



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



March 2026

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FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

A warm welcome to the March 2026 edition of the Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter. I was determined not to start these comments by writing about the weather. After all you don't need me to tell you about the wet, miserable weather we have been having since the beginning of the year. On the bright side Spring is here and we can only hope that the weather improves in the new season.

Are you planning to go to the u3a in Scotland Spring Event on Thursday, 26th March? The agenda looks very interesting especially if you are interested in theatrical matters. From a personal perspective I think the talk on The RRS Sir David Attenborough, the UK's new state-of-the-art polar research ship looks really interesting. Over the next 30-years this ship will keep Britain at the forefront of research in the Arctic and Antarctic which will help to enhance knowledge and understanding of global climate change. You may have heard of this ship by its proposed name of Boaty McBoatface.

At the time of writing the programme for the u3a Festival 2026 (1st – 3rd July) is still to be finalised but some details have become available of the events that will be taking place. The events include the following: pickleball or pétanque* (see info about this below), table tennis, and walking football. There will be interesting talks on such subjects as the Bayeux Tapestry and Egyptology. There will also be plenty of time to socialise with dances, quizzes, games and guided daytime walks around the beautiful city of York.

We have also received an update on the u3a in Scotland 2026 Summer School (24th – 26th August). The following three courses have proved very popular and are now full: Exploring Artificial Intelligence, the Picts and Positive Psychology. At the time of writing the other three courses still have some places as follows: Creative Craft (Sashiko Embroidery) has 3, BSL has 4 and Photography has 6.

May I wish you all a happy and healthy Spring.

Peter Kahan

*Pétanque

In case you do not know what pétanque is, here is an AI description of the game 'Pétanque is a French boules sport where the objective is to throw hollow metal balls (boules) as close as possible to a small wooden target ball called a **jack** or **cochonnet**. Its name comes from the Provençal expression *pè tancat*, meaning "**feet planted**," referring to the rule that players must stand with both feet inside a small circle on the ground when throwing.

A mindfulness thought

"Your calm mind is the ultimate weapon against your challenges. So, relax."

Bryant McGill

THE INTERVIEW

In this month's interview George Love gives us his answers to the same, now regular, 6 questions about himself. George is our tech expert who makes sure all equipment is working at the Open Meetings



1. What was your first job and how much were you paid?

My first 'real' job was on a Saturday working in a local music shop in Bathgate. For this, I received the princely sum of 30/- (£1.50). The shop sold musical instruments and records.

My first full time job was in the laboratory of a local factory which made electrical components. I later went to college to study building and construction.

2. What is your favourite place to visit in Scotland?

I have worked on construction sites in various parts of Scotland. While working in the Dingwall – Invergordon area, Izzy and I rented a cottage in the Black Isle village of Avoch for 6 months. We liked the area so much, we went back there to get married in the registry office in Fortrose, while staying in a hotel in Cromarty. We have returned to the hotel several times.

3. If you were alone on a desert island, what piece of music and what book would you like to have with you?

I find this almost impossible to answer as I cannot rank one piece of music against the other, but I enjoy the variety of it all. I like to have music in the background throughout the day but will stop to listen if something "tasty" is being played.

My music collection is quite large, consisting of both Audio (LPs, cassette tapes, CDs, etc) and Video (VHS tapes and DVDs). I actually put together a computer in order to digitise my collection and play it through my TV and/or stereo system. While I know some classical pieces, I enjoy mostly "Rock and Pop" music, particularly the singer/songwriters. You will find such names as Sandy Denny, Cat Stevens, Jackson Browne, Harry Chapin and Leonard Cohen in there, as well as a lot of Neil Young.

I have not been a great book reader as I have grown older, but I still enjoy the occasional detective story from the likes of Raymond Chandler, Ian Rankin and Andrea Camilleri, or having a good chuckle by re-reading one of the "Jeeves and Wooster" stories.

4. Do you have any pets? Have you ever had any unusual ones?

I had a terrier cross called "Tramp" for all of my teenage years and enjoyed long walks with him through the Bathgate hills in the area of the "Knock" Hill and Cairnpapple.

5. Tell us about one of your hobbies.

I have a wide variety of interests and, while listening to music, I like working with my hands by doing some woodwork or DIY project. It has been my privilege over the years to meet some highly skilled individuals which have included car mechanics, welders and a number of joiners. While admiring the skills that they practice so effortlessly, I sometimes look on my own efforts with heavy criticism. However, I enjoy trying.

6. Share something about yourself that not many people know.

I really do not consider myself an expert on anything. I would say that history, science and music are right up there but, as I said, I have a wide range of interests. This has sometimes led to me being mistakenly considered something of an authority on a number of subjects. There is a lot of “stuff” that rolls around in my head (which anyone is welcome to if I can find it) and I still think I have a sense of curiosity. Does this sound like why I joined the u3a???

Interest Group Section

Film Group

(By John Giovanacci)

After the 1971 ‘edge of your seat’ thriller **Duel** last month, I’ve selected a much more recent film to show later this month. I saw **The Penguin Lessons** at the cinema a year ago and afterwards thought to myself that this is a film I must show to the Film Group. It’s based on the memoirs of Tom Michell, played by Steve Coogan, who is a world-weary English teacher who gets a job at a boy’s private school in Argentina in 1976. The film is set against the backdrop of the Military Coup which adds another dimension to the film, but the main theme is how Tom reluctantly ends up with a penguin and how the penguin affects the lives of so many. It’s a truly delightful film, you’ll laugh and yes, you will cry but the film is summed up perfectly near the end when Tom says a line which I won’t share as I don’t want to spoil it for those who will be lucky enough to watch it with me and anyone else who hasn’t seen this film.

Local History Group

(By Jennifer Kightley)

In February the Local History Group visited the Falkirk Archive at Callendar House where Carly Manson, the archivist, began her presentation by giving us an overview of the role of the town archive. She then proceeded to show, with the help of documents, photographs, maps, artworks, everyday objects and much more, how archives help us to understand and document many aspects of daily life as well as major events in society.

Four themes were explored in the presentation: first *place, landscape and change*, then *work, industry and everyday life*, followed by *memory, belief and cultural attitudes*, and finally *what archives do*.

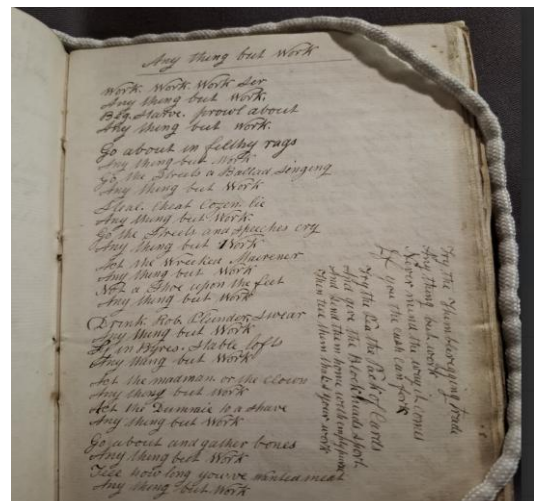
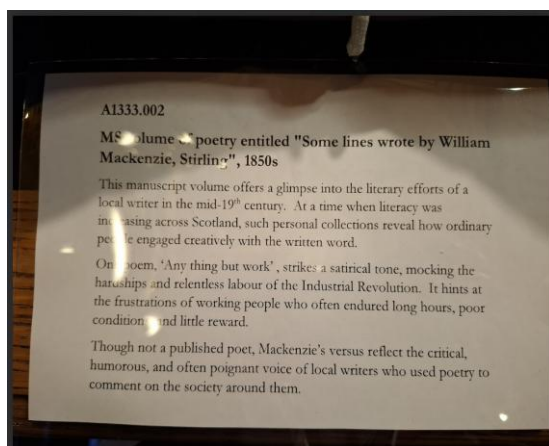
In conclusion Carly gave us some insight into another aspect of the archivist’s work - “Behind the Scenes: Caring for the Collection” demonstrating a range of tools and materials. She addressed common problems, protecting archives and conservation. We also discussed how to store and look after our own family archive at home.



Carly shares information about a mystery object we had been asked and had failed to identify.



At the end of the session, we were able to spend some time examining the various items displayed on the table.



The poem above “Any thing but work” by local writer Andrew Mackenzie in the 1850’s was one of the documents we were able to study.

After an afternoon of close concentration, we were thankful that the tea room was still open where we were revived by the classic tea or coffee and an excellent scone.

Scrabble Club

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you get on finding the meanings of the three letter words I gave you in the February edition of the Newsletter? If you have not had an opportunity to explore their meanings, please find their meanings below according to the Collins On-Line English Dictionary:

arf – ‘a barking sound’

cly – ‘to steal or seize’

ewk – ‘an irritation or tickling sensation of the skin causing a desire to scratch’

luz – ‘a bone of the human body, thought to be the coccyx, and believed in certain religions to be indestructible and therefore the bone that will be used by God to rebuild individuals at the time of the Resurrection’

rya – ‘a handwoven Scandinavian rug with a thick pile and usually a strong, colourful design’

Your next word challenge

Here is a quiz question you might like to try in March/April.
How have the meanings of the words *Silly* and *Flux* changed over time?

Answers in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you find the two maths teasers in the February 2026 Newsletter? Did you find them easy or hard? Don't worry if you were not able to do the questions as they are repeated here together with their solutions.

Question 1

Find the missing number XX

$$2 + 9 = 22$$

$$3 + 9 = 36$$

$$4 + 9 = 52$$

$$5 + 9 = XX$$

Solution

This is the type of question you might find in an intelligence test. It's just a question of spotting the connection between the successive lines.

Looking at the first line $2 + 9 = 11$ and $2 \times 11 = 22$

Looking at the second line $3 + 9 = 12$ and $3 \times 12 = 36$ and so on

Thus, turning our attention to the fourth line $5 + 9 = 14 = 14 \times 5 = \mathbf{70}$

Question 2

Find the value of t in the following equation:

$$\frac{t \times t \times t \times t}{t + t + t + t} = \frac{80}{5}$$

Solution

This question requires the use of some algebra skills. Let's start by simplifying the equation

$$t \times t \times t \times t = t^4 \text{ and } t + t + t + t = 4t \text{ and } 80/5 = 16$$

$$\text{Thus, the equation simplifies as follows: } \frac{t^4}{4t} = 16$$

$$\text{The equation further simplifies as follows: } t^3 = 64 \text{ or } t = \mathbf{4}$$

March Math Teasers

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

Question 1

Simplify the following expression without using a calculator:

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

Question 2

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

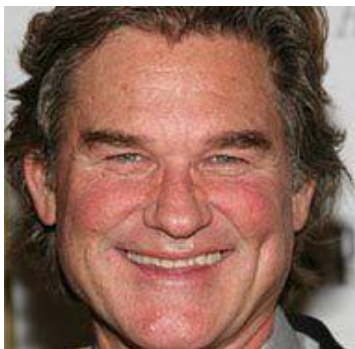
A Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated using mass in kilograms and height in metres. It is calculated using the formula

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

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

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Actor Kurt Russell was born on 17th March 1951



Athlete Mo Farah was born on 23rd March 1983



Singer Celine Dion was born on 30th March 1968

