



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



April 2026

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FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

A warm welcome to the April 2026 edition of the Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter. Spring has sprung so to speak, although you might not think so with some of the weather we have had lately. It's great to see all the new life dawning. I personally like the rows of daffodils in gardens and along pathways. The only downside of Spring coming as far as I am concerned is that I am going to have to start cutting my lawns: rain permitting.

A big thank you to Andy Crisp for his fascinating talk entitled *Nostalgia, It's Not What it Used to Be*. Andy certainly got the audience thinking about things from the past: especially sweeties. I can confirm that the word 'penguin' likely originates from the Welsh phrase pen gwyn which means 'white head.'

The u3a have produced a short film, in a cartoon format, promoting some of the activities and benefits of being an u3a member. It is an interesting watch and takes only 1 minute and 25 seconds to view. You can find the film by clicking on the following link: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>. I think the film provides further evidence of how the u3a is pushing to increase membership numbers to 500,000 by 2028.

U3a have advised that tickets for the u3a Festival 26 cost £18 a day, or £50 for a three-day ticket. The festival starts at 11am on Wednesday, 1 July and ends at 3pm on Friday, 3 July. The festival is to be opened by the comedian Johnny Ball, father of Zoe Ball. Tickets are selling fast so it is recommended that those interested in going book soon to avoid disappointment. **Three-day tickets, and day tickets for Wednesday 1 and Thursday 2 July have now sold out. Tickets for Friday 3 July are still available.** Further information can be found at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/festival-2026>.

Have you ever thought of learning a musical instrument but never quite found the time to do it? U3a member and subject adviser, Val, gives you her top tips and advice on learning a new musical instrument if you click on the following link: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>. You will be pleasantly surprised by the number of benefits you will find from learning to play a musical instrument.

I wish you all a happy and relaxing April and May.

Peter Kahan

A mindfulness thought

'Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time.'

Jon Kabat-Zin, 2005

Interest Group Section

Groups Report

(By Dorothy Ferrie)

In the March Newsletter we had updates from the Film Group, the Local History Group and the Scrabble Club, and I would encourage any Group Organisers who have not submitted an update this session to send some information, however brief, to John Giovanacci for the May Newsletter, so that members can get an idea of what is happening in the groups. The deadline for submissions to John is always the 12th of the month.

Now that I have encouraged other Group Organisers to submit reports about their groups, I'd better do it myself by letting you know what is happening in the German Group, which I run, and the World History Group, which I do some admin for. Here goes . . .

German Group

We continue to be a small band of diehards who 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 have been really good in trying to accommodate us in the quiet room if they can. We continue to have some chat in German and also in English on a variety of topics. We practise our German using a variety of tasks including short games, conversation practice, listening tasks, reading tasks and grammatical recap and extension tasks.

Here's photos of us at Christmas. I proposed using AI to change the photo so that we would all appear in German traditional costume, but I think everyone is secretly pleased that I haven't got round to trying to do it yet. They shouldn't get too complacent; I might manage it over the summer when I have more time!



World History and its 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.

Our focus this session has been India. Did you know that from medieval times India was the world leader in manufacturing, and by the 18th century, India was an advanced civilisation and the world's largest economy, producing 25% of the world's industrial output.

We've had presentations, 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

For those who are happy to do a little bit of research, this is a very interesting and informative group to join.

Scrabble Club

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you get on with the March quiz challenge 'How have the meanings of the words Silly and Flux changed over time?' Did you find answers for the two words? Don't worry if you were unable to find the answers as these are given below taken from chatgpt:

Silly

In Old English, *sælig* (later spelled *seely* or *sely*) meant "happy," "fortunate," or "blessed." It came from the same Germanic root as the modern German word *selig*, which still means "blessed." Over time, the meaning of *silly* shifted through a series of stages:

1. Old English (before 1000): *Sælig* – blessed, happy, prosperous.
2. Middle English (c. 1200s): *Sely* – innocent, holy, or pitiable.
3. Early Modern English (1500s–1600s): came to mean weak, simple, or naïve.
4. Modern English (by 1700s): foolish, lacking good sense – the meaning we use today.

Flux

The word "**flux**" comes from Latin and originally meant "**a flow**" or "**a flowing**." It derives from the Latin verb *fluere*, meaning "**to flow**."

In its earliest uses in English (from the 14th–15th centuries), "flux" referred quite literally to **the act of flowing or continuous movement**, especially of liquids. Over time, it developed several related meanings:

- **Medical (historical):** an abnormal discharge of fluid from the body (e.g., "the flux" for dysentery).
- **General sense:** continuous change or instability (this is the modern figurative meaning—"in a state of flux").
- **Science:** the rate of flow of something (like heat, energy, or particles).

So, the **core original meaning** is simply:
"**a flow**" or "**the act of flowing**."

Your next word challenge

Here are two quiz questions you might like to try in April/May.

1. How many points does the word 'words' add up to in scrabble?
2. Which word, the longest to use all five vowels in order exactly once, means one who doesn't indulge in excesses?

Answers in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Axe Throwing

(By Jan Livingstone)

This is your chance to try out something new and exciting. I have added some details about this activity which takes place in Stirling, within The Arcade, on King Street.

<https://www.gameofthrowing.co.uk/game-of-throwing-stirling#book-stirling>



75-minute session Wednesday – Sunday

Adult - £25

Includes up to 15-minute training from our dedicated Axemaster & 60+ minutes throw time in the lanes.

At present there is no set date, but I was thinking of an early afternoon either later this month, May or June if available. I know people have holidays booked and I do not want to disrupt other activities you may be involved with but if anyone is interested, please contact me by email at jmlqurt@gmail.com

Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

Did you manage to solve the maths teasers in the March 2026 Newsletter? Don't be concerned if you were not able to solve the questions as they are restated here together with their solutions.

Question 1

Simplify the following expression without using a calculator:

$$\frac{8^4}{4^8}$$

Solution

This is a question that involves indices: something that a lot of pupils find difficult. You do have to remember your laws of indices. To begin, the problem becomes simpler if we convert the 8 to 2^3 and 4 to 2^2 as shown below.

$$\frac{(2^3)^4}{(2^2)^8}$$

This expression simplifies as follows:

$$\frac{2^{12}}{2^{16}}$$

The expression simplifies further to

$$\frac{1}{2^4} = \frac{1}{16}$$

Question 2

The following question is taken from the 2025 SQA National Qualifications 5 Applications of Mathematics Paper 2 (Calculator Paper).

A Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated using mass in kilograms and height in metres. It is calculated using the formula:

$$BMI = \frac{mass}{height^2}$$

A patient's mass is 93.5 kilograms and their height is 182 centimetres. Calculate the BMI of the patient.

Solution

This question simply involves substituting the numbers into the formula. However, it should be noted that the height is measured in metres so we must convert the 182 cm to metres ($182/100 = 1.82$ m).

Thus, the formula becomes

$$BMI = \frac{93.5}{1.82^2} = \frac{93.5}{3.31} = \mathbf{28.25}$$

As I understand it, a BMI of 28.25 is considered overweight. It is in the range 25 – 29.9, indicating a weight that is higher than the healthy range (18.5 – 24.9).

April Maths Teasers

Here are another couple of maths teasers for you to try in April/May.

Question 1

Find b^2 given the following equations:

$$\begin{aligned} a^2 &= 49 \\ a + b &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

Hint: there are two answers to this question.

Question 2

This Question is taken from the 2025 National Qualification 5 Mathematics Paper 2 (Calculator Paper).

Solve the following equation for x

$$\frac{5x + 1}{2} = \frac{4x}{3} + 1$$

Gardening Tips for Spring

(By The Gardening Guru)

Roadsides and gardens are now awash with daffodils. Their bright shades of yellow certainly brighten everyone up. I also have lots of hyacinths flowering in white, pink, lilac and blue in the garden. No, I didn't go out in the autumn and spend a fortune on new bulbs. Don't throw out your indoor hyacinth bulbs when the flowers are over. Plant them in the garden and you too can have a colourful and scented display in April next year in your garden.

The mowing season has started. Don't cut the grass too short for its first cut. Just take off enough to tidy it. Look for any bare patches and reseed but make sure you protect the area from birds.

Lots to see and buy in the Garden Centres and online now. But, be warned, here in the Falkirk area, we can still have heavy frosts which can kill off tender plants. Leave buying these until next month.

A Time To Talk

(By Robert Frost 1874-1963)

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, What is it?
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.

