



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



May 2024

Editor – John Giovanacci – publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

The intriguing title of Franklin's Legs had me wondering what this month's talk at the Open Meeting would be about. I was not disappointed with the talk which was about Eleanor Roosevelt. She was a fascinating lady and was, in her time, one of the world's most widely admired and powerful women. As the First Lady during her husband's President Franklin D Roosevelt's four terms in office(1933-1945), she often disagreed with him and was a controversial First Lady for her outspokenness, particularly with respect to her promotion of Civil Rights for African-Americans. Perhaps, she was a lady ahead of her time.

The Trustees Committee have completed our new draft Financial Policy. It is now on our website and ready for members to read and give their comments before the end of May. I can't believe that 3 years have passed since I became your Chairperson. I have enjoyed my term of office, but it is now time to pass the baton on to someone else. After elections at the AGM on 4th June I will stand down. A new Chairperson and a new Trustees Committee will take over with fresh energy and ideas to take Falkirk & District u3a forward into another session. I wish them well.

May you all continue to LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE with Falkirk & District u3a.

Louise Westall

Gardening Guru

Are you doing a 'no mow May'? The choice is yours and is definitely less work in a busy month in the garden. In May the daffodils look very sad, but tulips and primroses are now giving a lovely colourful show. Wait until the end of month to put any bedding plants outside because we may still get some overnight frost. Put supports in the borders before they are needed so that they are ready to stop tall flowers flopping.

Interest Group News

I am happy to say that last month's appeal to Group Organisers means that this month we have news about quite a few groups' current activities.

Litter-picking Group

A successful litter-picking group, supported by Falkirk Council Waste Management, has been meeting monthly since November 2023 at Falkirk Stadium. Although the group's undertaking was occasionally curtailed by inclement weather, a considerable amount of litter was removed from the stadium periphery. Each litter-pick lasted for an hour and was followed by a coffee and a chat at the Falkirk Stadium restaurant. Many thanks to all participants for their commitment, effort, and achievement.

Donald MacAulay

Family History

Last month the group investigated farming in our family. We talked about the Highland Clearances causing emigration to Australia and Canada, through Blackhouses with the kai, the small black cows, at one end of the house and the crofters themselves living at the other end, to hiring or 'Feeing' Fairs. We linked into famous plant hunters, as one such person, George Forrest, born in 1873, was a Bairn who lived in Grahams Road in Falkirk, just opposite the present Retail Park.

Louise Westall

Theatre Group 1

After a quiet spell just at the beginning of the year and allowing for the fact that we cater for all tastes within the Group, our "young at heart" kicked off a busy few months with "Kinky Boots" which all thoroughly enjoyed.

Around the same time "Vanya" was screened in Cineworld. A difficult production in which Andrew Scott admirably played multiple characters which proved confusing to any who had not previously seen Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya" in Edinburgh's Lyceum - a long time ago but in that production, there was a full cast. It was great to compare both performances.

One of our favourite venues is the Barony Theatre in Bo'ness. This season the youth group from the talented company performed The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe " - not an easy story but they gave it their all and the Drama Group at the Barony is assured of a supply of talent for years to come.

Total change of experience was Showaddywaddy" in the Albert Halls, Stirling bringing back memories of not-altogether-forgotten youth (and Teddy Boys!)

A more recent Cineworld screening has been "The Motive and the Cue" - with Mark Gatiss playing Sir John Gielgud and Johnny Flynn as an aging Richard Burton at the end of his career-having recently married Elizabeth Taylor. We were given a taste of the complicated relationship between actors, directors, art and celebrity and what happens behind the scenes in the rehearsal room (Hamlet) and back in recreation. Good acting.

As I said before, we cater for all tastes and Shakespeare often splits the Group. However, Ralph Fiennes' portrayal of an older Macbeth from the National Theatre, London is one not to be missed. Previously played live. In the RHS Arena in Edinburgh. (at extortionate prices) it has now reached Cineworld, Falkirk.

Looking forward to the rest of this month, we have "Priscilla Queen of the Desert "locally in the Dobbie Halls, Larbert. "Katherine "from the "James Plays" in the Macrobert and "A Play, a Pie and a Pint" also in the Macrobert.

Elma Farquar

Theatre Group 2

This is the Group's second year and we have tried to be as inclusive as possible, with membership ranging between 10 and 15.

We meet on the 3rd Monday of each month at Klondyke Garden Centre to plan the next few months and have a laugh. The second can often take priority!!

Our main activity has been the screenings from the Royal Opera House and National Theatre Live. These have produced some outstanding performances and some very challenging and thought-provoking events.

We have also attended the Lanternhouse in Cumbernauld, Behind the Wall in Falkirk and the Alhambra in Dunfermline.

Jim Hanmer

Current Affairs

By the end of 2022 we had managed to secure a permanent meeting place at the Community Room in Tesco supermarket at Redding and we continue to meet in this excellent venue on alternate Wednesdays throughout the year. Membership of the group (currently 8) has changed slightly over the past year but attendance at meetings has been fairly consistent. Subjects discussed include International, national, and local news/gossip. Topics vary widely from Covid/Partygate, wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, monarchy, gender self-determination, ecology, migration, the future of Falkirk Town Hall, potholes, recommended restaurants, films/TV series, books to the viscosity of fairy liquid. We aim to have fun and don't take ourselves too seriously.

Morven Mack

Scrabble Club

Did you have an opportunity to explore the meaning of the six words in last month's Newsletter? If not, there meanings according to Collins English Dictionary are as follows:

ava – Scottish form of 'of all'

dox – 'to publish personal information about (a person) on the internet'.

geed – 'an exclamation, as to a horse or draught animal, to encourage it to turn to the right, go on, or go faster'.

haj – 'In the Islamic religion, the **hajj** is the pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims are required to make'.

loge – 'a small enclosure or box in a theatre or opera house or the upper section in a theatre or cinema'.

tice – 'to tempt or allure; entice'.

For those interested in a slightly different challenge this month can you write down six, four letter words that contain consonants only? If you can do this, try writing down six, five letter words containing consonants only. All the very best.

Peter Kahan (peterkahan@hotmail.com)

Coffee Morning Group

The group continue to meet every second Thursday and the conversations always throw up some interesting facts. We met at Klondyke last week and the following two words were discussed and could be used to describe all members of the u3a:-

opsimath - the love of learning in later life.

A word that should have become familiar since the emergence of the u3a, this is a person who begins studying late in life. The *-math* part comes from a Greek word meaning 'to learn' and crops up in *mathematics* (literally 'skill or knowledge related to learning') and *polymath* (a person who is learned in many subjects). *Opsi-* is from the Greek for 'late'. But clearly, in this instance, never too late.

It follows, therefore, that we are all also a

philomath – as with **opsimath** the *-math* part of the word isn't to do with sums, it's connected with learning generally, and as with **arctophile** and **bibliophile**, *philo-* is to do with loving something. Hence a *philomath* is someone who loves learning.

Film Group

This month's film is the 2011 biographical drama **My Week with Marilyn** about Marilyn Monroe's week in England during the shooting of *The Prince & The Pauper* when Monroe was escorted around London by Colin Clark (Eddie Redmayne). Michelle Williams plays Marilyn in a performance that won her a Golden Globe for Best Actress.

John Giovanacci

Starting a Group

Interest Groups are the life blood of the u3a. We can't have enough of them, and we know that the running of these groups depends on the dedication of members of the u3a community who decide to start a group. This can seem a little daunting at first and something that we would never be able to do.

If you have ever thought of starting a group but were not sure how to go about it then there is help at hand. Drawing on the experience of past and present Organisers and the resources available on the national website Falkirk u3a has compiled a step-by-step guide. just for you.

Please find a link below that will take you directly to the guide on the website.

https://falkirku3a.uk/images/u3a/documents/Group_Organisers_Guide_April_24_updated.docx

Don't hesitate to contact me for further support and information.

Jennifer Kightley - jenniferkightley@gmail.com

Maths Teaser

How did you find last month's maths teaser? I hope not too difficult. The question involved compounding (yes, just like compound interest). In case you were not able to solve the problem, the question plus solution now follows.

Question

A lake had a volume of 14,730,000 litres.

Due to decreasing rainfall the volume of the lake is expected to decrease by 2.8% annually. Calculate the expected volume of the lake after 3 years. Give your answer to 3 significant figures.

Solution

The water level in the lake is decreasing by 2.8%. Expressed as a decimal this is $2.8/100 = 0.028$. As the water level is reducing, we have to take 0.028 away from 1. This gives 0.972.

The reduction in water level = $14,730,000 \times 0.972 \times 0.972 \times 0.972$

$$= 14,730,000 \times 0.972^3$$

$$= 13,527,002 \text{ litres}$$

To 3 significant figures this = **13,500,000 litres**

Problem

Sam drives from Paris in France to Zurich in Switzerland. He knows:

- his car will cover an average of 47 miles per gallon of fuel
- the fuel tank holds 50 litres of fuel when it is full
- it is 650 km from Paris to Zurich.

Will Sam be able to complete his journey with one full tank of fuel? Use your working to justify your answer.

1 mile = 1.609 km, 1 gallon = 4.545 litres

Peter Kahan (peterkahan@hotmail.com)