

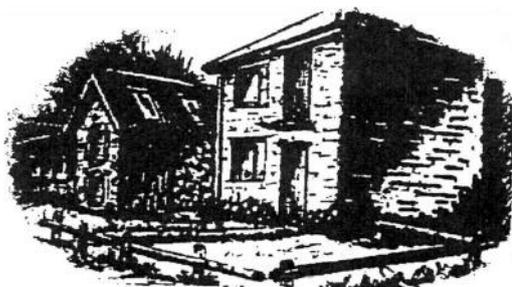
A Short History of U3A Mornington

In 1990, some six years after the first U3As opened in Melbourne, a move began to establish an independent U3A in Mornington. Frankston and Southern Peninsula already had U3As up and running and in November of that year Bobbie Moorefield chaired a meeting of 25 people in the Mornington Gardens (now Mornington Park).

It was decided to offer ten classes from the beginning of 1991. A Steering Committee was formed, with Bobbie Moorfield as Acting President. By the time classes began, U3A Mornington (U3AM) had forty-two financial members. Classes were predominantly held in people's homes but also in other venues such as the Art Gallery, Mornington Yacht Club and Currawong Community Centre (CCC). In April, President Bobbie Moorfield edited the first U3A Mornington newsletter.

An active membership drive doubled the membership by mid-1992. This increase resulted in accommodation pressures and the Mornington Peninsula Shire (MPS) offered the current two-storey office/reception space at the CCC for U3AM members' exclusive use.

By 1995 classes were being held in the Loft above the Office, in the Art Room (now the Music Room) and the CCC Hall. In December, ninety members gathered in the Hall at CCC to celebrate the fifth birthday of U3AM.



By 1997, membership had increased to 162 with 38 courses were on offer. During the year, a pencil-sketch letterhead was designed and was used for many years as the masthead.

Computer classes were offered for the first time in 2000 using donated equipment and in 2001 the new U3AM Theatre Group presented its inaugural productions; a Cabaret in August and a Christmas Pantomime in December. This group continued to be active for several years. Also in that year the Committee of Management decided there would be four newsletters published each year. The Newsletter was tentatively called the *The Tanti Tattler* and in 2003 was renamed to its current *Four Seasons*.

By 2003, fifty classes were on offer to almost 500 members. Tragedy struck on February 21 when the CCC Hall was burnt to the ground. After consideration of a range of alternatives MPS decided to rebuild the Hall. Despite many frustrating delays the new Hall was finally completed and officially opened in October 2006.



In 2005 the U3AM Choir began meeting and gave its first public performance at an end of year recital at St Mark's Uniting Church Hall in Mornington. The choir has operated continuously since inception, initially under the baton of founding director Warwick Taylor until his death in 2016, and currently directed by Heather Bird.



By 2007, with sixty-five courses on offer, accommodation pressures again surfaced and the Committee of Management began to plan for the purchase and installation of a portable classroom on the CCC site. This became a protracted and frustrating process. The portable finally arrived in 2008. However, it took another year to complete the modifications required to permit occupancy.

During 2008, the Office moved to the upstairs Loft which freed up the downstairs area for Reception. In that year, rent payable to MPS increased substantially and necessitated a significant membership fee increase. The high rent issues continued until 2015, when a rental agreement was negotiated between U3AM and MPS.

By 2010 the computer age had arrived at U3AM with a website and email address, and the thriving Computer Department was providing IT for both class and office administration. MPS announced plans to refurbish the Stables, mindful of the heritage overlay. The refurbishment was completed by the middle of 2012 but created huge accommodation issues in the interim.

In September 2011 U3AM celebrated its 21st Birthday with a full-day of exhibitions, demonstrations and many fun activities at the Peninsula Community Theatre in Mornington.

In 2013, U3AM developed an on-line enrolment system and data base in conjunction with a private provider. This system was successfully implemented at U3AM and became U-MAS (U3A Membership System) the system recommended by U3A Network Victoria and now adopted by many U3As in Victoria and interstate.



In 2014, U3AM together with the U3As of Hastings and Southern Peninsula were jointly awarded The Order of Australia for services to the community of the Peninsula. Membership at U3AM exceeded 1000 and there were more than 200 courses on offer. An intergenerational program between members of U3AM and students at various local primary, secondary and tertiary schools and universities commenced and has continued to thrive.



In 2015 the inaugural Celebration of Tai Chi was held at the Peninsula Community Theatre. By this time U3AM had become the biggest provider of tai chi on the peninsula. Also during 2015, U3AM together with U3A Frankston and other Peninsula U3As sponsored a series of dialogues on healthy ageing with Monash University. In the summer of 2015-16 a summer program was offered for the first time and members embraced the opportunity to be involved in a range of events over this time. This program has continued to grow with over 22 courses being offered over the summer of 2017-18.

2016 was a year of celebration of 25 years of friendship and learning at U3AM. A number of events were planned and an updated history of the organisation, *Shelbourne to Currawong*, was published.

In 2018, with membership at over 1100, and space at a premium, MPS granted U3AM sole occupancy of the Stables during weekdays, in addition to sole occupancy currently enjoyed in Music Room, Annex, Portable and Office. U3AM also enjoys considerable but, not exclusive, use of the CCC hall.

Over the years, U3A Mornington has become a vibrant learning community and a strong social focus for the growing numbers of retired and semi-retired people in the Mornington area and across the peninsula.