



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



January 2025

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

On behalf of the Falkirk and District u3a trustees I would like to wish all our members and their families a belated happy and healthy New Year.

Have you made any resolutions for the New Year? I know a lot of people don't bother with making any resolutions, or if they do, break them before the end of January. However, if you have made a resolution, I would like to wish you every success with keeping it. I have made one resolution for 2025, and that is to play the online game Wordle every day. The reason for making this resolution is to improve my Scrabble skills, which as the members of the Scrabble Club would tell you, are rather poor. I don't think playing Wordle daily will do much to improve my Scrabble skills, but 'any port in a storm' as they say.

I have been exploring the u3a Trust website recently and was amazed by all the things the website offers. One of the features that particularly caught my eye was the monthly Radio Podcasts. These radio podcast started in 2020, and feature some of the amazing things that happen across the u3a movement. Each podcast is created by a team of u3a members who all have radio experience. The Podcasts include interviews with members, interest group leaders, trustees, national volunteers and subject advisers.

The entire series is available on the **u3a YouTube Channel**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheU3a>

Since January 2022, the podcasts are now available on the following platforms:

[Spotify](#)

[Google Podcasts](#) (sign in required)

[Apple Podcasts](#)

Why not give the podcast a listen?

As mentioned at the December 2024 and January 2025 Open meetings we are still looking for a member who has experience in Health and Safety and who can help the trustees implement the new u3a Health and Safety Policy. If you have this experience and are willing to help please contact me at chair@falkirku3a.uk.

In conclusion, I hope you keep warm and safe in January and February 2025 and enjoy the days getting steadily lighter and lighter, and, hopefully, some plants flowering.

Peter Kahan

Interest Group News

Scrabble Club

Here are the meanings of the 6 words in the December 2024 Newsletter taken from the Collins English Dictionary.

gad - to go out in search of pleasure, esp. in an aimless manner; gallivant

nome - any of the former provinces of modern Greece; nomarchy or administrative division of ancient Egypt

nomen - an ancient Roman's second name, designating the person's gens or clan

oba - (in W Africa) a Yoruba chief or ruler

salade - a light round helmet extending over the back of the neck; replaced the basinet in the 15th century

vav - the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (v) transliterated as v or w

In the December Newsletter it was reported that the Oxford University Press had named its word of the year as **'brain rot'**. But what exactly is brain rot? What are the symptoms? And perhaps most importantly, can it be cured?

The Oxford University definition of brain rot is as follows:

Supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as a result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content) considered to be trivial or unchallenging. Also: something characterized as likely to lead to such deterioration.

Symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Confusion or disorientation
- Mood swings and personality changes
- Trouble with motor skills and coordination

Cure

As brain rot is not a disease there is no need for a cure. However, less time spent on low quality, trivial materials on a computer and/or on social media will reduce its effects. Engaging with more mentally stimulating and intellectually challenging learning materials will also help.

Why not investigate the meanings of the following new 2025 words this month. The meaning of these words will be given in next month's newsletter.

- *banchan*
- *cachumber*
- *floof*
- *grammable*
- *hoglet*

Film Group

After watching **Hachi: A Dog's Tale**, which pulled at the heartstrings of the members who attended just before Christmas, it's time for something completely different as I will be showing a Foreign Language film called **The Guilty**. It's a tense thriller from Denmark about a police officer assigned alarm dispatch duty who enters a race against time when he answers an emergency call from a kidnapped woman.

John Giovanacci

Maths Teaser

I hope you managed to find a little time to attempt the two maths teaser questions in the December Newsletter, but if you did not, here is a restatement of the problems and the solutions to both.

Problems

Question 1

Moirá buys 4 mangoes and 3 apples at a fruit shop.
The total cost is £4.25.

(a) Write down an equation to illustrate this information.

Solution

Let m = cost of a mango and a = the cost of an apple. Then the equation is as follows:

$$4m + 3a = 4.25$$

Sami buys 5 mangoes and 2 apples in the same fruit shop.
The total cost is £4.70.

(b) Write down an equation to illustrate this information.

Solution

The equation is as follows:

$$5m + 2a = 4.70$$

(c) Calculate, algebraically, the cost of a mango and the cost of an apple.

Solution

In the following solution I have converted £4.25 and £4.70 into the corresponding pence (425p and 470p) to make the arithmetic a little bit more straightforward.

$$4m + 3a = 425 \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

$$5m + 2a = 470 \quad \text{Equation 2}$$

I will eliminate the 'a' from the equations by multiplying Equation 1 by 2 and Equation 2 by 3. Thus, the equations become

$$8m + 6a = 850 \quad \text{Equation 3}$$

$$15m + 6a = 1410 \quad \text{Equation 4}$$

Subtracting Equation 4 from Equation 3 gives the following:

$$-7m = -560$$

Or

$$m = -\frac{560}{-7} = 80p$$

Substituting the 80p back into Equation 1 gives the following:

$$4 \times 80 + 3a = 425$$

Or

$$320 + 3a = 425 \text{ or } 3a = 425 - 320$$

Thus

$$3a = 105 \text{ or } a = \frac{105}{3} = 35p$$

So, a mango costs 80p and an apple 35p.

Question 2

Solve the following equation for s.

$$16^{2-s^2} = \frac{1}{2}$$

Hint: remember that 16 can be represented as 2^4

Solution

We will change the 16 into 2^4 and $\frac{1}{2}$ into 2^{-1} . Thus, the equation becomes

$$(2^4)^{2-s^2} = 2^{-1}$$

Or

$$2^{8-4s^2} = 2^{-1}$$

For this equation to be true $8 - 4s^2 = -1$

Or

$$4s^2 = 9 \text{ or } s^2 = \frac{9}{4}$$

Or

$$s = +/\!-\frac{3}{2}$$

This month's Maths Teasers

You may be interested to know that I have been gathering lots of new maths problems for you to try this year. Here are two questions for you to solve. Answers in next month's Newsletter.

Question 1

What are the next three numbers in the following sequence of numbers?

4, 6, 9, 6, 14, 6, ?, ?, ?

Question 2

Jim can dig a hole in 50 minutes. Alan can dig the same hole in 40 minutes. How long will it take to dig the hole if they work together?

- a) 45 minutes
- b) 32.7 minutes
- c) 22.2 minutes
- d) 16.5 minutes

You must justify your answer.

Gardening Guru

This is the month to look forward to the next growing season. Many of the seed merchants now have their catalogues online rather than sending out paper catalogues. Either way, it is time to browse the seed catalogues in the warmth of your home while dreaming of the colourful and floriferous show you will have in the flower garden or the prize-winning vegetables in your vegetable patch this year. Enjoy the process.

Hamamelis, commonly known as witch hazel, is now beginning to flower. The flowers are most commonly yellow but can also be orange or red. Snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils are beginning to peep through the soil, but it will be some time before we see their flowers. However, if we have a mild spell you can tidy up the flower beds. Cut down old foliage on perennials to ground level and this is a great time to plant bare rooted trees, roses, fruit bushes and hedges.

And.... don't forget to feed the birds.

Robert Burns

Born: January 25, 1759 **Died:** July 21, 1796 (aged 37)

Birthplace: Alloway, Scotland

Star Sign: Aquarius

Robert Burns is Scotland's favourite poet and perhaps its most famous son.

Burns' poetry was first published in 1786, his volume "Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect" brought him wide acclaim.

Burns spent the last ten years of his life collecting, revising and writing traditional Scottish songs, and it is with these songs that most of his fame lies.

Burns night is now celebrated through the world on the poet's birthday 25th January.

