

Appendix 1 to Annual Review 2024-25



Interest Group Review 2024/25

The u3a is a nationwide organization which encourages and enables those who have retired from full-time work to share their knowledge, skills, interest and experience, and to promote the values of lifelong learning.

In Falkirk & District u3a Interest Groups, learning is for fun and members choose to follow an interest together.

Each interest group decides on its subject matter, when and where it meets, and how it operates.

Groups generally meet every two to four weeks in a local venue or in a member's house.

Full and current information and contact details on each group is on our website: look up <https://falkirku3a.uk/>

Coffee Morning.



Coffee Morning. This friendly group meets every two weeks throughout the year; our current venue is The Nutmeg Café within the grounds of Galaxy Sports Little Kerse, Polmont. The group is open to all and is particularly good, relaxed way for new members to meet people. Also, we occasionally have a special outing, our Christmas lunch was a great success. We are a drop-in group; you are not obliged to come every week! For more information contact Susan Crisp - email: coffeemorning@falkirk3a.uk

Computing for the Third Age



The Computer Group has not been meeting this year but the Organizer supports where possible. Alternatively members are referred to the Scottish Seniors Computer Club where help is available.

Current Affairs

Membership has changed throughout the year but we have retained our core number of 10 participants. Average attendance per meeting is 8 people. We meet fortnightly in Tesco, Redding Community Room which we find suits our purpose well. The group discuss varied topics including international, national and local news. Opinions between members do often vary depending upon political or religious views held but respect for alternative opinions is maintained. Other subjects arise from individual members' personal interests and can include sport (chiefly football and tennis), local restaurants/hotels, health, travel, books, theatre/TV/radio, education and transport. We enjoy learning from each other. The group has chosen to continue meeting throughout the summer months.



Dinner Group

u3a Dinner Group



The Dinner Group (currently oversubscribed) continues to meet on the last Wednesday of each month, for a pleasant evening of good food and conversation. Group members suggest the venues and the group organizer co-ordinates and books a table (meals are paid for individually). Restaurants visited offer a variety of cuisine – Scottish, Italian, Indian, and Greek. Recent venues include:

- Ciro's, Glenbervie, Larbert
- Chianti, Beancross
- Croft and Creel, Falkirk
- Greek Theory, Falkirk
- Mango, Longcroft
- Corbie Inn, Bo'ness
- Cook's, Grangemouth
- Park Hotel, Falkirk
- Bar Leo, Linlithgow
- The Oxbang, Grangemouth

Family History



The group held monthly meetings at Klondyke Garden Centre Restaurant in Polmont. All members participated in the discussions on diverse topics chosen by the group. Topics included using newspapers to find information on the lives of our ancestors, researching Scotland's People website to find out about historical wills & testaments, using census records to find those working at the 'big hoose' as a domestic servant, and looking at death records to see the effects of Tuberculosis on a family in the past.

Film Club



Over the course of the 2024/25 session the group met in the Community Room in Morrisons Supermarket, Falkirk on the second last Friday of each month. Unfortunately, two screenings had to be cancelled at late notice, firstly because of Storm Eowyn in January and in March due to a mix-up with the room booking when we had to settle for a coffee and chat in Morrisons Café.

There were around 60 attendances and once again the selection of films included the now obligatory Hitchcock film, on this occasion Young & Innocent from 1934, a foreign film from Denmark called The Guilty, two classic musicals That Night In Rio and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, the uplifting and tear-jerking film Hachi: A Dog's Tale, the very funny dark comedy What We Did On Our Holiday and the film adaptation of Noel Coward's play about snobbery called Relative Values.

In total 7 films have been shown and the eighth and final³ film in June is yet to be decided but will be something cheerful to get us all in holiday mode.

German

The German group has continued to meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at Klondyke Garden Centre café. We are a small but friendly group and enjoy some chat in German and in English while we have our cuppa.



We do various activities to practise and improve our German and to increase our knowledge of German-speaking countries. We have recently re-visited the topic of what we do in our free time, focusing on our TV and cinema viewing habits and our reading habits. We also like to keep up to date with what's going on in Germany and discussed the German election which took place in February, finding out about the main

Litter-picking

Our intrepid litter-picking group, facilitated by Falkirk Council Waste Management through material, insurance and associated risk assessment support, has been convening monthly since September 2024. Several pick-ups were undertaken at the Falkirk Stadium. To address a perceived on-going litter issue, Falkirk Council Waste Management was asked to consider placing additional waste bins around the Stadium periphery. Pick-ups were also undertaken near Falkirk town centre and at Westquarter. The group registered with Spring Clean Scotland 2025, which was managed by Keep Scotland Beautiful, for a one-off event at Westquarter in April. Falkirk Council Waste Management has expressed its thanks to group for the bags of waste collected.



Each litter-pick lasted about an hour and was followed by refreshments and a chat at a prearranged venue. Many thanks to the eight group members for their commitment and effort in endeavouring to keep our local environment tidy and beautiful. Special thanks to Anne for personally depositing some of the gathered litter and for her help in undertaking a preliminary check of the last two areas visited.

Local History

The Local History Group meets once a month on the second Thursday of the month at Morrisons Community Room. We meet there to plan future activities, to host visiting speakers and to share knowledge and resources. The remainder of the time, this session, has been given to guided visits to sites of local interest: Falkirk High Street, an HES (Historic Environment Scotland) Free Learning Visit to Kinneil House and a Walking Tour of Stirling Old Town.



Lunch Club



The Lunch Club was reformed in September 2024 with 15 members. We have lunched at seven different restaurants, with c11 attending each time, with a range of cuisines, including Italian, Chinese, Indian and traditional.

Whilst the cuisine is important, the social aspect is also essential, so we will be continuing using a known list of venues on a rota.

We believe the number we have is ideal, but if any member would like to join a reserve list, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Mindfulness



The group continues to meet on Zoom every alternate Friday. Meetings normally involve three to four short sessions of Mindfulness in which members are encouraged to 'stay in the now'. Between Mindfulness sessions members 'chat' on topics of interest. Members have introduced some new meditations with considerable success. There continues to be a Mindfulness session at the monthly Open meetings. A number of members have indicated that they find these sessions beneficial in helping them 'to be in the here and now.'

Photography Group

The photography group have been to a variety of venues over the year. We started with a treasure hunt in Callendar Park. Then to various venues including The Wheel, Christmas lights in Stirling, Summerlee Museum of Industrial Life, Tour of the Hippodrome cinema in Bo'ness, South Queensferry and this month to the Colzium Estate near Kilsyth which has a lovely walled garden. We also had two indoor meetings, one was a tuition where we learned some hints and tips for taking photographs. The second one we took some of our images and the other members gave constructive feedback.



We have had quite a few meetings in the rain which never deterred us from making the most of things.

Poetry Reading and Appreciation

We are ticking along nicely. Still have our original group and still enthusiastic. We recently tried 'blind reading' of presented poems i.e. No titles and no authors named until each poem was read out: gives a new perspective to the reading. We seem to be more of a Reading and Performance group now and it is working very well. One can use certain poems as a small play. All in all most successful and enjoyable.



Reading Group

Meantime awaiting organizer. Contact group coordinator for further information

Science Matters

We are a discussion group concerned with advances in Science and Technology. We meet, once a month on Zoom.

Prior to the start of this year's session some of us were invited to a workshop from a Stirling University Masters student concerning using water in old mineshafts as a source of thermal storage.

In this year's session, some of the things we have covered are:

Standards in Agriculture, megafarms or free-range, pollution of waterways, etc.

Can AI make instruction and procedure manuals obsolete?

Why solar farms when roofs of new-build housing and industrial buildings can be used?

The Scotland-England sub-sea electric power cables.

Zonal Pricing - Could our Electricity bills be adjusted by where we live?

The Japanese way of tackling food waste using fermentation.

The project to create an "Atlas" of the cell types in the human body.

We had an excellent presentation on Ancient DNA – What it can and cannot do!

Grangemouth – The Project Willow report.

Drones and robot dogs – working in high-risk environments.



Scrabble



The Scrabble Group continues to be held every alternate Wednesday in a member's home. Normally around eight people attend the group: with members split into two groups playing Scrabble on separate tables. Recently the game Upwords has been introduced. This is a kind of 3-dimensional Scrabble which members have also enjoyed playing. Games are played in a friendly, relaxed manner with just a hint of competitiveness. However, help is often given to new players and those players who are not so good at Scrabble. The Group Leader makes a regular contribution to the monthly Newsletter which includes testing readers knowledge of new words the Scrabble Group have found while playing games.

Theatre Group 1

Theatre group 1 has had a change of leadership. Elma gave up for personal reasons, and the group is now run by Fiona Stewart, and Isobel Bolger. We'd like to give Elma all our thanks for her good work. We also have a couple of new members too.



We have been to a variety of shows over the last 12 months, everything from Shakespeare to Elvis tribute acts and pantomimes. NTL is great way of seeing London productions at Cineworld and the Hippodrome. You almost feel like you are in the theatre.

We like to support local amateur groups and love going to the Barony theatre in Bo'ness and the Dobbie Hall in Larbert. In fact we are going to Boness in a couple of weeks, to see Allo Allo. Looking forward to a good laugh. The last big show was Wild Rose at the Lyceum, which was excellent, and we are in the middle of booking Miss Saigon at the playhouse later on in the year. Some of us even went to Stirling to see showwaddywaddy. (Not easy to spell but a good night). Looking forward to many more shows in the future.

Theatre Group 2



Members of our theatre group have attended a range of events over the last year. These included live theatre performances at the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh of 'The Merchant of Venice' by a New York theatre company and the premiere of a new stage musical, 'Wild Rose' set in Glasgow's country music scene and a visit to the Theatre Royal in Glasgow to see the National Theatre production of 'The Boys from the Blackstuff'.

We have also attended cinema event screenings of 'Macbeth', 'The Importance of Being Earnest', 'Jesus Christ Superstar' and 'Swan Lake' all filmed live before London audiences.

The acting and staging of these performances were of exceptional quality and well worth going to see.

Walking Group



The walking group continues to meet on the second Monday of each month at 10am. We decided, a long time ago to continue throughout the summer, even although other groups break for the summer.

We felt that, given that we often walk in cold and wet weather over the winter, it would be a shame to stop when the weather is likely to be at its best and nature is in full bloom.

The group remains healthy with around 25 members and 8 to 15 present for the majority of walks. We concentrate on areas within 10 miles of Falkirk, very occasionally venturing further.

World Events

This session, the World Events group has turned its attention to The Renaissance, which started in Italy in the 15th century. This cultural movement affected many aspects of human life, such as architecture, art, literature, mathematics, music, philosophy, politics, religion and science.

Group members have made contributions and enjoyed discussions on various areas of their choosing, such as: the causes of the Renaissance; the political situation; the voyages of discovery; political philosopher Machiavelli; Thomas More's book Utopia; the Black Death; The Medici family, the Papacy and the impact of the Renaissance. We also discussed the BBC's excellent 3-part series, The Blood and the Beauty, which brought the political turmoil of the period to life along with the beautiful artworks of artistic rivals Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and Raphael.

The group has now turned its attention to India. This is a large topic which should provide plenty of interest for the remainder of this session and for the new session.

The World Events group continues to meet on Zoom as we find this useful for presenting information to the other members of the group.