.

An Interim Committee was appointed, consisting of Jim Connelly (chair), Norma Bayliss (scribe), Ray Elliot, Cedric Johnston, Brian Kilner, Ethel Orchard (catering!), Philip Snoxall, and Terry Synan. This Committee met every other Tuesday in private homes and at the Anglican Church in Drouin.

Courses began almost immediately. The venues give an idea of the catch-as-catch-can nature of our arrangements. They were:

**Philosophy**, led by Dulcie dent. Venue: Anglican Church Hall, Drouin.

**Computers for Beginners**, led by Brian Kilner. Venue: St Paul’s Grammar School, Warragul.

**Gardening**, led by Dawn Gough. Venue, Dawn’s home in Hallyburton Grove, Warragul.

**Health Matters**, led by Gill Mitra. Venue: Gill’s home in Paterson Street, Drouin East.

**History of Western Music**, led by Jean Marler. Venue: Pindari (Vision Australia), Warragul.

**Psychology**, led by John Gough. Venue: Pindari (Vision Australia), Warragul.

**Australian History**, led by Tom McGrath and Jim Connelly. Venue: Cedric and Merrill Johnston’s home in Princes Way, Drouin.

A second round of courses followed in the second half of the year.

These courses were run some weekly, some fortnightly, and were of mixed duration, each of them running for between three and six sessions.

Alongside the courses, general meetings continued on the second and fourth Tuesday afternoons of each month. To begin with these were held at the Baw Baw Shire offices in Young Street, Drouin. This venue was offered free for the first three meetings and a fee of $10.00 a meeting was paid after that. In August, the meetings were moved to the CWA Hall in Sinclair Street, Drouin, where the fee was also $10.00 a meeting.

Following the Travellers’ Tales, the theme of the fortnightly general meetings was ‘India’. Each meeting a different member spoke on some aspect of Indian culture and history.

By the end of July, fifty people had attended at least one of the fortnightly general meetings.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Branch (now called ‘U3A Baw Baw’) was held on Tuesday, 10 August. Elizabeth Fraser chaired the proceedings. Thirty-nine members attended. A Constitution was adopted. Philip Snoxall gave a talk on his early life in Africa as part of the ‘African Journeys’ series.

By now the Branch was well-established. We had affiliated with U3A Network, and a formal application for Incorporation had been lodged with the Office of Fair Trading. Membership fees were fixed at $20.00 per person. A government grant (through ACFE) of $800.00 had been received to go towards the purchase of a photocopier. This photocopier was bought, through Roy Seville in Warragul, from the Drouin South Primary School.

The office-bearers elected were:

President: Jim Connelly

Vice-President: Dulcie Dent

Secretary: Norma Bayliss

Treasurer: Cedric Johnston

Public Officer: Terry Synan

Ordinary Committee members: Ray Elliot, Philip Snoxall

In October, the first issue of the journal appeared. The name, '*Athene*' (Greek goddess of wisdom) was decided on, and the theme of our branch agreed to (from Tennyson's 'Ulysses'):

*… All experience is an arch wherethro'*

*Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades*

*Forever and forever as I move.*

At the time of the first Annual General Meeting, 10 August, there were fifty-three financial members. These were the pioneers. Let us record their names:

Norma Bayliss, Nancy Bourke, Bette Boyanton, Esther Colquhoun, Anne Connelly, Jim Connelly, Stuart Cumming, Dulcie Dent, Gerard de Vries, Maree Dunn, Joyce Elliott, Ray Elliott, Bet Forbes, Barbara Gallagher, Dawn Gough, John Gough, Dick Gregg, Dorothy Gregg, Grace Hall, Helen Hauser, Peggy Holmes, Cedric Johnston, Merrill Johnston, Brian Kemp, Brian Kilner, Joan Lowrey, Olive Lyon, Frances McGrath, Tom McGrath, Barbara Maison, Iris Maxfield, Ronald Mitchell, Gillian Mitra, Ethel Orchard, Margaret Polson, Alan Pugh, Kevin Richardson, Marion Richardson, Hilde Rombout, Philip Snoxall, Rosalie Snoxall, Ilma Steer, Pamela Straffon, Anne Struckett, John Struckett, Gerardine Synan, Terry Synan, Una Tomasetti, Val Vansittart, Margaret Washusen, Kathy Watson, Heather Wilson, Rosalie Woolcock.

The first edition of ‘Athene’ appeared in October, 1999, under Kevin Richardson’s editorship. It contained a round-up of news and branch activities, and two scholarly articles, one on the concept of ‘productive ageing’ and the other discussing the monetary value to society of U3A volunteerism.

The latter paper was based on a survey returned by eighty-four U3A branches across Australia, which showed that each U3A member was supported by thirteen hours of volunteer work, including teaching and administration, each year. Assigning a notional value of $10 an hour to this work, it was calculated that U3A volunteerism was worth more than $4 million annually to Australian society.

The first year – 1999 – drew to a close with a Break-up Christmas Lunch – with all the trimmings - at the Warragul Country Club on 14 December. The cost was $15.00 per person.

**2000**

U3A survived into the following millennium without falling victim to any of the Millennium bugs!

The 2000 programme had hardly begun when the news was received in March of the death of our Vice-President, Dulcie Dent. Dulcie had been a vital figure in the establishment of our Branch. She had helped to set our sights high, i.e. on maintaining a high level of integrity in our courses. It was she who suggested our motto from Tennyson’s ‘Ulysses’, while her course in Philosophy set a high standard for others to follow.

In March the Constitution was completed, with the Office of Fair Trading accepting the draft we had sent to them. The only addition needed was a section on Disputes and Mediation. Terry Synan, our Public Officer, was indispensable in the finalisation of the Constitution.

In May, general meetings returned to the Old Shire Offices in Young Street, Drouin. The steep entry to the CWA Hall had been a problem, while the Shire offered a more convenient meeting-room than previously in Young Street.

A film group led by Rosalie Woolcock commenced, the group attending films at the Warragul Cinema and meeting monthly at the Courthouse restaurant for discussion.

The first of our excursions began in August with a visit to the Victorian Parliament and Gardens, led by Dawn Gough. It was followed in September by an excursion to the Victoria Barracks War Room, led by Terry Synan.

Meanwhile courses continued at various far-flung locations, including Pindari (later named Vision Australia) where some of their clients joined in the courses. Similarly, there was a short-lived experiment where members of ADASS (as it was then) – Acquired Disabilities Association – also joined some courses.

Two more issues of ‘Athene’ appeared in 2000. Kathy Watson and Kevin Richardson worked together as editors. The April edition contained the usual bits and pieces about our courses, a report from the National Innovation summit, a short story by Olive Lyon and a poem by Rosalie Snoxall, and a tribute to Dulcie Dent, which referred to her classes as ‘marvellous occasions of wit, good humour and sound teaching’. The second issue for the year, in September, again featured news of Branch activities, original contributions from members, and articles of interest from the wider world.

The Second AGM was held on 22 August, 2000. Keith Brownbill, President of Latrobe Valley U3A was the guest speaker. The Executive Committee elected consisted of Jim Connelly (President), Philip Snoxall (Vice-President), Norma Bayliss (Secretary), Cedric Johnston (Treasurer), Kathy Watson (Public Officer), and Ordinary Members Terry Synan, Ray Elliot, and Rosalie Woolcock.

The Treasurer’s Report, covering the period, 11 May, 1999 to 31 July, 2000, showed receipts of $2176, expenditure of $1692, and a Credit balance of $484.

In September, fortnightly general meetings were given up in favour of monthly meetings, on the second Tuesday of the month.

Further excursions were held to the Royal Botanical Gardens, to Parliament House, and to the Warragul Cemetery.

Looking back from the end of Term 4 of 2000, some eighteen months since our foundation, it is interesting to see the range of courses that had been conducted over that time. In no particular order, they were:

Philosophy, Health Matters, History of Western Music, Psychology, Australian History, Exploring New Guinea, Wilson’s Promontory: the War Years, Perspectives on Social Issues, Creative Writing, Australian Literature, Australia and the Second World War, Flower arranging and pressing, Early Greek philosophy, Book collecting, Introduction to the Bible, Romeo and Juliet, three different courses to do with computers, while there were three ongoing groups – the Film Group, Gardening, and Scrabble.

A Christmas Lunch on 12 December at the Commercial Hotel in Warragul brought the year to a close.

**2001**

‘Athene’ was now published each term. It contained scholarly articles, mostly ‘pinched’ from various learned journals, course reports, original stories from members, and a good deal of humour. The names and phone numbers of members were printed on the back page of each edition.

The number of financial members over the year continued steadily in the middle to high sixties.

A wide variety of courses was again offered. Over the whole of the four terms of 2001, these included Australian Politics since Federation, Macbeth, History of Computer Technology, Italian, Social Perspectives, and Physical Wellbeing for Retirees, Othello, Reflections on West Gippsland, The Worldly Philosophers, History of China and Japan, The Taming of the Shrew, and various computer classes. Some of these ran across two terms.

There were continuing groups in Book Collecting, Scrabble, Films, and a Book Discussion Group commenced.

Excursions were held to the recently-opened museum in the Exhibition Gardens, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

A fund-raising film night at the Warragul Cinema was held for Pindari as a gesture of thanks for their allowing some of our courses to be held there. The film shown was ‘The Tailor of Panama’, which starred Geoffrey Rush, Pierce Brosnan, Jamie-Lee Curtis, Harold Pinter, and Daniel Radcliffe in his film debut.

The U3A International Conference was held in Melbourne in May. Terry and Gerardine Synan took part in planning at Network level, while Philip Snoxall represented us at the actual conference. The keynote address was given by Barry Jones. In an amusing speech, he referred to government policies supporting folk in their ‘third age’ as promoting a ‘vertical’ policy for them rather than consigning them to the ‘horizontal’ state symptomatic of the ‘fourth age’! As might have been expected, Barry was timed out just as he was warming to his subject!

During the year U3A Baw Baw joined with three other adult learning organisations – The Education Centre and the Community House, both in Warragul, and GEST (Gippsland Employment Skills Training), in Moe – to form a ‘Cluster’. Each body remained completely independent. The main aim was to enhance the likelihood of gaining government grants.

For the first time U3A Network offered U3A ONLINE. Existing U3A members could enrol for an annual fee of $12.00, which covered all courses taken. No one from our U3A took up the opportunity at that time. Indeed, online learning seems never to have taken off in our Branch.

Forty-two people attended the Annual General Meeting at the Shire offices in Young Street, Drouin on 11 September, where Jean Melzer, President of U3A Network, presided and spoke. Subscriptions were raised to $25. A clause was added to the constitution to stipulate that no Committee members were to receive any remuneration, which hardly changed our actual practice!

At this meeting the Founding President, Jim Connelly, stepped down after two years, and Rosalie Woolcock was elected President. Other members of the Committee included Norma Bayliss (Secretary), Cedric Johnston (Treasurer), Terry Synan (Public Officer), Kathy Watson, Dawn Gough, and Maree Dunn.

As we learnt from ‘Peter Pan’, two is the end of the beginning. There was a certain amount of reflection amongst us on reaching this milestone. In various remarks made on the occasion, references were made to the ‘democratic’ style of the opening years, where consensus was always sought and a ‘lively and productive atmosphere’ developed, while Jim, himself, had earlier used the phrase, ‘courteous informality’ to describe the tenor of those early years.

Forty members attended the break-up smorgasbord Christmas Lunch at the Downtowner in Warragul. Some even wore paper hats!

**2002**

‘Athene’ continued to be published each term, with Kathy Watson as editor and Norma Bayliss and Barbara Maison as proof-readers. With its mixture of local Branch news and reviews of courses, together with articles sourced from academic and other journals, as well as members’ contributions, all spiced with a dose of humour, it took a vital part in building the Branch’s cohesion and sense of fellowship.

The Term 2 issue contained some interesting notes on the origins of U3A. The movement began in Toulouse, France, in 1972. To begin with, the teaching was done by local universities which allowed ‘outsiders’ to join their classes or, in other instances, set up extra-mural classes for third-agers.

However, when U3A migrated across the Channel in 1982, a different model developed, one of self-help or mutual-aid – a kind of intellectual democracy with no distinction between teachers and taught, and administration left entirely within each branch of U3A. This is the system which we inherited and which prevails today.

The same issue contained a tribute to Tom McGrath, who had died. Tom was a prolific contributor to ‘Athene’ and a much-loved tutor, renowned for his Australian History classes and, perhaps more particularly, for his courses on Shakespeare’s plays. An earlier ‘Athene’ had described Tom’s teaching of Macbeth, where the class had conducted a trial of Macbeth, with Tom acting in that role, conducting his own defence.

The focus of Adult Learners Week in September was to encourage older men to become more involved in learning activities. This had some relevance in our own Branch, where the membership list for Term 2 showed a total of 97, made up of 71 women and 26 men.

The aim was to have one excursion each term. In 2002, the four excursions were to Warragul Water, Power Works in the Latrobe Valley, Coal Creek at Korumburra, and Three Centuries of Italian Art in Melbourne.

A Film Night at the Warragul Cinema was held, to see ‘The Importance of Being Ernest.’

Almost all courses were now being held at Vision Australia (Pindari). To mention only the new courses presented during the year, these were Practical Philosophy, The Sound of Music, Talks on the Outback, Cryptic Crosswords, Physical Wellbeing and Relaxation Techniques, Australian Literature, Wilsons Promontory in the War Years (a repeat from 2000), Art Appreciation, War History on the Home Front, and English Usage.

The AGM on 13 August was chaired by Ian Maxfield, MLA. Rosalie Woolcock was returned as President, Terry Synan Vice President and Public Officer, Dawn Gough Secretary, Philip Snoxall Treasurer, Kathy Watson Publicity Officer, Maree Dunn Course Coordinator, and Frances McGrath and Elva Fisher Ordinary Members.

The year ended with a Christmas Lunch at the Downtowner on 10 December, although the members of the ‘Outback’ course had their own break-up in the park. The next issue of ‘Athene’ reported on the occasion:

*Our intrepid armchair Outback travellers led by Chris Bayliss celebrated their Christmas with typical Outback Tucker in the local park. However, much to the chagrin of the travellers and the envy of Central Australians, it rained. To any other group this would have been a wet blanket, but, being the pioneering stock that they are, they soldiered on and enjoyed their lunch, comprised of:*

*Smoked Cooper Creek Barra on Baked Wattle Bark*

*Lake Albacutya Lamb Roast*

*Dusty Goondiwindi Gravy*

*Karrasini Kangaroo Kook Up*

*Mungeranie Vegetable and Witchetty Bake*

*Derro’s Damper and Goats Milk Pudding with Sweet Quandong Sorse*

*Billy Tea Korfee with Gibber Cakes*

**2003**

The year began with a new ‘home’. All of the monthly general meetings and some courses were held in the ‘supper room’ at the back of Wesley of Warragul, the former Methodist Church.

Because our U3A was now part of a Learning Cluster and receiving funding from the government through ACFE, our funds were awash with money. From September 2002 to June 2003, these grants totalled over $12,000. However, our Committee became increasingly restive about the amount of frustrating record-keeping and paperwork involved. Serious consideration was given to ‘flying solo’.

Because of Cluster requirements, it was necessary to document course activities in order to prove the legitimacy of our applications for these grants. Accordingly, a good deal of systemisation now occurred.

Accurate records of class numbers began to be kept, so we can list course attendances in some detail. So, for instance, the Term 1 classes were as follows:

*Italian (Beginners)* at Vision Australia. 7 members

*Italian (Intermediate)* at Vision Australia. 11 members

*Italian (Advanced)* at Vision Australia. 6 members

*Scrabble* at Fairview, Warragul. 14 members

*Film Group Lunch/Discussion* at the Courthouse Restaurant. 16 members

*Current Affairs* at Wesley of Warragul. 10 members

*War Years at Wilsons Prom* at Fairview. 15 members

*Computers for Beginners* at Wesley. 12 members

*Petanque* at 6 Buln Buln Road, Drouin. 17 members

*Book Group* at Wesley. (no number given)

A major development was the introduction of course assessments. A pro-forma was produced and class members were asked to assess the course they were attending. This was extraordinarily detailed and caused vast amounts of time in documenting the results. Besides, very little information of any value was obtained, and the process was soon modified and eventually dropped.

Beginning in Term 1, a printed Course Selection brochure was distributed. It showed the courses for the term with venues and contact details of leaders, listed the excursion for the term, and contained an application for membership as well as an application section for course enrolment. This brochure was extremely useful not just for members choosing courses to attend, but also as an information pamphlet to be left in public places like the libraries and doctors’ waiting rooms, and to be given to those enquiring about membership.

Over the following three terms of 2003, besides the ongoing groups such as the Italian classes and the Film Group, new courses were presented as follows:

Term 2: Prime Ministers, Art History, Tutoring for Small Groups (provided by the Education Centre in Warragul), Travellers Tales.

Term 3: Australian History, Genealogy, Poetry.

Term 4: Philosophy of God, Art: Learn the Basics, Computers.

Excursions were held to Williamstown, including a ferry trip from the City, to the Morwell Timber Treatment plant in Morwell and then on to Gippsland Aeronautics, the National Gallery of Victoria, and to St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne, and then on to the Immigration Museum.

The members of the Italian classes had their own excursion in Seniors Week – to the picnic gathering of the Italian Pensioners Clubs of Victoria at Gumbaya Park. Jan Mildenhall’s amusing report in ‘Athene’ told of the 2000-strong throng, the dancing (including our attendees). One elderly Italian woman greeted them: ‘*We are all sisters; we look after each other, si?* Jan went on:

*The rapid flow of the language from the microphone was rather daunting to say the least. We will need to practise with a metronome set at ‘presto’ to improve the pace by next year’s picnic.*

We lost one of our colourful characters in April. ‘Athene’ for Term 3 printed this tribute:

*Those of you who joined U3A Baw Baw early in its inception will remember the very tall, erect figure of Len Stubbs and his striking grey beard. Len was as eccentric as he was tall, with a mind like a steel trap and a firm believer in his independent sustainability. He was a very keen Scrabble player, and nearly always came to the game with armfuls of his home-grown produce.*

‘Athene’ continued to print original articles and verse from members. The Term 3 edition, for instance, included this poem by David Holroyd, one of the Italian tutors.

*Mountain Death*

*She said she remembered the crows*

*I only recall snow pigeons*

*wheeling against a cloudless blue*

*then disappearing*

*against grey cliff and jagged peak*

*white with freshly fallen snow*

*Death had come early*

*in the stillness*

*of the spent storm*

*Dazed*

*we roamed the village*

*All we could do now*

*was wait to break the news*

*but what to say?*

*Cliches gasping in the thin air*

*The crows she remembered*

*hovering over the valley*

*I only recall snow pigeons*

*the prayer flags*

*flapping in the wind*

The AGM was held on 12 August, with the Mayor of Baw Baw, Cr Geoff Davey presiding. Rosalie Woolcock stepped down after her two-year stint as President.

In her farewell comments in ‘Athene’, she wrote:

*… the greatest treasure we have is not measured in goods, money or material things, but in the wealth of Lifetime Knowledge which with great Good Will our members share with us. It has been wonderful to see the change in people. Some come to U3A shy and with diffidence about their ability to contribute. It has been amazing to see the increase in people’s confidence and their pleasure in helping others. The spirit of friendship and co-operation is our great strength. You can’t list it in a document or cost it. It is priceless. I congratulate you all most heartily.*

Terry Synan was elected President and Public Officer, with Elva Fisher Vice-President. Dawn Gough and Philip Snoxall remained as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Kathy Watson was appointed to the new position of Membership Secretary. Maree Dunn, Laurie Huffer, and Joan Lowrey completed rhe membership of the Committee.

At this meeting, an information sheet to assist and welcome new members was introduced.

The annual Christmas break-up Lunch was held at In2Food in Warragul on 9 December. Cost $22.00. Only 26 members attended.

**2004**

In his first presidential comments in ‘Athene’, Terry Synan commented that “our membership contains a formidable pool of quality people highly experienced and practised in successful living, in earning an income, in numerous leisure skills, in caring for family and others, in creative capability, and in diligent industry across most aspects of society”.

The Term 1 issue of ‘Athene’, in a piece of journalism worthy of a Walkley Award, and rising to almost Churchillian levels, reported a disaster:

*Very few will be ignorant of the devastating fire that was deliberately lit in our club rooms late in 2003, but for those of you who were unaware, here are the facts as I know them.*

*Apparently two boys gained access to the building by fearlessly climbing the scaffolding surrounding the tower and climbing down an internal ladder in the tower.*

*Using some old paint tins that were housed in our club rooms, they allegedly lit the fire, enjoyed the adrenaline rush that provided, then raced next door to Safeway and told the staff there that there was a fire in the church.*

*It is a great pity that their ingenuity has not been harnessed and directed at a venture deserving of their efforts.*

*Whilst they, it appears, received great satisfaction in the destruction they caused, we have lost all of our hard fought for possessions, including our new TV and DVD recorder, plus some of our records, some of which were your applications for membership. Hence the recent letter requesting you to reapply.*

*Because of the fire, we are now back to where we were early last year - HOMELESS. Hence the general meeting is back in Drouin at the Health and Community Care Centre temporarily, until we get our refurbished club rooms back.*

*I know, as do most of you, that something good always comes from something bad. I’m not sure what that good will be yet, but we have to be positive, especially at the beginning of a new year, so like the good Australian stock that we all are we will stiffen the upper lip and press on into 2004 with optimism and enthusiasm for another great year in U3A Baw Baw.*

Despite this setback, activities proceeded unabated. Excursions were held each term, sometimes more than one. The 2004 excursions were to:

the Airlie Bank Gallery, Morwell to see the display, ‘Dad’s War Stuff’ and then on to the Latrobe Regional Gallery, and finally to the Morwell Rose Gardens.

the Caravaggio exhibition at the National Gallery.

the State Library of Victoria, then on to the Old Melbourne Gaol.

the Knoxfield Horticultural Exhibition, then on to Brown, Prior Anderson, Book Printers, in Burwood.

Flavorite Tomatoes in Warragul, then on to the Lillico Glass Studios, with (Lunch at Anne and Jim Connelly’s place in Buln Buln East!), then Piano Hill Cheese in Jindivick.

Mirboo North brewery.

As well, there were two Class excursions. The Natural Philosophy class visited the Cyclotron at Monash University, while the Italian classes had a day out seeing the film, *The Leopard*, (set in Sicily) at the Astor in St Kilda.

Classes continued as usual. Taking the year as a whole, the continuing groups included Italian (Intermediate and Senior), Current Affairs, Film Group, Scrabble, Book Group, Creative Writing, while new classes were held in Australian History, Art Practical, Natural Philosophy, Baw Baw Today, Sociology, British Imperial History in South-east Asia, and Art: the Impressionists.

A strong connection was being built between U3A and the local community radio station, 3BBR. U3A events were frequently reported on air, and our U3A President was interviewed on air from time to time.

The AGM was moved from August to May (May 11) in order to comply with Consumer Affairs requirements. Ruth McDonald, Baw Baw Mayor, presided. Terry Synan was returned as President, the other Committee members being Laurie Huffer (Vice-President), Dawn Gough (Secretary), Norma Bayliss (Treasurer), Kathy Watson (Publicity Officer), Maree Dunn (Course Co-ordinator), Joan Lowrey, and Philip Snoxall. Rosemary Perkins was confirmed as Excursions Officer and Chris Bayliss as Speaker Organiser. Philip Snoxall and Elva Fisher were presented with boxes of chocolates in appreciation of their services to the Committee.

A historic event occurred on 12 October, when the first of our annual U3A Literary Luncheons was held at the Royal Hotel in Drouin. Members of the public were invited. 80 people attended, half of whom were non-members. The speaker was Don Watson, who grew up in Poowong and was a former student of our member, Laurie Huffer, at Korumburra High School. Don Watson is a prolific author and commentator, although he is best known, perhaps, as Paul Keating’s speechwriter.

Don’s topic was ‘Death Sentence – the Decay of Public Language’. He argued that our language has been replaced with deliberate de-personalisation - ‘*debased, depleted sludge – in the media, amongst our leaders, corporations and companies of all sizes, the public service, cultural institutions, at work and even in the locker room”.*

On 14 December, the Break-up Lunch was again held at In2Food. The cost increased to $25.00, although an entertainer was provided – guitarist Don McPhee.

**2005**

Because of the fire at Wesley late in the previous year, general meetings for Term 1 were held at the Baw Baw Community Care Centre in Drouin, Committee meetings at the Gippsland Education Centre in Warragul, and various venues were used for courses, including Vision Australia, Fairview Village, Warragul, the Shire Centre in Trafalgar, the Courthouse Restaurant in Warragul, the Anglican Church Hall in Drouin, and the Baw Baw Library in Drouin.

In June, we returned for general meetings – and many of our courses - to a beautifully refurbished Wesley. Under a capital grant from ACFE, the Branch bought two fold-away tables, twelve chairs and a lectern (second-hand). The previous twelve months had brought in $3000 in ACFE general funding.

A range of people spoke at the monthly general meetings, a mixture of members and people from the outside community. Brian Kemp organised the outside guest speakers.

A series of ‘Ten-minute talks’ were held at these general meetings, where members gave a brief outline of their life and achievements. At one of these, President Terry Synan recited ‘How McDougall topped the Score’, and told how the famous poem first appeared in the Bulletin and was recited at the public reception to Victor Trumper in the Sydney Town Hall in 1903.

Edna Ollington, one of our members at this time, sang on several U3A occasions. In May, she organised for a number of our members to attend ‘Morning Melodies’ at the Concert Hall in Melbourne.

Courses.

Term 1: Italian for Fun, Scrabble, Film Group, Current Affairs, Glorious Gold: Victoria in the 1850s

Term 2: (new): Defending Australia, Migrant Memoirs

Term 3 (new): the Dutch Masters, Weather and our World, Memoirs

Term 4 (new): Musical Moments, Medieval History, History of Computers, Exotic Salads

Excursions.

Term 1: the Shrine of Remembrance and Botanical Gardens/the Observatory.

Term 2: the Gold Treasury Museum, Spring Street.

Term 3: (i). Melbourne Town Hall (guided tour), then on to the Block Arcade (another guided tour). (ii). National Gallery of Victoria – the Dutch Masters exhibition.

Term 4: Bus Trip to Toora, Agnes Falls, Port Albert, and Tarraville. A subsequent photo in ‘Athene’ shows a group of weather-bedraggled excursionists beating their way along the strand at Port Albert looking as if they were searching for the next coffee shop!

The AGM was held on 10 May at the health and Community Care Centre in Young Street, Drouin, with Glenn Patterson, the new CEO of Baw Baw Shire, presiding. Laurie Huffer was elected President, with Terry Synan Vice-President (and Public Officer), Dawn Gough and Norma Bayliss continued as Secretary and Treasurer respectively, and Terry Synan resumed his former role as Public Officer. Maree Dunn was course-coordinator, while Kathy Watson continued as editor of ‘Athene’. The General Members of the Committee were Joan Lowrey, Philip Snoxall, Rosemary Perkins, and Brian Kemp.

[The election of Laurie Huffer completed a remarkable co-incidence. In the early 1950s at an Education Department hostel in Melbourne for country students in secondary-teacher training, there were thirty-two residents. Three of them were Jim Connelly, Terry Synan, and Laurie Huffer. Now, over half a century later, all three had become Presidents of U3A Baw Baw!]

The second annual Literary Luncheon was held on 11 October at Elizabethan Receptions, Warragul. The speaker was Ann Synan, Terry’s sister-in-law, from Sale, who spoke on her prize-winning book, ‘*We Came with Nothing: the Story of the West Sale Migrant Holding Centre’.*

Many of our members have published books. One of the first of these was David Holroyd, whose collection of poems, ‘*Edge of Memory’* came out at this time. Terry Synan’s book, ‘*A Journey of Faith: a History of Catholic Education in Gippsland, 1850-1981’* had been published the previous year.

The year was brought to a close with the Christmas break-up Lunch on 13 December at In2Food, Warragul.

**2006**

At this stage in our development, we maintained a close connection with U3A Network, the coordinating body for all Victorian U3As. Rosalie Woolcock attended Network meetings and kept the Branch informed of developments in the wider scene, particularly with regard to financial grants available through ACFE. However, as time went by, our connection with Network declined, although monies still filtered down to us through government allocations to U3A. In 2006, for instance, we received $1082 from U3A Victoria and a further $1000 grant from the Community Support Fund.

With this assistance, material procurements were made, including a wall-mounted flat-screen TV with video and DVD player, and a new photocopier.

Committee meetings were held in the room at the rear of the by-now fully restored Wesley building in Warragul, while general meetings were held in the main auditorium.

A smorgasbord of courses were held, as usual. Over the year, these included Italian (now called Italian for Fun), Scrabble, the Film Group, Memoirs, Musical Moments: Opera to Jazz, various Computer Classes (now taken by John Campbell, and conducted at the Nilma State School), Christianity and the Church, A History of Islam, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Convicts and the Foundation of Australia, the History of the Nobel Prize, Poetry, The Adventure of English, Global Warming, a Music class based on the visit of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra to Warragul, and 4 Steps for Life.

The last-named was a one-session course on a Wednesday afternoon. Participants were asked to bring a pillow. No record of this event has survived. Perhaps everybody slept through it.

Venues for courses included Wesley itself, Vision Australia, Fairview Village, the Shire Service Centre in Trafalgar, and the Courthouse Restaurant for the monthly Fine Films lunches.

From Term 2, a new method of enrolment was introduced. Enrolments were to be made directly to the tutor of each course rather than through a central enrolment procedure.

One activity of particular interest was arranged by Chris Bayliss. On successive Mondays two ‘leisurely walks around Warragul’ were held, led by two non-members - Malcolm Dickson and Ian Brooks.

We were now using the talents of non-members perhaps more readily than in previous years.

Aldo Bagnara, another non-member, led a one-off lecture on Genetically Modified Foods.

Another non-member who played a valuable role for us was Paul Petch, who voluntarily curated our website. A thank-you note in the Term 2 ‘Athene’ commented:

*You will no doubt be aware that our previous website was vandalised and, because it wasn’t monitored, was purloined by purveyors of porn. Hence this is an important job. Paul is well credentialled and donates his time and experience FREE.*

Other non-member speakers at the monthly general meetings included Linda Mullett and Robert Radford. At one meeting speakers from Anglicare spoke on Gamblers Help and the Latrobe Valley Rights Centre. Bill Redman, from the RACV, spoke on road safety for seniors, while Sue Clark came from Baptcare to speak on home care services.

Walter Aich, Regional Director of ACFE, chaired the AGM in May. The attendance was thirty. Other guests were Ian Maxfield, MLA (in whose office ‘Athene’ was printed), Cr Ian Clark, Mayor of Baw Baw, Margaret Yorick from Community House, Warragul, and Bernadette O’Connor from the Education Centre. The executive team, led by Laurie Huffer, continued in place, while Beryl Geisler and Anne Keating replaced Philip Snoxall and Brian Kemp on the General Committee.

There was no excursion in Term 1 due to the Commonwealth Games being held in Melbourne from 15th to 26th March. Because of this the first school term in Victoria was reduced to six weeks.

There were two excursions in Term 2 – to the Pissarro exhibition at the National Gallery and to the State Library to see the exhibition of rare and historically significant books.

Other excursions held during the year were to the National Gallery exhibition, ‘Picasso: Love and War’ (this was followed by a one-off seminar for attendees at the Wesley Centre), and a visit to the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals in Sale. The latter excursion was an outcome of Ray Elliot’s course on Christianity and the Church. In the afternoon of that day, participants had a conducted tour of the Port of Sale, the Swing Bridge and the Powder Magazine.

The third annual Literary Luncheon in August, held at the Elizabethan Restaurant, took a different form in that we combined with the Baw Baw Writers Network on this occasion. Cr Dick van Leeuwen formally launched the 2006 Writers Festival (with the help of two ‘puppets’, Witchy and Wizzy) and then, after the meal, Carolyn Landon spoke on her ‘Jacksons Track Revisited’. Carolyn had had occasion to modify some of the content of her original ‘Jacksons Track’ (co-authored with Daryl Tonkin), and spoke of how this second account evolved from the need to represent more fully and fairly the views of all those who took part in the events described in the earlier book.

During Adult Learners Week in early September, we held an Open Day. Members of the community were invited to come and see a display of our activities and courses, a venture that was followed in a number of later years.

Several weeks later, in Seniors Week we again held an Open Day for visitors.

In November, as the feature for the monthly meeting, Jim Connelly arranged a debate. Six of our members took part in the classic format for debates. Unfortunately, no one can remember either the topic or the outcome, but ‘a good time was had by all’.

The number of financial members held very steady throughout the year, the number standing at 81, 86, 83, and 84 over the four terms.

The financial position was sound, the cash in hand at the end of the year standing at $15,273, with assets valued at $12,460.

Annual subscriptions remained at $25.00.

The Christmas Lunch was again at In2Food in Warragul, on 12 December.

**2007**

This was a year of reaching out, especially to other U3As in Gippsland and to U3A Network. More anon.

Meanwhile, our course content remained on the highbrow side, with new courses beginning with ‘Cryptic Crosswords’ and a play reading of Macbeth. Later in the year, we added ‘Wilsons Promontory during World War 2’, ‘the Australian Home Front in WW1’ (held at Trafalgar), ‘History of South Africa’, a play-reading of ‘The importance of Being Ernest’, ‘Hildegard of Bingen’, The Cathars and the Albigensian Crusades, and, perhaps rather less highbrow, a course in ‘Towards a Healthy Lifestyle’.

As the year went on, many of us became familiar with the train trip to Flinders Street. In April there was an excursion to the Ian Potter Gallery to see the Australian Expressionism exhibition, and in July to visit the Guggenheim Exhibition: Art from the New York Gallery, and then again in October to the exhibition of the work of the war artist, George Lambert at Melbourne University in the morning and in the afternoon, to ‘Melbourne Bohemia’ in the Old Treasury Building. A visit to the Lillico Glassworks saw only eight attend rather than the twenty originally hoped for.

Then, in May, some of us attended a two-day U3A Conference organised by Network. The idea developed as the year progressed that regional groupings of U3As should be developed. For instance, Baw Baw might be part of a Gippsland Regional Group, joining the Latrobe Valley, Leongatha, Wonthaggi, and Phillip Island. The idea was taken further in November when an informal meeting took place between ourselves and Latrobe Valley. However, the concept never took root, largely because of the great distances involved in inter-Branch travelling.

Nevertheless, informal contacts between Baw Baw and Latrobe Valley were maintained. This was especially noticeable with our Literary Lunch, held on 24 July at the Elizabethan in Warragul.

When notice was first given that Dr Barry Jones, AO, was to be our guest speaker, the folk at Latrobe Valley immediately asked if all their 200 members could attend! In the event, some from Latrobe Valley came, as well as U3A folk from Wonthaggi and Leongatha. Members of the Baw Baw Writers Group were also present in numbers.

We had a connection with Barry Jones through Rosalie Woolcock who had been at Sunday School with him. He readily agreed to come, giving his time without cost, although he did sell quite a few copies of his recent book, ‘A Thinking Reed’. 130 came to hear him, breaking all records.

The event was a very good advertisement for U3A, and it may not be coincidental that our financial membership hit the hundred mark for the first time in Term 4 of this year (though only just!)

A few weeks after the Barry Jones dining event, thirty of us (the limit allowable) had an evening meal together at the Wattleseed Restaurant in Warragul, thus giving support to the McMillan hospitality students who operated the restaurant at that time.

John Mitchell, CEO of U3A Network Victoria, presided at the AGM on 8 May, which saw Jim Connelly return as President. The Executive was made up of Laurie Huffer (Vice-President), Margaret Theile (Secretary), Nancy Bourke (Treasurer), and Terry Synan (Public Officer and Excursions Coordinator). Others in the leadership team were Harry Milne (Course Coordinator), Barbara Maison (‘Athene’ editor), and three ordinary members of the Committee – Beryl Geisler, Judy Baird, and Dawn Gough. The annual subscription was increased to $30.

In November, we joined forces with Latrobe Valley U3A at a lecture in Morwell by Daryl Nation from Monash University Churchill on ‘Education and Ageing.’ A light lunch followed, and then David Welch from Latrobe City spoke on the recent introduction of the Latrobe City’s ‘Older Persons Strategy’.

We broke new ground in December when we handed over a cheque for $560 to the West Gippsland Chorale’s Leading Notes Youth Choir. Through this donation, the oldest group using the Wesley building was supporting the newest group using Wesley. The donation actually came from a government grant that U3A had successfully applied for. (We later provided a grant of $780 to the Nilma State School under the same arrangements).

This was the time that the Council erected a controversial piece of public sculpture –‘The Cloud’ – over South Road in Warragul. There was something of a public outcry, and the controversy hit the pages of our ‘Athene’, where our resident poet, Alan Pugh, penned these lines:

*I wandered lonely as a cloud*

*That lazily drifts o’er Warragul town,*

*When of what I saw I was not proud.*

*Could these chunks of tin come crashing down,*

*Crazily swinging in the gale?*

*Oh, not again would mere metal fail?*

*But woe is me of uncultured mind,*

*To be so crass and to art so unkind,*

*That of wisdom heard in Council’s Chamber.*

*No risk was seen, nor seen a danger,*

*Nor any thought could be uttered aloud:*

*‘Have they really fixed that ersatz Cloud?’*

The year was brought to a close with a delicious afternoon High Tea at the Lillico Glass Studio’s ‘Clearly Delicious’ catering facility. Cost $11.

**2008**

Late in the previous year and continuing into 2008, discussions took place between the Presidents of U3A Baw Baw, U3A Latrobe Valley, and the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Monash University, Churchill, Professor Harry Ballis, regarding U3A members being given free access to lectures at the University in certain subjects, such as Social Sciences, Visual Arts, and Science.

There would be no fees, no pre-requisites, no assignments, and no qualifications issued by Monash

There was a good deal of excitement about this, and the deal was eventually struck. However, there was more substance in the preparation than in the execution. Hardly a soul from either U3A Branch took up the offer, and the idea sank into obscurity.

The Presidential letter in the April ‘Athene’ had some comments that apply to U3A generally and which are worth repeating here:

*Every edition of ‘Athene’ in the early days had these lines from Tennyson’s ‘Ulysses’ printed on the front page:*

*… all experience is an arch wherethro’*

*Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades*

*Forever and forever as I move.*

*These lines were suggested as our motto or catchphrase by the late Dulcie Dent, who was our first Vice-President and who helped greatly to establish the tone of earnest personal endeavour that still prevails amongst us.*

*There’s a nice coherence of ideas in that the title of our newsletter (Athene was the Greek goddess of wisdom!) and our original motto both have their origins in Ancient Greek culture, for the spirit of the Greeks, with its emphasis on experiment and enquiry and the worthwhileness of the individual, accords well with the philosophy of U3A, as well as the direction of many of us personally.*

*In this connection, I was interested in an article in ‘The Age’ recently, in which Stephanie Dowrick discussed the benefits associated with a mature mind. Fields of interest like philosophy and theology, she argued, call for experience, patience, depth of thinking, and a broad view – all attributes that can improve with age. She went on,*

*Most of us will never be brilliant or wise … Nevertheless, wisdom, and the humanity that comes with wisdom, remain far more accessible than brilliance … We can grow more and not less curious. We can learn from our mistakes without being crushed by them. We can appreciate what other people have to teach us. We can discover for ourselves that money matters far less than happiness. We can newly value kindness, beauty, and humour. And we can certainly learn and practise the infinite arts of reflection.*

At the AGM in May, the Executive team was returned, while Terry Synan (Public Officer), Rosalie Woolcock, Russell Brown, Beryl Geisler, Dawn Gough, and Barbara Maison made up the General Committee.

Excursions were held to the National Gallery to see the Modern Britain exhibition, and to the Yallourn North Brown Coal Museum. There was an excursion combining the Sidney Nolan exhibition at Federation Square and the Medieval Manuscripts exhibition at the State Library, and another to visit the Art Deco 1910-1939 exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. In August, members made the long trip to Warragul to hear an organ recital on our own home ground at Wesley!

Meanwhile, we invited an interesting range of speakers to our monthly general meetings. These included Bev Pascoe and Fred Everett (a marvellous photo display of their travels), Nancy Bourke and Myra Findlay (their China Adventures), Ian Wall (Street Kids), Sgt John Brookes (Policing), Carolyn Turner (Warragul Gazette), Jacqui Turner (Travel), Bernie Rowell and Gary Blackwood (the Kokoda Track), Karen Price (Alzheimer’s Association), and Ann Ivamay Phillips (Living Life as an Orthodox Jew).

New courses in this year included play readings of ‘As You Like It’ and ‘Major Barbara’, two new computer courses (still held at the Nilma State School), a craft group, ‘Crafty Creatures’, a revived discussion group, ‘What’s the Matter’, The Internet, Votes for Women: the Australian Experience, Design and Development of Armoured Fighting Vehicles, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Angevin kings of England, Islam, and Reshaping Europe: the Napoleonic Era.

Brochures containing course information and enrolment forms were mailed to members well before each term began, and because of this, the number of ‘Athene’s put out each year was reduced from four to two.

We scored another coup when Mark Knight, the Herald-Sun cartoonist – and Walkley Award winner - agreed to speak at our Literary Luncheon. Mark, who lives in West Gippsland, has often donated his talents to local causes. Ninety-two people attended at the Elizabethan. During his talk Mark drew amusing portraits of John Howard and Julia Gillard on an overhead projector. (These are now in the secret cabinet of a certain former President who was sitting next to Mark, but will be surrendered to U3A Baw Baw if enough physical pressure is applied!)

Meanwhile some of our people had been busy with their own literary efforts. Some were printed in ‘Athene’. In August, Dawn Gough launched her ‘Hurry, Hurry, Hurry, Come and See: a Tale of Two Centuries of Hurry Hurries’ at Beeches Bookshop in Warragul.

To the chagrin of some of the Executive, ‘Athene’ at this time had a large number of ‘humorous’ articles gleaned from outside published sources. To honestly report the nature of our own journal of this period, let us include one such contribution, albeit its highly immoral (though admittedly humorous) nature:

*Working people frequently ask retired people what they do to make their days interesting.*

*Well, for example, the other day I went into town and went into a shop. I was only in there for five minutes and when I came out there was a cop writing out a parking ticket. I went up to him and said, “Come on, man, how about giving a senior citizen a break?”*

*He ignored me and continued writing the ticket. I called him a Nazi. He glared at me and started writing another ticket for having worn tyres. So I called him a \*!#%!\*. He finished the second ticket and put it on the windshield with the first.*

*Then he started writing a third ticket. This went on for about twenty minutes. The more I abused him the more tickets he wrote.*

*Personally I didn’t care.*

*I came into town by bus.*

*I try to have a little fun each day now that I’m retired. It’s important at my age.*

In October, during Seniors Week, U3A Network organised a ‘Carnival of Learning’ in Federation Square, U3A Baw Baw was well-represented. A good number of our members attended and set up a display of our activities. Special U3A shirts were provided for the attendants to wear. (One of these is also still in the aforesaid former President’s possession!)

This Melbourne display was a major operation, but it did not prevent us from having our own display and Open Day at Wesley the next week.

We were still in a mood of expanding and evangelising at this time. Earlier in the year, we placed a large advertisement in the Warragul and Drouin Gazette advertising our courses. A multi-coloured laminated advertising sheet was also produced to be distributed locally.

The end-of-year Break-up was held at the Darnum Musical Village, where Albert Fox, together with Colin and Sue Parish, provided lively entertainment and Edna Ollington sang for us.

**2009**

Term 1 was our tenth anniversary term.

Members could choose from the following courses, as listed in the Course brochure for that term, with conveners:

Mondays: What’s the Matter Discussion Group (Jim Connelly)

Local History (Terry Synan)

Wednesdays: Advanced Italian (David Holroyd)

Intermediate Italian (David Holroyd)

Thursdays: Crafty Creatures (Margaret Theile)

Genealogy (Margaret Theile)

Play Reading (Anne Connelly)

Fridays: Fine Film Discussion Group (Rosalie Woolcock)

Scrabble (Beryl Geisler)

Memoirs (Dawn Gough)

Music for Learning and Pleasure (Faye Harkess)

An excursion was held to the George Lambert exhibition in Morwell.

Frank Hiscock came to the General Meeting in March to tell us of his mountaineering experiences in Africa.

Final preparations were made for the publication of our 10th Anniversary book launch. The Book Sub-Committee and the General Committee had a pleasant afternoon tea to celebrate the work done at the President’s semi-rural property in Buln Buln East.

Our former President and invaluable Committee member, Terry Synan, was honoured by the award of an Honorary Doctorate by the Australian Catholic University for his contribution to Catholic education. Terry was Director of Education in the Diocese of Sale and member of the Schools Commission for many years.

After a good deal of agonising, the decision was made to move our activities from Wesley of Warragul to the new RSL Memorial Community Centre in Albert Street, Warragul. There were advantages in cost, parking, catering, improved facilities, and health and safety. The RSL building had automatic doors and no steps. (One of our members had been injured in a fall when negotiating the steps at Wesley).

Our last hurrah at Wesley was the long-awaited launch by the Mayor of Baw Baw, Cr Ruth McGowan, of our Tenth Anniversary Book, ‘In Our Own Words’, held there on 5 May.

‘In our Own Words’ contained sixty-one contributions from our members, some autobiographical, some philosophical, some comic, and some all three! There were poems, drawings, and paintings. Luke Watson, a young local artist and designer, did some topical sketches which were placed appropriately throughout the book.

The book was printed by DCP Printers in Drouin and was sold for $25.00. 150 copies were printed.

A week later, on 12 May, the Tenth Anniversary Annual General Meeting took place, at our new premises at the RSL Building in Albert Road, Warragul.

David Powell, CEO of Baw Baw Shire, conducted the elections and later spoke about his work.

The Executive team elected was made up of Jim Connelly (President), Laurie Huffer (Vice-President), Margaret Theile (Secretary), Nancy Bourke (Treasurer), Terry Synan (Public Officer), Rosalie Woolcock (Liaison Officer), and Beryl Geisler, Dawn Gough, Robert Gration, and Harry Milne (Ordinary Members).

In his Report given at the meeting, President Jim Connelly included these comments:

*This report and this year’s Annual Meeting mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of our Baw Baw branch of the University of the Third Age. On Tuesday, 13 April, 1999, our first general meeting was held in the old Shire Offices in Drouin. Twenty-two people attended that meeting and formally decided to inaugurate the Branch. Eleven of those are still members.*

*Today we have five times that original number and over the ten years a huge number of learning opportunities have been presented to the people of West Gippsland through U3A. …*

*As one of those founding members of ten years ago, it has given me enormous satisfaction to see our Branch grow and prosper. I thank you all very sincerely for the opportunity to preside over this excellent organisation.*

With those remarks we close this account of the first ten years of U3A Baw Baw.