

Appendix 1 to Annual Review 2025-26



Interest Group Review 2025/26

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/>

Ten Pin Bowling



This is a popular, new group started in session 2025/26. The group meets at the Camelon Ten Pin Bowling Alley every 2nd and 3rd Monday in the month.

Group members participate in the bowling, have some refreshments if they wish, while also having the opportunity to enjoy the company of their fellow u3a members.

Cinema

The Cinema Interest Group was new for the year 2025-26. It meets once a month at Cineworld on the Central Retail Park. Group members let me know their preferences and I share these with the group. Some months one film proves very popular, other months there are many preferences. I share this information with group members so that any of them can gather in the foyer to meet up with others to see a film.



My personal favourite from this year is "I Swear". This film is a biographical drama telling the true story of John Davidson, a Scottish man living with severe Tourette's syndrome. It tells his story from childhood struggles through to finding purpose as an advocate. It is sad and funny and, ultimately, uplifting.

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 spring outing to the Scottish Owl Centre 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@falkirku3a.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.

Craft



The Craft Group are a new group this year. We meet once a month on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the group organizer's house. Numbers are restricted due to the venue, but so far we haven't had to say no to any member who wanted to come along. We've had fun with a whole lot of "makes".

In December we made macramé Santas and Xmas trees. In January we made small leather items - cable ties, zip pulls and triangular purses. In February we made magazine strip art pictures and cards. In March we did kumihimo - Japanese braiding and in April we did some basic crochet.

Current Affairs

Members meet on alternate Wednesdays from 10.30-12.30 in Tesco, Redding Community Room.

Membership presently consists of 10 people; we find this number conducive to effective discussion. The group discusses and expresses individual opinions on international, national and local news. This can range from politics to sporting events, entertainment (especially local events), cultural visits, holidays and amusing news items. We have developed a lending library based on discussion topics covered. We aim for the discussions to be light-hearted and aim to find a good news item at each meeting.



Dinner Group



The Dinner Club continues to meet on the last Wednesday of the month, for a pleasant evening of good food and conversation. The group now numbers 21 and there is a waiting list. Club members suggest the venues and the group organizer books the tables (we now require two for ease of access!). Venues have to agree that meals can be paid for individually (which has been refused a couple of times). Restaurants visited during the last year offer a variety of cuisine - Scottish, Italian, Indian - including:

Ciro's, Glenbervie, Larbert / Chianti, Beancross / Mango, Longcroft / Mountview, Laurieston / Corbie Inn, Bo'ness / Cook's, Grangemouth / Park Hotel, Falkirk / The Oxbang, Grangemouth

Family History



We had monthly meetings in Klondyke Garden Centre with between 6 and 10 members attending.

The season has included

- a look at a lady from Callender who was sighted as a witch during WW1,
- the demonstration in Falkirk of the first tv by John Logie Baird ,
- looking at National Library of Scotland (NLS) maps both historical and modern as an aid to family history research.
- Christmas cards throughout the last century also gave an interesting morning's discussion.

There was always interesting and lively discussion on all topics on the agenda.

Film Club



The group has proved to be very popular with 21 signing up at Registration Day in September. Unfortunately, there is a limit of 15 people allowed in the Community Room at Morrison's however with an average attendance of 11 or 12 I have not had to disappoint anyone so far.

A carefully selected film is shown on the second last Friday of each month and once again the selection of films included a much-anticipated Hitchcock film, on this occasion the classic 39 Steps starring Robert Donat. Other films have included Dean Spanley, a surreal film exploring the relationships between father and son and master and dog, which was recommended by one of our members, The Illusionist, a tender and moving animation based on a Jacques Tati screenplay, set mostly in Edinburgh, Letter From An Unknown Woman, a highly acclaimed film set in Vienna in early 1900s with Joan Fontaine giving one of her finest ever performances alongside debonair actor Louis Jourdan. The most up to date film shown was The Penguin Lessons which is a wonderful adaptation of the true story of Tom Michell, played by Steve Coogan, who spent time as an English teacher at an exclusive boys college in Argentina at the start of the Military Coup in 1976 and how he came to adopt a penguin named Juan Salvador who became an inspiration to everyone who had the good fortune to meet him. Two more films are scheduled and without giving too much away one will be fairly recent and the other from 1960.

German



The German Group continues to meet twice a month in Klondyke's café/restaurant. This may seem to be an odd choice of venue for a language group, but the group members like the coffee and cakes there and the staff try to provide accommodation in the quiet room if they can.

The group continues to have some chat in German and also in English on a variety of topics. German is practised using a variety of tasks including short games, conversation practice, listening tasks, reading tasks and grammatical recap and extension tasks.

Litter-picking

The Litter-Picking group has not met this session as the group organizer has been recovering from surgery and none of the other members of the group felt able to take over the role.



Local History

The Local History Group did not have a promising start to the session as the new Organizer, for personal reasons, was unable to take on the role. But, in the event, group members worked collaboratively to organise eight sessions altogether. Two of these were planning meetings which led to two visits and two talks, listed below. We celebrated Christmas with a Show and Tell activity where group members brought in an object related to a Local History theme with a Falkirk connection and spoke about it to the group. This generated lively conversation.

One of our visits to Larbert Old Parish Church Graveyard was cancelled due to poor weather conditions and low attendance.

Planning meetings serve to establish collaboratively a programme of activities for the session allowing and encouraging everybody to contribute to the resulting schedule.

Whilst visits were to external venues, meetings and talks took place at Morrison's Community Room, which is free of charge. The regular meeting time was 3.00 pm on the second Thursday of the month during the u3a annual session September to June. Visits were arranged as convenient to the hosts but we were able to keep them to the usual Thursday



Talks

Archaeological work in the Falkirk area, speaker Geoff Bailey

Falkirk Street Names, speaker Ian Scott

Visits

*Leighton Library, Dunblane (lead by a local volunteer) and Dunblane Cathedral
(leader from HES)*

Falkirk Archive, Callendar House, hosted by Carly Manson, Archivist

We were privileged to have expert, entertaining speakers on every occasion.

In order to continue its activity the Local History group will need a new Organizer for the coming 2026/27 session.

Lunch Club



The Lunch Group meets on the second Tuesday of each month in a range of locations across the Falkirk area.

We have 16 members and most lunches are attended by c12 members. This season we have visited venues with traditional cuisines.

Mindfulness



The group continues to meet on Zoom every other Friday. Meetings usually involve three short sessions of Mindfulness in which members are encouraged to 'stay in the now.' In between the Mindfulness sessions members talk about topics of interest. New meditation techniques have been introduced to help members relax and stay focussed on the present. There continues to be a Mindfulness session at the monthly Open Meetings. A number of members have indicated how much they enjoy these sessions in spite of the uncomfortable seats.

Photography Group

The photography Group has increased this year to 13 members with an average attendance at meetings of 6 to 8. Our field visits this year included Falkirk Town Centre, Edinburgh Christmas Markets, Bridge of Allan, Kincardine on Forth, Glasgow Botanical Gardens and Kinneil Estate. We also had 3 meetings in Morrison's Community Room to view our Town Centre photos, discuss composition rules and investigate black and white photography.

We upload a selection of these photographs onto our Flickr page, and they can be viewed by anyone on Flickr using the link <https://www.flickr.com/photos/198298700@N04/> We have over 500 photos on that site.



Poetry Reading and Appreciation



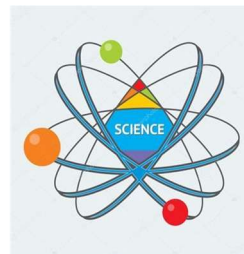
Poetry Group is enthusiastically flourishing. Many topics have been covered as they have arisen during our 'readings' and discussions. It has been 'uplifting' to listen to the many poetry memories of our members, with emphasis on 'listening' as we believe that poems should be read aloud to appreciate them fully. We are hoping to continue to expand in the next season.

Reading Group

Meantime awaiting organizer. Contact group coordinator for further information

Science Matters

The Group consists of seven members who meet on Zoom for what is essentially a chat about developments in Science & Technology. There is a broad range of expertise in the group in the fields of chemistry, mathematics, life sciences and information technology.



Subjects covered include –

- Climate Change
- Agriculture
- Power Generation and Transmission
- Computers and AI
- Medicine
- Automation and Robots
- Transport
- Environment
- Geology

Scottish Country Dancing



It has been an interesting first year linking the u3a with the local branch of the RSCDS (Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society), with a number of u3a members trying our Thursday evening and Friday afternoon sessions. We hope to start beginner's classes in the autumn so watch this space for updates.

Please remember that this group is open to non-u3a members, so if any friends or family would like to come along I can be contacted for details.

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. 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 Organizer 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

The theatre group is still getting out and about. It's been mainly supporting local venues and amateur groups this year with a few concerts thrown in. We have been to the Barony Theatre in Boness, to see Brassed Off, which was excellent. We've had a few musical plays in the Albert Hall in Stirling, based on life in Glasgow and which were very funny. We also went there to see Eddi Reader, who was brilliant and so funny too. We've had many visits to Grangemouth town hall and the Dobbie Hall in Larbert, and just recently saw the excellent We Will Rock You there. And not forgetting the National Theatre Live performances at Cineworld, the most memorable being The Audience with Helen Mirren playing the Queen meeting all her Prime Ministers. Unfortunately the group is full, and there is a big waiting list, however if anyone wants to start a theatre group 2, we can certainly help them get started.



Walking Group



The walking group continues successfully. We walk throughout the year as nature is often at its best, when the other groups are on their recess. There are about 30 members and most walks have 8 to 14 members as people dip in and out. We do mainly Falkirk District and our outlying walks are all within 20 miles of Falkirk, places like South Queensferry, Culross and Gartmorn Dam in Alloa.

Charlie Colliar and I do most of the arrangements but David and Amanda Miller assess and lead walks in the Kilsyth area. We intend to continue as before.

Historical Events and their Legacy



This group continues to meet on Zoom which suits members who live further afield or who might have difficulties in travelling to a venue.

The focus for this session has been India, and members gave presentations and took part in talks and discussions on subjects, such as:

- the ancient history of the area, including the Mughal Empire
- how the East India Company gained control
- the pros and cons of the British Raj
- Partition
- Indian Independence

- The main beliefs of the religions of India
- The legacy of Christianity
- (New) Delhi's development, importance and challenges

The group has now turned its attention to China. It has already examined the country's Belt and Road Initiative and is now planning a series of investigations based around a timeline of important people and events in the country's history.