



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



September 2026

Editor – John Giovanacci

—

publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

A warm welcome back to the 2026/27 session of the Falkirk and District u3a. It was so good to see so many of you at this year's Registration Day on Tuesday, 1st September 2026, including a number of new members. I hope you were able to find the interest groups you want to participate in this session.

It's definitely not too late to register for the 2026/27 session. You can either do this at the next Open Meeting on Tuesday, 6th October 2026 or by registering on-line using the following link: <https://falkirku3a.uk/index.php/membership>. The £20 Registration Fee can be paid by BACs transfer.

We have an interesting selection of talks for you to hear at our open meetings. The one that I am particularly looking forward to hear is the Fraud and Scams Workshop by Lynne Millar from RBS Falkirk. As we know frauds and scams, especially on-line, are a very real problem nowadays, and any information and advice we can get to minimise our risk of fraud, or getting scammed, will, I am sure, be gratefully received.

We have three of our own members giving talks this session. Andy Crisp is returning again this year with a talk entitled 'It's a Fishy Business' which sounds most intriguing. Jack Egdell is also back with what sounds like a fascinating talk about Cast Iron Investments in Falkirk. I am also back to fulfil my promise to give a talk on How Women won the Vote which may involve a little bit of controversy.

Are you looking for a good novel to read? This may help. The u3a asked book groups across the u3a movement to share recent novels that they think are perfect for the summer months. I know summer is over, but I am sure the novels are still worth reading. Click on the following link to see what some of the u3as recommended as good novels to read: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/latest-news/u3a-book-groups-share-their-summer-read-recommendations>. I hope you find a book you enjoy reading.

I very much look forward to catching up with you at the Open Meeting on 6th October 2026. In the meantime, I do hope you have a very good and safe September.

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

THE INTERVIEW

This month it's John Giovanacci in the interview seat to give his answers to the 6 questions about himself. John is our Publicity Officer & Group Organiser of the Film Club.



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

I started work a month after leaving school in 1968 as a Commercial Apprentice with Harland Engineering Co. in Alloa. I can't remember the exact rate of pay but I was paid weekly and I think I took home around £5 which sounds pitiful now but felt like a decent amount for a teenage boy just out of school at that time.

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

Aviemore was originally developed in the 1960s as Scotland's prime ski resort but I have to say that I have spent some great summer holidays there and it's probably my favourite place to visit in Scotland. It's a real sun trap when the weather is nice with plenty to do in Aviemore and the surrounding area such as a walk or cycle around the Rothiemurchus Estate, a visit to the Highland Wildlife Park or a short trip to Inverness for some great shops and to take in the incredible scenery.

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

Music is a passion of mine and ideally, I would take my iPod which has around 600 songs and pretty much maps out my taste in music. Everything from *The Beatles* to *Hawkwind*, *Simple Minds* up to my current favourites *First Aid Kit*. However, if that's cheating then I would choose the album *Rubycon* by *Tangerine Dream* which would be the perfect soundscape for the peace and tranquillity of a desert island.

The book I'd like to have is called *The Film Book* which is like an encyclopaedia for film fans. It covers the History of Cinema, Movie Genres, World Cinema, an A-Z of Movie Directors plus Top 100 Movies and I can just imagine dipping into it to keep reminding myself of all the great films I've enjoyed watching in my lifetime.

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

It's always been cats in my family, and I've had 3 female cats of my own, with Sky in particular the most loving cat I've ever known. She still holds a special place in my heart having gone over the Rainbow Bridge ten years ago.

5. Tell us about one of your hobbies.

I take part in a daily quiz on the Pie & Bovril Forum, an online discussion site for Scottish football fans. It's great fun and run by a Dundee fan in Australia with promotion & relegation between the 3 leagues each month. I'm mostly in the middle league but have spent some time in the top league.

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

My favourite TV show of all time is *Twin Peaks: The Return* and it was a dream come true to meet and chat with Chrysta Bell, close friend and muse of the late great David Lynch. She played FBI Agent Tammy Preston in *The Return*, and I met her when she hosted and sang at three David Lynch inspired concerts at the Manchester International Festival in 2019.

Interest Group Section

Scrabble Club

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you get on exploring the meaning of the 'z' words in the Summer 2026 edition of the Newsletter? Good I hope, but in case you did not have time to do it, the answers (according to AI) are shown below.

zax – a specialist hand tool used by roofers and slaters for cutting, trimming and punching nail holes in roofing slates

zappy – an adjective meaning lively, fast-moving or full of energy

zazen – a traditional form of seated meditation at the heart of Zen Buddhism

zestful – full of energy, enthusiasm and hearty enjoyment

zillion – an informal, made-up term that means an extremely large, but unspecified number

Your next word challenge

Two letter words in Scrabble can often be very useful especially if you have a bad set of letters. There are between 107 and 127 official two-letter English words in standard Scrabble dictionaries. There are some words we will all be very familiar with such as the following: *as*, *be*, *is* and *of*. However, there are other words you may not know about such as: *aa*, *ef*, *ka*, *ow* and *xu*. If you have time, you may wish to explore the meaning of these words

Table Tennis

(By Jan Livingstone)

The Table Tennis Group is now up and running and we had our first session on Monday 7th September. Ongoing, the group will meet on the 1st Monday morning of each month with details as follows:

VENUE – Grangemouth Sports Complex, FK83 8JB.

COST = £2 per person

PLAY TIME – Morning session lasting 45 minutes

FOOTWEAR – Trainers

There are 2 available courts that must be booked in advance.

Anyone interested in joining please contact me by email jmlqurt@gmail.com)

Film Club

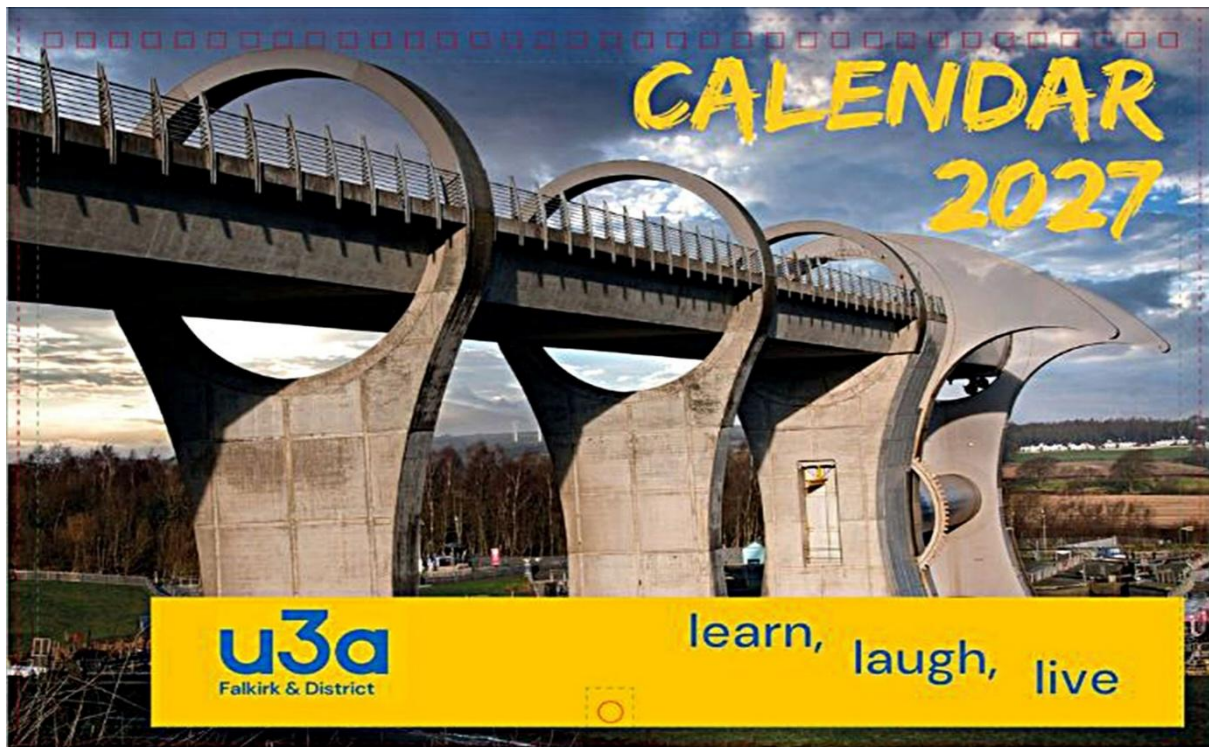
(By John Giovanacci)

The new season begins on Friday 18th September and I'll be starting off with an excellent comedy-drama with a fantastic cast. The film is called *Song for Marion* and is funny, sad and uplifting in equal measure.



2027 Falkirk u3a Calendar

(By Jack EgdeU)



This is the cover of the Falkirk u3a calendar for next year, 2027. It will be on sale at our Open Meetings in October, November and December this year for the same price as last year - £10 in cash. That's not something that you can say about most items nowadays, given the increase in inflation. All the monthly images were taken in the Falkirk area this year.

Some Photos from our Registration Day



Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

Did you have time to try the two maths problems in the Summer 2026 edition of the Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter? Don't worry if you did not have time to solve the problems as the questions and their solutions are shown below.

Question 1

Perform the following calculation without using a calculator.

$$99^2 + 1$$

Solution

The most straightforward way to solve this problem is to multiply 99 by 99 and add 1. How is your long multiplication nowadays?

$$\begin{array}{r} 99 \\ 99 \\ \hline 8910 \\ 891 \\ \hline 9801 \end{array}$$

Thus, $99 \times 99 + 1 = \mathbf{9802}$

A quicker way to solve the problem is to multiply $100 \times 99 = 9900$: *subtract* $99 = 9801$ (99×99) *and add* $1 = \mathbf{9802}$

Question 2

This question is taken from the 2022 SQA Applications of Mathematics Paper 1 (Non-calculator).

Tracy decides to walk to the top of Dumyat Hill from Blairlogie car park. The horizontal distance between these two places is 3 kilometres. Blairlogie car park is 21 metres above sea level. The top of Dumyat Hill is 420 metres above sea level.

Calculate the average gradient between the Blairlogie car park and the top of Dumyat Hill. Give your answer as a fraction in its simplest form.

Solution

To answer this question, you need to remember (or look up) that $Gradient = \frac{Height}{Distance}$

The height is specified with respect to sea level and $= 420 - 21 = 399m$

The distance is 3km, but to solve the problem we must express the height and distance in the same units. So, 3km should become 3000m.

Thus, the $Gradient = \frac{399}{3000}$ which we can simplify by dividing top and bottom by 3 which gives us $Gradient = \frac{133}{1000}$

September Math Teasers

Here are two maths teasers for you to try over September/October.

Question 1

Is the next number (?) in the sequence of numbers shown below a) 97, b) 92, c) 102 or d) 99?

2, 6, 15, 31, 56, ?

Question 2

Simplify the following expression:

$$\sqrt{\frac{50}{2} \div \frac{5}{6}}$$

On This Day

(By John Giovanacci)

Peter's upcoming talk, mentioned above, about 'How Women won the Vote' made me think of this significant September event in history: -

On 19 September 1893 the governor, Lord Glasgow, signed a new Electoral Act into law. As a result of this landmark legislation, New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world in which women had the right to vote in parliamentary elections.

