

**L**ast time I wrote to you I wished you a Merry Christmas. Time has certainly flown since then and I hope you all had a wonderful Easter, enjoying all that the Riverland offers at this glorious time of the year. Yes, autumn is certainly my favourite season.

U3A Riverland has launched into 2016 with a huge offering of courses and activities—some continuing, some new. If you haven't decided on something to do, please check the activities page on our website or collect your copy of the activities sheet from your nearest library. If you have an activity you would like to see offered, please let one of the committee know. For ease of identification, I remind you to wear your membership badge to any classes or activities you attend.

President, Brent Morrell, presided over our first AGM held on 24 February 2016. He presented his Annual Report outlining the enormous success of 2015, our first year of operation. Brent thanked the retiring members Lyn Harvey, Helen Slade and Pam Rule and welcomed in their place Anna Harper, Anne Chase and Jan Owens. The three members up for re-election (Brent Morrell, Tony Guster and Terry Marter) were returned unopposed.

Magic was also in the air at the AGM with James Young demonstrating his masterful illusion which certainly left our President with a confused look on his face.

Keep your eyes open for more details of a float making project to be facilitated by local artist Tim Baulderstone. It may be just what you are waiting to be involved in.

Remember that this is a volunteer-based organisation run for members. We look forward to your continued support.

*Diana March* (Editor)

## COMMITTEE PROFILES

### SECRETARY — DAINA BRADDOCK

As an enthusiastic supporter of lifelong learning, I became one of the founding members of U3A Riverland and have been taking minutes and creating agendas since the very first meeting back in May 2014.

As an art teacher in a previous life, people assured me that I could easily take on art classes for U3A. Well, 25 years ago that was what I did, but having worked at TAFESA since then (in a totally different capacity), I found this thought a bit daunting ... could I still remember all the important concepts ... would I remember how to apply them?

I did take up the challenge and have found taking the U3A art classes very rewarding, thanks to the ever-cheerful, interested and amazing people who have been attending—some now for the second year. The groups have already mounted one very successful art exhibition at the Chaffey Theatre ... keep your eyes open for the next one.

I look forward to every Tuesday and many more to come.



### PUBLICITY AND MARKETING — DIANA MARCH

Sometimes I feel that I've never left school. With a 40-year career in education, initially as a teacher in the secondary school system and later as a Business Studies Lecturer at TAFE, I am forever hungry to learn something new.

On taking an early retirement I was able to enthuse a small band of colleagues, in a similar situation, to look into the idea of establishing a local U3A branch. I'd read much about the health benefits of staying mentally active and over a glass of wine ... or two ... the concept evolved. Considering its phenomenal growth, it is particularly gratifying to have been part of its inception.

When I'm not in "school mode", writing newsletters or preparing much-needed publicity, I'm an avid traveller and long distance walker. With my husband, Geoff, I have completed 2 x 800 km walks on the pilgrims' trail "Camino de Santiago" across both Spain and France. I would have to say that these have been life's best classrooms yet!

On the homefront, I am a born and raised Riverlander and am passionate about showing this region off to our many visitors. I am an enthusiastic gardener and am slowly realising that I inherited some of my father's artistic talents (thanks in part to Daina Braddock and the U3A art class). I have run several courses for U3A, creating beautiful photographic books using an online software called Snapfish and enjoy the challenges of writing short stories in the U3A Creative Writing for Beginners classes. At the moment there's not much time to do more!







*Founding U3A Riverland members: Daina Braddock, Shirley Sims, Diana March, Lyn Harvey with the birthday cake*

U3A Riverland has celebrated its first birthday. President, Brent Morrell, applauded the efforts of the small founding group who worked tirelessly to establish a U3A branch in the Riverland. Di March, Daina Braddock, Shirley Sims and Lyn Harvey were invited to cut the birthday cake to mark the milestone. The President echoed the state body's praise for the Riverland's innovation, enthusiasm and proactive approach to providing Riverland retirees with an opportunity to engage in lifelong learning. "From an exciting beginning, our membership has grown to almost 150 and we have been able to offer more than 20 activities at venues right across the Riverland", he said.

The organising committee has planned an even broader array of courses and activities for 2016. In keeping with U3A's motto "Staying active: mentally, physically and socially", members attending the lunch at Ruston's rose garden were eager to pre-register for new courses including Conversational French, Home brewing, Pageant float building, Creative writing for beginners, Patchwork and Raku glazing for pottery.

The local libraries display U3A information brochures, membership forms and activity sheets. Anyone wishing to find out more about the activities of U3A Riverland is encouraged to visit the website [www.u3ariverland.org](http://www.u3ariverland.org)





It is a privilege to be able to present the first Annual Report of U3A Riverland Incorporated.

It was apparent from the interest and enthusiasm shown at the initial Public Meeting, held in this room just 15 months ago, that U3A for the Riverland was an idea whose time had come. The ease with which your first Committee was formed a few weeks later confirmed this.

2015 was a year of rapid growth for the organisation, accompanied by a very steep learning curve for the Committee. Almost 40 people joined at the initial public meeting. Our membership had grown to 150 by year's end. We offered six activities a year ago. The 2016 Term 1 prospectus has 31 choices.

There have been a number of contributing factors to our successful first year. Most important has been you, our membership. Your support and involvement has ensured that what was just an idea has become a reality. Allied with that has been our tutors, most of whom are also U3A members. The time and effort they have put into preparing, co-ordinating and delivering their activities has been marvellous. We are fortunate to have them. Thank you all.

We have had great support from our three local councils. Their co-operation in providing services and in particular, venues for our activities has been extremely important and appreciated. The support of the Riverland Arts Gallery also has been invaluable, providing us with a home base and a venue for activities. The State Government has also provided great support through U3A SA, with four-year funding of \$38,000 per annum to be distributed to 19 member organisations.

I have been blessed with an extremely talented and hard-working Committee. Whether by accident or design, you elected a group to portfolios that made the most of their considerable abilities.

Vice President Helen Slade's knowledge of how to deal with local government and what it can do for us, has been invaluable. Daina Braddock epitomises the reliable Secretary, maintaining the group's records and correspondence and keeping us all informed. Treasurer Shirley Sims has had to cope with a burgeoning membership and manage our communications with you, our members. You would all be able to attest to how well she has done that.

Course Co-ordinator is probably the most taxing of all portfolios, particularly in the first year. Sue Britton made a very enthusiastic start in this position, particularly in Loxton, but sadly had to retire for health reasons part way into the year. Fortunately for us all, Pam Rule stepped up and carried us through to the end of the year, ably assisted by Judith Hennig who was able to use her considerable IT skills to maintain order in a potentially difficult situation.

You have all seen the talent of Publicity Officer, Diana March, in the regular newsletters she has produced and in keeping the U3A flag flying in the local media. The more we can keep the public hearing and talking about U3A the more we will prosper.

Perhaps the revelation of our first Committee has been the work of our Webmaster Terry Marter. The website he has produced, and maintains, is the envy of every other U3A in the state, as is the ad you can't miss at the Chaffey Theatre. What you don't see is the comprehensive database he has developed in conjunction with Treasurer Shirley. Every organisation needs a genius—Terry is ours.

Lyn Harvey, Marian Woodberry and Anne Chase, who we co-opted following Sue Britton's retirement, round out what is an outstanding group, delivering a successful first year for U3A Riverland.

The diversity of activities, the ever-increasing participation of you in those activities and the lessons we have all learned in delivering those activities, gives me great confidence that we have an even brighter future.

24 February 2016



*An entertaining presentation by magician James Young had not only Brent Morrell amused and confused. We are not sure if Brent ever worked out what happened to those balls!*

*If you would like to learn how to perform magic tricks (perhaps to entertain the grandchildren), keep your eye open for the next course.*

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**"Resistance training is just as important as cardio. Train yourself to resist chocolate, pastries, fried foods, beer, pizza...."**

## CREATIVE WRITING FOR BEGINNERS

An enthusiastic group meets twice a month on Mondays at the Renmark Community Centre. Under Brent Morrell's facilitation they regularly write to a specific topic and enjoy listening to each other's stories. Here are a couple for you to read. Any new budding writers are very welcome to join the group.

### THE HORSES *by Jenny Sanders*

I remember the day we sold the horses. Both my father and aunt were accomplished riders but because I had ill health as a child my dream of following in their footsteps never materialised. Although I wasn't allowed to ride, I still managed to spend a lot of time around the horses.

Those were the days of the horse teams and there were eight horses to a team – at one stage we had two complete teams and my favourite thing to do was to sit on the big red gum gatepost and watch them come sweeping down the hill to the river in the late evening. They were big heavy draft horses, bred to work hard and pull great loads, but in full gallop – manes and tails flying in the wind, they were magnificent. They all had names of course and as my father and uncle called to them "Here Belle" "Here Monty" they would come forward trustingly, ears pricked, noses questing for what might be offering – gentle giants all of them.

Inevitably as mechanisation became an affordable and more viable option, the time for the horses began to run out. Our two riding horses were the first to go – and then Dad and his brother decided to buy a tractor and get rid of the teams.. It was of course the right and only decision for them but I was still a child and my reaction was one of outrage and pure

despair. Those horses had been through so much with us – each one had their own personality – they were our FRIENDS. How could anyone prefer a machine. My tears achieved nothing at all. I was far too young to understand the logistics of farming and the difficulties of trying to keep animals in two different places.

Common sense prevailed over sentiment and after several would-be buyers had come out to look over the stock, a deal was struck. On the day that the buyer came, we all went to the outback farm where the horses had been stabled overnight. They were pleased to see us, coming up expectantly to the rails and nosing gently at the men as they moved amongst them.

Almost before we knew it, they were loaded into the trucks, eyes rolling, heads tossing, in what seemed no time at all and then they were gone – the haze of dust on the road all that was left of their passing. The yard that had been jostling with big warm bodies stamping and snorting was cold and empty – their smell was all around us but the only tangible evidence was a broken halter hanging forlornly in a corner.

Something special went out of our lives that day. It was the end of an era and we never again had horses at Border Cliffs until many years later when our son brought his horse, Rival, home.

### IT'S A RAINY DAY *by Di Turton*

Who would have poisoned the old man's dog? That was the question uppermost in the minds of that small close knit community. They were aghast that it may have been one of them – someone who they trust and love. It must be a person who has no thought for the old man and what the consequences would be. Which one of them was it?

Ben is the old man's name. He is a retired farmer who saw his wife die a few years ago. His children live in various parts of the country many kilometres away. He lives in his cosy small cottage with his close and constant companion, his dog named Such. Such was a Labrador, an extremely faithful and reliable companion to Ben. He was Ben's life. They would sit for hours, sharing the many tales of Ben's past life as a farmer. Such would sit and listen, big brown eyes wide, questioning, head turning from one side to the other. He was a very patient and attentive listener and loved to hear Ben's voice telling his tales of old times.

Ben would rise early in the morning and they would share breakfast together. If Ben had to go out he would take Such with him whenever he could. On pleasant days they spent time ambling around the streets of their town or just soaking up the warm sunshine down by the river on balmy days and visiting Jean's special place in the cemetery.

Hearts were breaking in that community for Ben. Ben was devastated to lose Such.

On that particular day Ben opened the screen door to the kitchen, with its usual protest that it needed oiling, to call Such for lunch. Such did not come. Ben stepped out into the yard to see where he could be hiding. He ambled around the corner of the house and there was Such lying on the lawn, not moving. Ben called for help from his neighbour. They rushed Such to the local vet but it was too late. Such had gone to where all dogs eventually go. He was not able to say goodbye to Ben. Whoever did the deed took that small comfort away from Ben as well.

Unbeknown to Ben, the community were gathering together

and elected two people to visit the local dog's home. They felt that another dog was needed. Not that another could ever take the place of Such, but Ben would have room in his heart alongside Such for another companion. They selected a dog that they thought was suitable. If Ben did not want the new dog, then the home would take him back. He was a bitser with shaggy long ears, brown and white fur, not very handsome and a bit of a trickster. Just what was needed. Someone different to Such, but would make a good companion.

The day came when they were to deliver the dog to Ben. It was a rather wet, rainy day but it could not dampen anyone's spirits. They went to Ben's house, all very quietly and secretly and knocked on the door.

Ben was cosy and comfy sitting by the fire, dreaming into the flames of Such and the good times they had together. He was listening to the raindrops falling gently on his roof when he heard the knock. What a surprise – at the door he could see nearly everyone from his community. They were holding a rather wet and bedraggled animal out to him.

It took a moment for it to register what they had done for him. He was delighted. He took the dog inside, close to the fire, found a towel to wipe him down and keep him warm. The dog looked so lovingly at him then curled up at Ben's feet.

It was so very cosy – man and dog had total acceptance of each other. Ben thought as he drifted off into his daily Grandpa nap "I have got a lot of tales to tell. I will have to start again so that you can catch up on the stories that Such knew about. I will call you Spec because of the tiny speck on your nose and because you are a special gift to me".

This was a rainy day that Ben would never forget. His heart was full to overflowing to all his friends and now he had another warm body to love.

They never found the culprit who did that dastardly deed to Such but they did determine it was not one of them. They could all sigh with relief and get on with their lives, content again that their community was okay.