



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



September 2025

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

It was very good to see so many people at the Registration Day on Tuesday, 2nd September 2025. We think at least 15 new people joined the Falkirk and District u3a on Registration Day which is very gratifying. I would like to thank my fellow trustees and group leaders (or their substitutes) for all the hard work they put in to making the Registration Day such a success. I would also like to thank Morven Mack for providing us with teas, coffees and biscuits at the Registration Day.

I know that both Toni Smillie (Membership Secretary) and Jim Hanmer (Treasurer) were grateful to all those who registered and paid on-line. It really helps to cut down the work they have to do.

We hope you have been able to join the group or groups you wanted to. Please remember that the following new groups are available for you to join: *Cinema* and *Construction and the Built Environment*. More details of these 2 new groups plus all the other groups can be found by clicking on the following link: <https://falkirku3a.uk/index.php/groups> It is also possible to join a Scottish Country Dancing group. For more information about this please email Dorothy Ferrie at groups@falkirku3a.uk.

I would also like to let you know that u3a in Scotland also provides some on-line groups. These groups include Ancient History, Archaeology, Bridge, History, Intermediate Latin, Interu3a Quiz – UK wide, Laughter yoga, Philosophy of Science and Qi Gong. For more details about these groups click on the following link: <https://scotland.u3asite.uk/groups/>.

Our Speaker Secretary has pulled together some very interesting and informative talks for our Open Meetings. The talks are on such subjects as Cycling Without Age, The Dogs Trust, The Universal Franchise, Falkirk Delivers, Flanders Fields and Falkirk District, Nostalgia Ain't What It Used To Be, John and Annie Glenn and Thomas Telford – The Colossus of Roads. There will also be an interesting range of other activities at our Open Meetings. The trustees would also like to encourage members to attend St. Francis Xavier's Church Hall from 2.00 pm rather than 2.15 pm so that you have more time to chat with your u3a friends.

We do hope you enjoy your group activities and attendance at the Open Meetings during the 2025/26 session. The trustees are always happy to listen to your ideas on how we can make your u3a experience better so don't hesitate to talk to us about your ideas. Remember the u3a is all about learning, laughing and living.

Peter Kahan

A mindfulness thought

A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it isn't open.'



Interest Group News

As we start the new session all Groups will already have met up or will be about to meet up and I would like to encourage all Group Organisers to send me anything at all about your Group as the year progresses. I'm sure members would like to know e.g. what routes the Walking Group have been on or what exciting walks are planned, which dinery did the Lunch Group visit, what books have been digested by the Reading Group etc. Last session it seemed to be the same 3 or 4 Groups every month who contributed an article about themselves so I'm asking again that Group Organisers send me a short article on an occasional basis so that we have more variety in the Newsletter each month.

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Scrabble Club

You may recall that in the Summer 2025 Newsletter I posed the following question 'What is the longest word in the English language with only one vowel?' Did you know the answer, or if like me, did you have to use Google to find it (cheating is very much allowed)? The answer is, of course, **Strengths**.

Here are a few more words the members of the Scrabble Club discovered while playing Scrabble recently which you might like to find the meaning of: *feese, Freon, jarl, pash, zex*.

u3a Short Story Competition

For all you budding authors here's a chance to take part in the Annual u3a short story competition. To enter this year's competition, members are invited to write and submit a short story (max 1,500 words) on the theme '**Lost and Found**' to be submitted by 12 noon, Friday 17 October 2025. For all the details and rules go to

https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities?view=article&id=2262&catid=260&fbclid=IwY2xjawMtlvVleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHn1qDq0HUUszO9G7aDfc5MZckonY6xWjOjpEBRYyNlJtseDmihKPXGzcQd2g_aem_pv0-fWpglBGb91t62-R3TQ

Gardening Guru

This is the time to plant daffodil bulbs for spring colour. Also thinking ahead, if you want hyacinths for Christmas, you have to plant them now. Buy prepared bulbs and after potting, leave them in a cool dark place until flower stems emerge.

Now is the time to trim hedges to neaten them up before winter. Doing this now means they stay neat for the next few months. Shred or compost any clippings or use as a mulch in the borders.

Lift any potatoes still in the ground. Choose a dry day and leave the tubers on the surface for a few hours before brushing off any loose soil. Store in paper bags or hessian sacks in a cool place.

THE INTERVIEW

This is the first in a new occasional series where members answer the same 6 questions about themselves.

This interview is with our Secretary, Ruth Morris



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

My very first job was as a Saturday girl at the bookshop in the town where I grew up. I was paid £5.00 for the whole day. This went up to £5.50 when I turned eighteen. When I joined the Civil Service as an Executive Officer in 1983, I was paid £5k a year.

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

I have lived in Scotland for only 2 years and, although I had many holidays here before I moved, there is still much of the country I have not yet explored. However, I love Edinburgh. I love that the centre is relatively small so you can walk to most places, that the buildings are so beautiful, that there are so many art galleries, museums and theatres, and that there are so many festivals on during the summer.

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

I think a large piece of classical music would be suitable such as Bach's Mass in C Minor. The book would have to be a long and complex one to pass the time so I think a Victorian novel such as Middlemarch by George Eliot would be a good choice.

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

I have had tabby cats most of my life. They all had distinct personalities and were all adorable.

5. Tell us about one of your hobbies.

Since I retired, I have been doing jigsaws. I love the challenge of fitting the pieces together and can lose track of time. One half of the dining table is given over to this.

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

I used to do the sport of Fencing with Foil blades.

Maths Teasers

Were you able to solve the two maths teasers in the Summer 2025 Newsletter? Don't worry if you were not able to, as the two questions are restated and their solutions are shown below.

Question 1

Simplify the following expression (you should not use a calculator)

$$(-11) + (-6) \times 5$$

Solution

This question is just another example of the application of 'our old friend' BODMAS (Brackets, Order, Division, Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction). In the context of the question above the two brackets have been included to remind us that both numbers are negative. According to BODMAS we should do the multiplication first which will give us the following;

$$(-11) + -30$$

A + and – gives a minus so we have

$$-11 - 30$$

If you remember your negative numbers this gives $-11 - 30 = -41$

Question 2

This problem has been taken from the 2019 National 5 Mathematics Paper 1 (non-calculator). You should solve the equation for x .

$$\frac{x}{2} - 1 = \frac{3 - x}{5}$$

Solution

I find the easiest way to solve this type of equation containing fractions is first to get rid of the fractions. I am going to multiply both sides of the equation by 10 to achieve this. I will use brackets to minimise the risk of forgetting to multiply any of the terms by 10.

$$10\left(\frac{x}{2} - 1\right) = 10\left(\frac{3 - x}{5}\right)$$

$$5x - 10 = 2(3 - x)$$

$$5x - 10 = 6 - 2x$$

$$7x = 16$$

Or

$$x = \frac{16}{7} = 2.29$$

September Maths Teaser

Now that we are back in full harness for 2025/26 I am sure you are keen to try a couple of new Maths Teasers.

Question 1

Show that the fractional expression shown below can be simplified to $\frac{7}{17}$

$$\frac{\frac{4}{5} - \frac{1}{3}}{\frac{4}{5} + \frac{1}{3}}$$

Question 2

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

James travelled from Southampton to New York by ship. It took 180 hours to sail from Southampton to New York. The local time in New York is 5 hours behind the local time in Southampton. The ship arrives in New York at 04:00 on 18 November.

Calculate the date and local time that the ship left Southampton.