



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



November 2025

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

Where has October gone? In fact, where has 2025 gone? They do say that as we get older time seems to go by quicker. The great physicist Einstein showed that this was not true (in fact, time dilates as an object approaches the speed of light). However, I do find that days and weeks seem to go by faster nowadays, and while I am on the subject of time, as of 15th November there are only 41 days to Christmas.

As I mentioned at the Open Meeting on 4th November, I represented Falkirk and District u3a at the Third Age Trust AGM on 15th October. The AGM took place at Sketchley Grange Hotel and Spa in Hinckley, Leicestershire. I did not attend in person, but online. The AGM was professionally managed by an external communications company. There were not any controversial items on this year's agenda, unlike last year when members had to vote on constitutional changes involving a new Council. The Trust were keen to promote the 500,000 u3a membership target by 2028, and to this end, are going to boost advertising and promotion of u3a activities nationwide. The current membership of the u3a is around 420,000 members (a little below target) so there is quite a lot of work to do if the 2028 target is to be reached. In 2024/25 there was a small surplus on income versus expenditure of £72,000, and the net assets of the Trust were £2,319,000 which, I confess, seems rather a lot of money for a relatively small organisation.

In case you were not aware, the u3a Trust offers a range of free online talks, workshops and courses. Members of u3as can access these online talks, workshops and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations. An example of one of these events is [Staying Safe Online](#) - a u3a Presentation with Q&A, free online via Zoom on November 24th from 10am to 11:30am. More details of these online events can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>.

In conclusion, may I wish you a happy, healthy and safe November, and every success with your Christmas shopping if you like to get it done before the shops get too crowded.

Peter Kahan

A mindfulness thought

“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes. Including you.”

Anne Lamott

COMMITTEE NEWS

(By Ruth Morris & Peter Kahan)

This is the first in a new series of articles sharing an item of interest that the Committee has been discussing. It is hoped that these articles will help to communicate the work of the Committee and encourage members to consider volunteering for roles when they become vacant.

Recently, the Committee has been considering amending section 16 of our constitution to provide flexibility and continuity on the Committee. At the moment, a person can only undertake a role for a maximum of three years from the date they officially take it on. (If a person is co-opted to fill an unexpected vacancy during a session, the months from then up to the beginning of the next session do not count towards the official three-year term in the role.)

Currently, the Committee includes 5 people who started in new roles in the 2024/25 session (Peter as Chair, Dorothy as Vice Chair, Ruth as Secretary, Jim as Treasurer, and Jack as Speaker Secretary). The Committee feels that introducing a stagger so that not all 5 are replaced/change role all at once will be beneficial. However, although an individual can step down before completing 3 years in a role, the current Constitution does not allow anyone to serve longer than 3 years in the same role (excepting being co-opted as detailed above).

Earlier this year, we were advised that the national board were considering amendments to the Constitution to address difficulties branches are having nationwide in recruiting and retaining volunteers to Committee roles. However, last month we learned that those amendments have been put on hold. Instead, we have been advised that we could remove paragraph 16.8 (the 3-year rule) and agree our own amendment. Any such amendment will need to be agreed at an AGM and be advised to OSCR (the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

New Bank Charges

(By Jim Hanmer – Treasurer)

We bank with Bank of Scotland who are a subsidiary of Lloyds Bank Group.

From this month (November) the group are introducing charges for small charities such as ourselves. The main impact is on transactions where their staff are involved, e.g. cash and cheques.

The cost to us is minimal, on current volume circa £11 per annum. Each cheque received is 75p and cash is 75p per £100 banked. We did consider, like many institutions, stopping the receipt of cheques, however, we are very aware that for a small number of our members this is the preferred option.

It is vitally important you all have the facility to pay your membership in the best way suitable to you. There is no charge for electronic transfer, internet banking, and circa 50% of our members use this facility. It has been interesting to note that some of our members, who don't use internet banking, have asked friends to do the transfer, which, also, makes the registration much simpler.

The Committee thought it was important you were aware of the above, but, please, continue to use the method best suited to you.

Interest Group Section

Scrabble Club

(By Peter Kahan)

In last month's Newsletter I gave you the following two-word quiz questions to answer. Here are the answers.

What is unique about the following sentence: 'The public was amazed to view the quickness and dexterity of the juggler'? *This is a pangram: that is, the sentence contains all 26 letters in the English alphabet at least once.*

What is the longest one-syllable word in the English language?

'Scaunched and the archaic word strengthed, each 10 letters long, are the longest English words that are only one syllable long. Nine letter monosyllabic words are scratched, screeched, scrounged, squelched, straights, and strengths.'

See <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/longest-monosyllabic-english-words>

Here are a couple of word quiz questions for you to try in November.

Which six letter disease name starts with a vowel, finishes with a vowel and has no vowels in between?

Which ten letter word can be typed using only the top letters on a QWERTY keyboard?

Answers in next month's Newsletter.

Film Group

(By John Giovanacci)

A good turnout for the second film of the season which I showed last month and I'm happy to say it was enjoyed by all. The film was **Letter from an Unknown Woman** which I had heard of some time ago but only recently managed to source a second-hand DVD. It really is a treat and it's easy to see why it is so highly acclaimed by critics. The film is set in Vienna in early 1900s with Joan Fontaine turning in one of her finest performances as Lisa who falls in love with Stefan, a concert pianist, played by the dashing French actor Louis Jourdan. It's directed by Max Ophuls who was known for his opulent and lyrical visual style with melancholic, romantic themes. If you enjoy old black & white films with a good story, then I highly recommend this film and luckily it is available to watch on BBC iPlayer.

This month I will be showing a film that was recommended to me and after watching it I am looking forward to seeing how it is received by group members as it is a very unusual film set in Edwardian England with a great cast and deals with themes about reincarnation and a strained father/son relationship. It's a 2008 film called **Dean Spanley** and I'm surprised it hasn't reached a wider audience.

Groups Update for November

(By Dorothy Ferrie)

Poetry Group

In advance of the first meeting of the Poetry Group, we thought about what poetry is for us and whether we settle down to read poetry in the same way as we would settle down to read a book. We also considered the idea of a “poetry pharmacy” and whether we have turned to a poem for solace in times of emotional stress, or whether we had a poem which we found helped in awkward or upsetting situations. Many ideas were discussed, including the connection between poetry and music and, as always, we enjoyed the poems that members brought along to the meeting as well as having a lot of chat and laughter during our discussions.

The Poetry Group is currently full and there are 3 members on the waiting list.

Anyone for bowling?

One of our members, Jan Livingstone, has kindly offered to set up a group for those who are interested in **Ten-pin Bowling**. Outdoor bowling and indoor bowling might be possible too, although season and the weather would often dictate which form of bowling would be best. You might have a preference for just one form of bowling, or you might also be open to trying something new. Jan has visited Tenpin Falkirk and has found out the extra information shown below. If you are interested, contact Dorothy Ferrie in the first instance at: groups@falkirk3a.uk and she will pass your details on to Jan.

TENPIN FALKIRK, REDBRAE RD, CAMELON, FK1 4HJ

- 1) Plenty of parking with some disabled spaces.
- 2) Each lane accommodates 6 players. There is a small step up to bowling platform from the sitting area with table. Drinks allowed at table, sweets etc. are ok also. There's a couple of wheelchair lanes that must be confirmed before visiting. Equipment at lanes to help anyone that wishes to use.
- 3) FOOTWEAR- players may choose to hire or wear their own suitable footwear. Own footwear requirements are NO OPEN TOE SHOES and non-slip soles. Trainers are the most suitable.
- 4) 12 or 1pm session but they open at 10am - 3pm quiet period except school holidays which are a hit or miss for booking. (Hoping to get outdoor and indoor bowling running next year if people wish). This is Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri. Wed has a standing weekly club booking so depending on the number of persons wishing to take part, there may not be enough lines to accommodate. Sat & Sun family mostly use. If Sat or Sun more pleasing to persons, I will enquire about this.
- 5) FEES- ADULT 1 game £4.75. 2 games £9.25
Concession 1 game £2.90. 2 games £5.70. (Depends on numbers, 12 or more suggested).
Anyone doing shoe Hire, I'm sorry but forgot to get cost. Will enquire if member would like to hire. Booking: I have been informed that I can reserve lanes with at least 10 days' notice by visiting the venue. That will allow persons to pay on the day. This is a must as booking are on-line payments per lane players. If it is successful and regular we will pay on the day individually with only reservation via phone.

6) FOOD & DRINK available to purchase. There is alcohol. Didn't manage to get menu or prices, I did purchase a glass of Cola £2.30.

If any member has dietary needs, they can bring their own food to eat at the lane sitting area. Not allowed to sit at a cafe table unless a food paying person at that table.

7) TOILETS there are a ladies, gents and one large disabled toilet (Radar Key) which I have a couple for anyone wishing to use. I was in both ladies and disabled and I can say they were clean.

8) There are Snooker tables that can be used £?, also an arcade of games to play £?. I'm assuming these will be coin operated as I spotted a cash converter.

If anyone has questions or queries, I will gladly enquire. Day of play and time slot can be looked at if anyone has preference.



Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

Did you manage to solve the two Maths Teasers in the October 2025 Newsletter? I do hope you did, but don't worry if you were not able too, because the two questions are restated here and their solutions are also provided.

Question 1

Simplify the following expression

$$\frac{\sqrt{99} + \sqrt{99}}{\sqrt{11}}$$

Solution

This is another example of a question involving surds. We can simplify the expression as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{\sqrt{9 \times 11} + \sqrt{9 \times 11}}{\sqrt{11}} \\ &= \frac{\sqrt{9} \times \sqrt{11} + \sqrt{9} \times \sqrt{11}}{\sqrt{11}} \\ &= \frac{3 \times \sqrt{11} + 3 \times \sqrt{11}}{\sqrt{11}} \\ & \frac{6\sqrt{11}}{\sqrt{11}} = 6 \end{aligned}$$

Question 2

Here is another question taken from the most recent NC5 Applications of Mathematics examination paper. A calculator may be used.

Andy runs 3.4 miles in a time of 33 minutes.

Calculate Andy's average speed. Give your answer in kilometres per hour.

1 mile = 1.609 km

Solution

$$\text{Average Speed} = \frac{\text{Distance}}{\text{Time}}$$

We need to convert 3.4 miles to km as follows: $km = 3.4 \times 1.609 = 5.471 \text{ km}$

We also need to convert 33 minutes to hours as follows: $hrs = \frac{33}{60} = 0.55 \text{ hrs}$

$$\text{Average Speed} = \frac{5.471}{0.55} = \text{9.95 kilometres per hour}$$

November Maths Teasers

Here are another two new maths teasers for you to try in November.

Question 1

Solve the following equation

$$\sqrt{2x^2} = 32$$

Question 2

This question is taken from the 2025 National 5 Mathematics Paper 1 (Non-calculator).

In a sale, the price of a wedding dress is reduced by 20%. The sale price of the dress is £720. Calculate the price of the dress before the sale.

Gardening Tips

(By The Guru)

Autumn is now coming to an end but there are still remnants of beautiful autumn colours around. Some roses are still flowering. Cut off any spent blooms to give any buds space to develop. What are the chances with climate change that you might have roses flowering at Christmas?

If you haven't planted tulips yet, this is the time to get outside and fill some troughs and pots with bulbs to give a splash of colour in May and June next year. Plant the bulbs about 12cm(5in) deep in a potting compost. Add some crocks at the bottom of the pot for good drainage.

Ensure your house plants thrive this winter by misting regularly to keep up humidity levels but take care not to overwater. Plants need less water in winter. Also consider temperature fluctuations with heating during winter months as this can cause leaf drop. Poinsettias, a favourite at Christmas are particularly susceptible to drafts.