



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



March 2025

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

We were told that meteorological spring started on 1st March 2025. However, at the time of writing these comments it did not feel much like Spring. It was cold and rather overcast. I hope by the time you read these comments that the weather has improved. One good thing is that the nights are now really beginning to draw out. A hopeful sign that things will soon get better.

The elections to the new u3a Council and Board are now completed, and there is information below about who the successful candidates were in the elections.

Just to remind you that as an u3a member you can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through your membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations. I had a look at what was on offer and was very impressed by the wide range of online learning events available. Here are a few examples of the events you can access.

How Many Letters in the Alphabet – a look at the main writing systems of the World.

Lung Disease in advancing age: identifying new treatments.

A Glimpse of Anglo-India

Smart Tech for Older and Disabled People

Robotics and Automation

For more information about these on-line events click on the following link

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

Join us on the Committee?

We're always looking for new committee members, and although the AGM is still 3 months away, now is a good time to think about whether you would like to join us on the committee. You could always try out a couple of committee meetings to see if you like it. The meetings take place once a month, mostly on Zoom, and occasionally in person. If you think you might be interested, contact me on chair@falkirku3a.uk

Peter Kahan

New members elected to the board of the u3a Trust

The u3a Trust, which is our parent organisation based in England, recently held elections for 4 new members to its board. We sent you information about the various candidates for these positions to allow you to participate in the election, if you wished to do so. We thought you'd like to know that the following people were elected: John Bent, Pauline Green, Alan Russell and Laurence Wale.

New u3a Council

The u3a Trust has set up a new council with the aim of providing better representation of members' views from the twelve u3a regions. Scotland is one of the regions, and the newly elected Scottish representative is George Cleland who joins Liz Ervine in representing u3a in Scotland.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Our policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion came up for renewal in February and the Committee have been working to update it.

One paragraph needed amending as we will be introducing a new Health & Safety Policy later this year and some of the areas overlap.

The point of contact for any concerns has also been updated.

Please take a few minutes to read the policy which can be found on our website

<https://falkirku3a.uk/> (drop-down menu About/Documents) as it is important for everyone to feel safe and included. If you have any questions about the policy, please email them to: secretary@falkirku3a.uk

Ruth Morris (Secretary)

Interest Group News

Theatre Group 2

Some members of our Theatre Group have attended a range of events since the New 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 Greatest' at Behind the Wall in Falkirk by the local Tryst Theatre. A visit was also made to the Pavillion in Glasgow to see David Hayman in 'Death of a Salesman'.

A further visit to the Lyceum in March will see the World premiere of a new stage musical, 'Wild Rose' set in Glasgow's country music scene and a visit to the Theatre Royal in Glasgow will 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.

Litter Picking Group

Donald MacAulay runs our Litter Picking Group and is applying for the group to take part in **Spring Clean Scotland 2025** organised by **Keep Scotland Beautiful**. This annual campaign brings together volunteers from across the country to tackle litter and improve the environment. Our litter picking group is registering to do a litter pick on **Thursday, 17th April** and anyone who wishes to join us, or wants more information, should contact Donald at the following email address: litterpicking@falkirku3a.uk

Anne Goldie from the group also let members know that Boots in the High Street now has a recycling container for collecting blister packs for pills. The container is near the Pharmacy counter.

Family History Group

The group looked at tuberculosis (also known as consumption, phthisis or TB) in our ancestors. Many of you will remember the BCG injection that you had at around the age of 12 but did you know that TB has been around since before 4000BC? Human skeletons from that time have shown tubercular decay. It has also been found in the spines of Egyptian mummies from around 3000BC. For centuries, TB was also associated with poetic and artistic qualities with many famous figures dying from the disease including John Keats, Edvard Munch, George Orwell, Charlotte Bronte and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Local History Group

The Group Is going on a Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Free Learning Visit to Kinneil House on May 8th at 3.00 pm (see the links below).

As the maximum number of people for one of these visits is 20, we have some spare places. If you would like to join us, please contact me (email only) by March 31st to reserve your place. First come first served!

The group will meet at the venue. I will send further information regarding, amongst other things, risk assessment and precise meeting point at the beginning of April when we have a finalised list of participants.

In the meantime, the information below was given to me by Rachel Sydeserff, District Visitor and Community Manager, Lothian

The main hazards to be aware of on-site are as follows:

Low doorways and passageways

Low lighting levels

Moving traffic at drop off/pickup points

Narrow passageways and steep spiral staircases

Slippery ground outside Kinneil House, on approach

Uneven surfaces and steps

I guess forewarned is forearmed!

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/learn/free-learning-visits/>

<https://kinneil.org.uk/house/>

Jennifer Kightley (Local History Group Organiser) - jenniferkightley@gmail.com

Scrabble Club

Here are the meanings of the five new words in the February 2025 Newsletter taken from the Collins English Dictionary.

brose – Scottish [oatmeal](#) or [pease porridge](#), sometimes with [butter](#) or [fat](#) added

lee – a [sheltered](#) part or side; the side away from the direction from which the wind is [blowing](#)

prow – the [bow](#) of a vessel

ruche – a strip of [pleated](#) or [frilled lawn](#), [lace](#), etc., used to [decorate blouses](#), dresses, etc., or worn around the [neck](#) like a small [ruff](#) as in the 16th century

toque – a woman's small [round](#) brimless [hat](#), [popular](#) esp. in [Edwardian](#) times or a hat with a small [brim](#) and a [pouched crown](#), popular in the 16th century or a chef's [tall](#) white hat

Here are some more unusual words we have discovered while playing Scrabble which you may wish to explore the meanings of: *avast*, *dunt*, *lam*, *thine* and *wiry*. The meaning of these words will be given in next month's Newsletter.

Film Group

The next screening will be on Friday 21st March and we will be watching a comedy about class and snobbery called **Relative Values** based on the 1950 play by Noel Coward and which has a great cast including Julie Andrews, Colin Firth, Stephen Fry, William Baldwin and Sophie Thompson.

Film recommendation for members – I highly recommend the film **Aftersun** which will be shown on BBC3 at 9.00 pm on Friday 21st March (will also be available on iPlayer). The film stars Paul Mescal and a young girl from Livingston, Frankie Corio who is outstanding and I can easily say that it is the best new film I have watched in the last couple of years.

World Events Group

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; and Thomas More's book Utopia. Further contributions scheduled include: advances in medicine; 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 World Events group continues to meet on Zoom as we find this useful for presenting information to the other members of the group.

Spring/Easter Crafting

Many of us already know of Louise Westall's excellent crafting skills and will be pleased to learn that Louise has kindly agreed to run a spring/Easter crafting session, numbers permitting. If you are interested, email Dorothy Ferrie at the following email address: groups@falkirk3a.uk

Want to enter a writing competition?

Many of you will know Morven Mack, who very kindly serves the teas and coffees at our Open Meetings and organises the Current Affairs group. Morven is also a member of the Falkirk Writers' Circle and has asked us to let you know about its annual writing competition. Entries must be submitted to the organiser by **2nd April** for any of the following categories:

- Short Story (max 1500 words)
- Article (max 1200 words)
- Poetry (max 40 lines)
- Trophy competition – Wildlife Theme – (max 1200 words)

Entry cost: £35 plus £2 for each entry.

For further details contact - morvenmack8@gmail.com

Results of the competition will be announced at Falkirk Writers' Circle Tryst Seminar on Saturday 17 May 2025 at Polmont Community Hub, Greenpark Drive, Polmont.

Maths Teaser

Did you manage to solve one or both of the maths teasers in last month's Newsletter? I hope you did, but if you did not, no worries as a restatement of the questions and the solutions to both questions are shown below.

Problems

Question 1

How can 5 plus 9 equal 2?

Solution

This question requires a little bit of lateral thinking. Think when $09:00 + 5.00 = 14.00$. Yes, it's the 24-hour clock, and 14.00 is equivalent to 2.00 pm.

Question 2

A lottery consists of a draw with 49 balls numbered from 1 to 49. In the draw six numbered balls are drawn and not replaced. These six numbers were 3, 7, 12, 13, 28 and 42. A further bonus ball is then drawn. Calculate the probability of the bonus ball being a number less than 8.

Solution

To solve this problem, we need first to determine how many numbered balls are remaining after the six balls are drawn and not replaced. The answers to this is $49 - 6 = 43$.

The number of balls less than 8 remaining in the lottery before the bonus ball is drawn are as follows: 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 = 5

Thus, the probability of a bonus ball being drawn that is less than 8 = $\frac{5}{43} = 0.12$

March Maths Teasers

Here are two maths teasers for you to try in March. The solutions to the two questions will be provided in the April 2025 Newsletter.

Question 1

Determine the value of x in the following equation.

$$\frac{\sqrt{3x}}{x} = 6$$

Question 2

This question is taken from the 2023 National 5 Applications of Mathematics Paper 1 (Non-calculator). You should not use a calculator when doing this question. Okay, you can if you like.

Laura makes and sells fruit smoothies. She intends to buy kiwi fruit in bulk.

She considers the following two options:

- Option 1: 35 kiwi fruit for £5.95
- Option 2: 45 kiwi fruit for £8.10

Determine which option offers the best value for money.

Gardening Guru

This month is the start of the main gardening season. On fine days, get out into the garden and start tidying up the flower beds and borders. If you do that now, it will make weeding easier later in the season but be careful that you don't overdo the work, as aching backs are commonplace with gardeners at this time of the year.

If you have covered your rhubarb crowns with a cloche, the first of the crop will almost be ready for harvesting, but in most cases, it will be next month before you can pull up any stalks. Buying new plants - then 'Timperley Early' rhubarb is a good early cropper.

Have you thought about having a little area for wildflowers? A small area can be planted in a border to make a natural patch which will attract birds, bees and butterflies. An inexpensive packet of seeds can be picked up from any garden centre or supermarket. Sow the seeds later this month or in early April for a great display in summer and autumn.



A mindfulness thought

'The best way to take care of the future is to take care of the present moment.'
(Thich Nhat Hanh)

