



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



May 2026

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

I am delighted to introduce the May 2026 edition of the Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter. The Trustees have been trying to expand the range of articles in the Newsletter by introducing the following three items: **The Interview** where you can learn some interesting facts about one of our members; **Committee News** - where a Trustee (s) shares an item of interest that the Committee has been discussing and **Interest Group News** where members are provided with up-to-date information about interest groups. These items will appear periodically throughout the year. The Trustees would welcome items of interest from members. These do not have to be long. You could tell members something about an experience on holiday, or about a visit to a museum, or maybe something about a pet.

What a wonderful talk Liz Allan gave about John and Annie Glenn. I tried to imagine just how John must have felt after hearing his wife's voice on the telephone for the first time when she was 53. No one could blame him for crying. They must have been tears of joy.

The u3a Trust has advised us about a Festive Fringe to the u3a Festival 26 which members can take part in from home. The Festival Fringe will be an on-line events programme especially designed to complement the u3a Festival 26 activities. The events will take place in the run up to and following on from the Festival in York on 1st to 3rd July. The Fringe programme will include on-line talks and workshops from Festival speakers with events including how to watercolour; the role of women in ancient Egypt; and the role of wind energy in the UK's electricity system. More details about the Fringe events should become available shortly.

The u3a Trust has launched a new learning activity entitled Missing Pieces, where members can help uncover the stories of historic buildings near them. Whether it's a place you pass every day, a building with a family connection, or a building that has simply been overlooked, your written or visual record will help build a richer picture of our common heritage. You can find out more about this activity by clicking on the following link: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/learning/learning-activities/missing-pieces>.

I wish you all a good and healthy May and June.

Peter Kahan

A mindfulness thought

'This is the real secret of life – to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now.'

Alan Watts

Our Trustees – Our u3a

(From the Committee)

In the Committee News item in the November 2025 issue of The Newsletter, we shared with you that the Trustees are planning an update to our Constitution which will be presented to the AGM in June.

This change will give the Trustees more flexibility around the term of office prescribed for all Trustees. Currently, Trustees are only allowed to hold office for three years and must then step aside for a minimum of one year. The change will remove this three-year restriction and allow Trustees to remain in office longer, should they wish, and, if approved at the AGM.

One other issue we currently have is that five Trustees were appointed to new roles in 2024. Under the current constitution, they should all stand down in 2027 when they have completed their 3-year term. Whereas all Trustees are essential to the smooth running of the Charity, the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are fundamental to our Constitution, the Charity Commission and Third Age Trust. Without members filling these four positions, Falkirk & District u3a would need to close.

Our solution to this problem is to stagger these positions, with one person standing down either this year or at the AGM in 2027, one other standing down in 2028, and so on, so that each year there is only one new member for one of these key roles going forward. Roles and duties can also be shared between 2 people. The only time limit that will remain in our constitution, if the changes are agreed at the AGM, will be the maximum number of years one person can serve on the Committee in one or more roles. This maximum is 9 years.

However, this depends on the willingness, and ability, of the existing Trustees to continue. Therefore, it is vital to the sustainability of our u3a that more Trustees are recruited. We currently have 7 Trustees, and our Constitution allows for a maximum of 15. Most of our Committee meetings are held on zoom.

If you would like to contribute to the future of our u3a and wish to find out more, without any obligation, please contact one of the existing Trustees. You can also attend one of our monthly meetings as an observer to find out more.

Interest Group Section

Scrabble Club

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you get on with the two quiz questions in the April Newsletter? Don't worry if you could not find the answers as these are shown below:

1. How many points does the word 'words' add up to in scrabble
Answer = 9 points (4,1,1,2,1)
2. Which word, the longest to use all five vowels in order exactly once, means one who doesn't indulge in excesses? *Answer = Abstemious*

Your next word challenge

At recent Scrabble Club meetings, we discovered the following words which you may wish to explore the meanings of - *ama* , *fave*, *largo*, *roke* and *seel*.

The meanings of the words will be given in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Film Group

(By John Giovanacci)

The April screening was the now customary Hitchcock selection which saw a capacity attendance enjoy the classic John Buchan espionage thriller **The 39 Steps**. It's quite remarkable that a film which was made 91 years ago can still feel fresh and hold your attention so much, you can see why Hitchcock became such an influential figure in the world of filmmaking.

I had intended showing a lesser-known Danny Boyle film this month but had second thoughts as it is more of a festive film, so I have now selected **Mrs Lowry & Son** for screening later this month. It stars two stalwarts of British cinema, Vanessa Redgrave as Mrs Lowry and Timothy Spall as the acclaimed artist in a film which shows the strained relationship between mother and son and imagines how this impacted on the great artist.

Coffee Morning – Spring Outing

(By Susan Crisp)

Once in a while, the coffee morning goes on an outing. Our Spring outing was to the Scottish Owl Centre in Polkemmet Country Park. The centre is home to around 160 Owls from all over the world. The centre concentrates on conservation including breeding programmes and educating people about these wonderful birds. Visitors can attend a meet the Owls presentation and see the owls flying. This photo shows coffee morning members waiting in anticipation for the flying demonstration to start. It was a fabulous experience.



Now the summer break approaches we are aware that most groups stop and it can be a lonely time after the busy-ness of the rest of the year. We are pleased to say that we will continue to meet every two weeks throughout the summer; our current venue is The Nutmeg Café within the grounds of Galaxy Sports Little Kerse, Polmont.

The group is open to all; come and enjoy some cheery conversation 😊

For more information contact Susan Crisp - email : coffeemorning@falkirk3a.uk

Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you get on with the maths teasers in the April Newsletter? Well, I hope, but don't worry if you were not able to solve the teasers as they are restated here together with their solutions.

Question 1

Find b^2 given the following equations:

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

Solution

Let's start the solution by finding a:

$$a = \sqrt{49} = +7 \text{ and } -7$$

Thus, b is equal to

$$b + 7 = 5 \text{ or } b = 5 - 7 = -2$$

And

$$b - 7 = 5 \text{ or } b = 5 + 7 = 12$$

Thus,

$$b^2 = -2^2 = 4 \text{ and } b^2 = 12^2 = 144$$

Thus, the answers are $b^2 = 4$ and $b^2 = 144$

Question 2

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

Solve the following equation for x

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

Solution

This question is designed to test one's algebraic skills. I normally solve these problems by first eliminating the denominators. This can be done by multiplying both sides of the equation by 6.

$$6\left(\frac{5x + 1}{2}\right) = 6\left(\left(\frac{4x}{3}\right) + 1\right)$$

This can be simplified as follows

$$3(5x + 1) = 8x + 6$$

Or

$$15x + 3 = 8x + 6$$

Or

$$15x - 8x = 6 - 3 \text{ or } 7x = 3$$

Thus,

$$x = \frac{3}{7}$$

Here are two maths teasers for you to try in May/June.

Question 1

If the ratio of the sides of a cuboid are 2:3:5 and its volume is 810 cm^3 determine the length of the sides of the cuboid?

Question 2

Solve the following equation for x:

$$4^x + 2^x = 20$$

Gardening Tips for May

(By The Gardening Guru)

We have had a fairly warm, dry Spring this year with a good show of spring flowers. Don't forget to deadhead the daffodils and tulips to make sure of a good flowering season next year. You can lift and divide congested daffodil bulbs so increasing your stock and spring colour next year.

Sow runner beans now in small pots indoors. They have some pretty, colourful flowers and the pods are full of flavour. After about two weeks, when the first two leaves appear, put the pots outside during the day to allow the plants to harden off, i.e. get accustomed to the outside temperature. Wait until the last of the frosts are over before planting in the garden and treat them in the same way as sweetpeas. Remember to save some of the pods when you harvest your crop later in the year so they can be planted to make next year's crop.

Are you going to go for 'no mow May' this year? If you are thinking about it, why not mow a border round the edge of the lawn for easy access while leaving the centre to support wildlife like grasshoppers and bees.

Iron and Clay Exhibition by Tom Astbury at Callendar House

This exhibition is a selection from an archive of photographs taken by Tom Astbury, who worked as the photographer for Falkirk Council's Museum Service between 1979 and 1983.

At that time, the Museum was engaged in a project to record local traditional industries. During the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries there were around 60 foundries and 25 brickworks listed in Falkirk District. By the time Tom was photographing these workplaces, and the people who worked within them, the industries were rapidly closing.

After leaving Falkirk Tom went on to have a successful and varied career as a Cameraman in the film and television industry. More recently, Tom has been returning to his photographic roots, producing and exhibiting new personal projects, and as a volunteer with the annual Stirling Photography Festival.

The photographs continue to be preserved within Falkirk Archives.

Open from 2nd May - 16th Aug 2026

FREE ENTRY

2nd Floor Gallery, Callendar House

Open Daily 10am - 5pm. Last entry 4,30pm. Closed Tuesdays

