

u3a in Scotland Charity SC030370 Newsletter Autumn 2022



Letter from the Chair

I hope that most of you are managing to hold meetings in person once again. The u3a in Scotland AGM was held on 21st June in Glasgow at St Silas Church. Representatives from 11 u3as were able to attend in person, which was enough to make us quorate. There were, however, too many technical problems to enable it to be a successful hybrid meeting. While Maggy Simms was able to give her talk successfully to those attending on ZOOM, those in the hall only caught the later part of it. Sound issues meant that we had to close the hybrid meeting early into the AGM and continue with those in the room only.

The committee vacancy was not filled and there will shortly be another, as our vice chair, Liz Ervine, will be taking over the role of trustee for Scotland at the Trust AGM. Please consider applying for these vacancies. We plan to continue to meet on ZOOM; it works well.

A few days after the AGM, I went to a well-attended meeting in Banchory to discuss setting up a u3a in that area. In September, Banchory and Deeside u3a held their inaugural meeting at which 100 people signed up. We welcome them to the fold.

A meeting was held in Cumbernauld in September, organised by u3a in Scotland vice-chair and Trustee designate Liz Ervine, Allana Parker, our publicity Officer and myself. Although thirteen people attended, all interested in a u3a being formed, no-one signed up to join the steering committee. Another meeting has been arranged which hopefully will attract more interest, with a minimum of 4

people willing to form a steering committee. The Isle of Bute has also expressed interest in having a u3a.

In mid-September, Professor Francois Vellas, president of the International Association of u3as (AIUTA), made a private visit to Scotland. I met him in Glasgow along with Allana Parker and Maria Chester, member of East Berwickshire u3a and Secretary General of AIUTA. A meeting between Professor Vellas and members of Edinburgh u3a the following day unfortunately had to be cancelled. The Third Age Trust is not a member of AIUTA but individual u3as can join at no extra cost. For further information, contact Maria on mchester.aiuta@gmail.com.

I hope you all had a fruitful u3a Day or week. My own u3a held a stand at Asda in Livingston and we engaged with a lot of people. Many people who had never heard of us, showed an interest so we hope that we will gain some new members from it.

Anne Walsh, Chairperson u3a in Scotland.

u3a in Scotland Summer School – third time lucky!

At last! The Summer School was held from 16 – 18 August 2022 having been postponed first from 2020 then from 2021, when it was replaced by a summer programme of online talks. Stirling Court Hotel, on the beautiful campus of Stirling University, was a most attractive and welcoming venue with views of the Wallace Monument and surrounding scenery. The event was attended by 67 u3a members who came from all over Scotland, from Inverness to Dumfries, Oban to Aberdeen along with five from England. Participants attended one of five courses: *Ancient Civilisations of Mesoamerica* with tutor Maria Chester, East Berwickshire u3a; *Creative Writing*, with Gilly Beckett, East Berwickshire u3a; *Exploring Poetry* with Peter Holmes, Forth Valley u3a; *Immunology* with David I Stott, Bearsden and Milngavie u3a; and *Scottish History 1750-1850* with Bill Bedborough, Sheena Bedborough and Robert Hough, Forth Valley u3a. This was a broad range of topics with something for everyone.

Apart from learning in the seminars, the participants had plenty of opportunities to network, socialise and have fun during tea/coffee breaks, lunches, evening dinners and drinks in the bar. The event was supported by Stirling Council and Stirling Provost Douglas Dodds joined the participants on Tuesday for afternoon tea.



Tuesday evening's entertainment was a quiz organised by Forth Valley u3a's expert quizmaster, George Johnston, assisted by June Johnston. The winning team (see picture) were delighted to receive Wallace Monument memo pads. On Wednesday evening we were entertained by Forth Valley u3a Wee Band, led by Christine Davidson, with a collection of

Scottish music. Participants enjoyed singing along to the music. After the final lunch a small group walked up to the Wallace Monument and around Abbey Craigs woodland.

During the final session there was feedback from each of the courses. They were reported to have been a great success, very worthwhile and enjoyable, with very knowledgeable and enthusiastic tutors. The overall feedback on the event was also very positive, as summarised by one participant: 'Great enjoyment - good company, beautiful setting, interesting stimulating seminars.' The organisation of the event and the services provided by Stirling Court Hotel were highly appreciated. Participants were already asking about the next summer school to be held in August 2024. We are actively looking for tutors so please contact u3a in Scotland if you would like to get involved.

Susan Tester, Forth Valley u3a

West Galloway u3a Celebrate 'Ladies Day' in Style

Linda Ward, secretary for West Galloway u3a organised a spectacular 'Ascot' Ladies Day for members on 16th June. Local restaurant, Henry's, went the extra mile and gave us the sole use of the place, decorating it in a racing theme. Live televised Ladies Day at Ascot was shown in the dining room and bar so that members could follow the racing and their favourite horses while enjoying a delicious meal. Canapes and complementary drinks were served to start the event which was then followed by a marvellous buffet.



Everyone was dressed to 'the nines' as you would expect on Ladies Day, large hats and stunning outfits made the occasion really special. Even our Chairman Charlie Stewart was dressed in pink from head to toe with a fabulous sequined top hat. Raffle prizes were drawn and a special gift of a diamante brooch in the shape

of a horse was presented for the most outrageous 'Ascot' outfit.



East Kilbride u3a

East Kilbride u3a are getting back to their usual classes and outings after the unusual last 2 years. Members had a lovely day out in June on their annual summer outing. They visited Callendar House in Falkirk and then enjoyed some free time in Stirling before a meal at The

Stirling Highland Hotel. To mark the 40th anniversary of the u3a movement, East Kilbride members are hoping to plant a commemorative tree.

Glasgow West End 40th Anniversary Celebration Events

We got off to a wet start with the sausage sizzle but were lucky to be able to cook the sausages and prepare the food before the heavens opened, and then finish the evening off under the gazebos. Next, we were off to The Grosvenor Hotel for our afternoon tea. Our third event was our Walking West End Quiz which was a lot of fun. We finished up with our Quiz and Fish and Chip supper

night and I think a great time was had by all. We were also very pleased to welcome members of Bearsden & Milngavie, East Renfrewshire and Paisley u3as.



Gail Donaldson, Glasgow West End u3a

Coffee Morning, East Lothian u3a

The East Lothian u3a held an Open Coffee Morning in Haddington town centre on the Saturday of u3a week. We chose that day to coincide with what is normally a busy time in the town, with a monthly Farmers' Market taking place. And, of course, there was cake -quite a lot, in fact - thanks to our stalwart team of volunteers and bakers. This was the first Coffee Morning since the COVID pandemic and lockdown and the first organised by a new Committee so nobody knew quite what to expect. It turned out to be much busier than all expectations with both potential new members and current u3a members, many of whom came along to meet up with old friends in person.

Dianne Murray, East Lothian u3a

Tree Planting

Brechin and District u3a



After a long discussion in the Brechin and District u3a about how to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the movement, we thought about planting a tree but were worried about planting it on public property where vandals could gain access to it and cause damage. We decided that a tree should be of use to the community and approached the Brechin Community Garden and asked what they thought. They came back with the idea of fruit trees so the fruit could be given away to the local community. With that in mind, Brechin and District u3a purchased two fruit trees, an apple and a plum. These have been duly planted and are both doing well.

Pete Stanton, Brechin and District u3a

Isle of Skye u3a tree planting for the Late Queen's Jubilee



Fifteen members of The Isle of Skye u3a marked the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting trees in Armadale Castle Gardens. The ceremony took place on Sunday 5 June, part of the late Queen's 'Green Canopy' initiative which encourages groups and individuals to 'plant a tree for the Jubilee'. Accompanied by Armadale Castle staff, they planted three young *Abies forrestii*, a species of conifer from

Western China. The trees are part of Armadale Castle's 'Trees for the Future' Programme, a collaboration with the International Conifer Conservation Programme at The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. David Hammond, Chairman of Skye u3a said: "Our members wanted to honour Her Majesty during her special celebratory weekend, and when a tree planting was suggested, we contacted Armadale Castle Gardens for help. Lisa Pook and her team made it possible for us to plant not one but three special rare trees. We are delighted to mark this special occasion by leaving a permanent legacy in Armadale's magnificent gardens."

Ian Burn, Isle of Skye u3a

Forth Valley u3a Tree Grove

When most of us in the u3a movement were born, the level of CO₂ in the



atmosphere was about 310 ppm... in 2022 it is 417ppm and rising fast. Whilst there is much to be done, one element of reducing CO₂ in the atmosphere is to plant trees – lots of them!

This prompted some of us in Forth Valley u3a to support a project that is dedicated to the rewilding of the

Caledonian Forest in the Highlands of Scotland. *Trees for Life* is a registered Scottish charity, and their vision is of “a revitalised wild forest in the Highlands of Scotland, providing space for wildlife to flourish and communities to thrive”. To date, they have planted nearly two million trees and plan to plant millions more.

Some 37 members of Forth Valley u3a funded a tree grove with *Trees for Life*. The Forth Valley u3a Grove is a continuous project that allows new trees to be added at any time. Anyone, whether a u3a member or not, can donate more trees to our grove. Each additional donation can be accompanied by a dedication, perhaps to a new-born grandchild, a birthday celebration, charitable activity such as walking or running or, perhaps, just because one wants to.

The tree grove can be found on the Dundreggan estate, just to the northwest of Fort Augustus and the southern end of Loch Ness.

Nicoll Fletcher, Forth Valley u3a

Open Day at Cupar u3a

For the first time since 2017, a ‘Meet Cupar u3a’ Open Day will be held in the Corn Exchange, Cupar, on Saturday 15th October. The event is being organised to give people in North East Fife the opportunity to find out about the wide range of activities on offer at Cupar u3a. Group contacts from the various Cupar u3a groups will be on hand in the Corn Exchange’s lower hall to discuss the organisation with visitors and answer any questions about the many activity groups. Cupar u3a chair James Tebbs commented: “It’s been a few years since we held a similar event and we felt it was time we did something to raise our profile and invite people to come and see the amazing range of activities we offer. We members may be ‘sold’ on Cupar u3a but I have no doubt that the organisation isn’t as well- known as it should be in North East Fife. Yet we provide a fantastic opportunity for retired and semi-retired people to ‘learn, laugh and live’, as the u3a nationally puts it”.

Local History Groups Out and About

Isle of Arran u3a



On a sunny August day, the Arran u3a Local History Group climbed up to the site of the Arran Cursus for a talk with Dr Kenny Brophy, senior lecturer in Archaeology at Glasgow University. A cursus is a rectangular enclosure with man-made banks of earth. There are over 50

remaining in Scotland, but as they can't be readily seen from the ground not many people have heard of them. A possible cursus was identified by LiDAR from the air a couple of years ago, just below the surface on Arran. Dr Brophy confirmed this last year and returned this summer with his students to uncover a few more of the secrets of this Neolithic monument. In the bags of findings, we saw crafted blades and worked arrowheads made of flint and local pitchstone. The students had found patches of charcoal but not enough to suggest remains of wooden posts that would have been burnt as dramatic torches. Why did these earlier settlers use precious farming labour and time to build something so big and monumental? We mused on this magic and enigmatic place as we stood on the hill looking out to sea.

Mandy Lovejoy, Isle of Arran u3a

Tweeddale u3a

The Local History group of Tweeddale u3a made Peebles part of a national cultural event by participating in 'Doors Open Days', an international celebration of culture and heritage. The event was advertised across Scotland, inviting people to follow a trail around Peebles to discover how and where people enjoyed themselves in times gone by. There was drinking and dancing and football - but some unexpected pastimes too! There was a quiz for children, and a trailblazer certificate for them to collect. The local history group worked hard to produce all the information and illustrations for the self-guided trail, and was awarded a community enhancement grant from Scottish Borders Council.

Sandra Whitnell, Tweeddale u3a

Poets' Corner

Chris Blake is a member of Glasgow West End U3A and has offered to share this short poem with other Scottish U3A members:

Pavement Perceptions

Am I becoming a grumpy old man –
or is it really the actual case
That my safe and protected pavement
has become a hazardous place?

As a little child on my three-wheeled bike
I would play there and have little races;
But now it's become a racing track
for adults with determined! faces.

Whether they be cyclists or simply someone running,
If they bump into me
The result could be
More than simply stunning....

And what about the wheelie bins –
those recycling and rubbish carriers?
Whatever their various collection days,
they are also pavement barriers.

Another great grump to add to this list
 highlights a nuisance that's quite often missed -
It's the theft of my space by the over-thick hedge
 that pushes me close to the pavement's far edge!

Then there's a hazard, increasingly common,
that sometimes makes me bitter -
The discarded food or packaging
of some lazy moron's litter!

Add to these the motorists, ostensibly road users,
Who use my space
As a parking place
And become public space abusers.

It seems to me (and perhaps to you?)
that we need some separation
To improve the lives and attitudes
of our travelling population.

For decades the experts have researched and reported
but their recommendations remain unsupported.
We need government action, both central and local,
and more grumpy folk being noisily vocal!

Online Across Scotland

We are looking to widen the portfolio of interest groups and short courses offered on the Online Across Scotland platform. Please get in touch with u3a in Scotland if your u3a has groups meeting on ZOOM that would like to broaden their membership via this platform.

The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed to this edition. The Spring edition is due out in March 2023. Contributions should be sent by February 28 2023, preferably by email, to:
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