

u3a in Scotland Charity  
SC030370  
Newsletter Autumn 2021



Sailing ships in 19<sup>th</sup> century Glasgow

Welcome to this autumn 2021 edition of the u3a in Scotland newsletter.

A new committee was elected in June and has been meeting on Zoom every month, led by new Chairperson, Anne Walsh.

Remember the Trust are still offering tutorials on how to use Zoom and how to run a 'hybrid' meeting. All details can be found on the website.

Thank you to those who contributed to this edition. We are always pleased to receive articles for publication. The Spring edition is due out in March 2022. Contributions should be sent by February 28, preferably by email, to: [newsletter.u3ainScotland@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.u3ainScotland@gmail.com)

The Editor

# Letter from u3a in Scotland Chairperson



I joined West Lothian u3a in October 2015 when I had already been retired from work for 7 years. I had always attended evening classes on many different subjects but due to cutbacks, my local authority was no longer offering leisure classes and so u3a seemed a natural progression.

I joined the Singing, Craft and Quiz Groups and in the spring, the Garden Visits and Walking Groups; I had been a regular rambler during the 14 years I had lived in London.

A year later I joined the committee as treasurer and the following year the u3a in Scotland committee, becoming temporary treasurer in March 2019 and full treasurer at the AGM in June 2019. I could have remained as treasurer for a further year but decided to stand for Chair at the June AGM as that position was becoming vacant.

I am also a Trust Volunteer and hope to help start up new u3as. Although now living in West Lothian, I originate from what is now North Lanarkshire, an area which does not have a single u3a...I plan to help rectify this!

Many of you will already have had some contact with me when I was treasurer, through the Facebook page that I administer – u3as based in Scotland, at previous assemblies either online or in person, at Online Across Scotland events...or perhaps you have attended Zoom tutorials I have given.

The Third Age Trust also has a new chairperson, Liz Thackray, appointed in August. Liz has very kindly agreed to be one of the speakers at our online Assembly on November 30, as have Sam Mauger, CEO of the Trust and Paul Martinez, convenor of the Pathfinder's Group that compiled the report on Retention and Recruitment.

The November 30 Assembly will not be limited to one person per u3a. Numbers will only be limited by the capacity of the Zoom account so will be on a first come first served basis. We will of course try to ensure that every u3a that wants a place will have at least one. If, however, your internet connection is poor, or if you do not have one at all, you can still join a Zoom meeting by telephone.

Our website is regularly updated so please check it out if you are looking for information. There are also links to other interest groups and events that may not be part of u3a in Scotland but have close ties.

*Anne Walsh*

*Chairperson u3a in Scotland*

# Third Age Trust

Covid-19 has created many difficulties and strange situations but u3a members have risen to the challenge and made great efforts to keep members together learning and socialising. My thanks go out to all those committees and members who have fought to keep u3as going during these unprecedented times. It is your energy and enthusiasm that keep our movement alive.

I have been impressed with how quickly most u3as took to Zoom and other online platforms. Poor broadband reception has been a problem in some areas but hopefully over time this will improve because there will always be a place for online learning.

u3a:OnlineAcrossScotland came into being as a response to lockdown. We now have almost 30 interest groups. Please have look at the website and join in. Online Across Scotland is a great way to share ideas and thoughts with members throughout the whole country. It is also a way for groups to join up and reach a viable number of members. Our Archaeology group in Edinburgh had only a few members but when it joined the Online Across Scotland platform it swelled to over 70.

The Tu3a is also continuing to operate post Covid.

We now have two regional networks working well. The Central Belt Network and the Borders Network. They are a great way of sharing resources and spreading information. In time I hope to establish more of these networks throughout Scotland.

There has been interest in establishing new u3as in Banchory, the Isle of Islay and Cumbernauld. If you know anyone who lives in these areas who might like to sit on a start-up committee, please. let me know.

Unfortunately, we have lost Wester Ross and Turiff u3as due to declining numbers.

There are some exciting events coming up which you might like to support: The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) is to host two events:

On 26th October 2021 Val McDermid will speak about her career as a writer and on 2nd November 2021 speakers from Strathclyde University will talk about healthy ageing. Brian Taylor will host a debate on the motion:

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks most of our learning is done when we are young".

u3a are taking part in the Cop 26 conference in Glasgow. We will have two slots: one on 5th November and one on 9th November. Look out for more details which will be published on the u3a in Scotland website.

I was at a Board Meeting in Milton Keynes last week. It was good to get back to face to face meetings. The most important issue we discussed was the decline in membership which has gone down by 20%. There has to be a concerted effort to relaunch and recruit. Grants are available for relaunching. All the information you need on how to claim one is on the Trust website under finance.

The u3a is an organisation that depends on all members taking part and being active. Please consider serving on your committee or leading an interest group. There are workshops by the Trust that you can sign up for which might give you the confidence to give it a go. It has been a very busy time for Trustees but it is a role I enjoy very much. I am thoroughly enjoying being part of such a relevant and necessary movement which aims to improve the quality of older people's lives.

*Ann Keating, Trustee for Scotland*

# Your new u3a in Scotland Committee

## Vice-Chair: Elizabeth Ervine

I have been a u3a member since my retirement six years ago. I belong to both Bearsden and Milngavie u3a and to the more recently formed Glasgow West End u3a. GWE u3a started four years ago and I have been Chairperson since then with my tenure finishing this month. I am a member of the Spanish Conversation, Current Affairs, Coffee and Chat and Book Groups. For me, u3a has been a great place to continue learning and meet people.

The pandemic has been and still is a challenging time but we continued on Zoom and are starting to meet face to face again. This is an important time for u3a UK and I am privileged to be part of that planning process.

## Secretary: Rosie Alexander

I live in the Scottish Borders where I joined Four Border Abbeys u3a in 2012 and have served on the committee in various positions for six years.

Like so many others, our u3a is beginning to open up to “in person” sessions and has so far held two monthly meetings. During lockdown, no monthly meetings took place but the Chair kept in touch with us all with what was happening. Many interest groups were indeed able to meet on Zoom, as did the committee, and some of these online meetings are continuing for the time being.

At present I am not heavily involved in activities but hope to resume in the New Year. I look forward to meeting you all at our next Assembly on November 30.

## Treasurer: Margaret Moffat

I joined Dumfries u3a in September 2014, along with my husband. We had heard about u3a while on holiday in Cyprus earlier that year and on our return home we made enquiries locally, discovering that Dumfries had a well- established u3a.

During the course of the next few years I joined various groups, namely Local History, Alexander Technique, Tai Chi, Social Dancing, Coffee and Lunch. In 2017 I was appointed Treasurer, a position I still hold. In 2020 I joined the u3a in Scotland committee and was appointed Treasurer in June 2021.

## Committee Member: Eric Moffat

I joined Dumfries u3a in September 2014 and was elected to the committee in 2015, becoming Chairperson in 2016. I joined the u3a in Scotland committee in 2019 and was appointed Membership Secretary.



*The Five Sisters, West Lothian*

## Committee Member: Linda Matheson



I am a member of Ayr u3a. I joined just three years ago and found a lovely group of people with whom I socialise and learn. I am a member of the Canasta, Backgammon, Craft and Natter and Spanish groups. My husband and I organise our local weekly Zoom quiz night and also the monthly U.K. Interu3a Quiz. (Details can be found on the Ayr u3a website. Join us?)

I have a passion for social media and the use of technology to bring people together. Not everybody can travel to local groups and activities, and the pandemic, if nothing else, has shown how useful online communication can be. I would like to see the u3a reach out to the communities of carers and those with disabilities and offer them online opportunities. It is for both these reasons that I applied successfully to join the u3a in Scotland committee.

u3a in Scotland now has a Twitter account @u3aScotland.

## Committee Member: Karyn Wilson-Hill



On retirement from lecturing in English studies in France, where I lived for over forty years, in 2017 I decided to return to Scotland and quickly joined Edinburgh u3a to help me explore new interests such as Yoga and Scottish History. I quickly realised what a vital role the organisation plays in enriching the lives of retirees.

I was elected to the committee of Edinburgh u3a, where I was a Groups Coordinator and then Chair, before moving to the Isle of Arran. Co-opted onto the steering committee of the fledgling Isle of Arran u3a, Scotland's newest, I have been involved in setting up new groups as Groups Coordinator and am a member of the Gardening Group. When the u3a:OnlineAcrossScotland platform was launched in January this year I joined the steering committee as Groups Coordinator. I am also a member of the Trustee Support Group's team of volunteers.

I hope to make a worthwhile contribution to the u3a In Scotland Committee as a representative of the island communities, making their specific needs heard and helping the u3a thrive in the more remote regions of Scotland.



*Slavery shackles*

## u3a in Scotland summer programme - a great success!

With their popular Summer School postponed yet again, to summer 2022, u3a in Scotland decided to run a 'taster' programme of live talks on Zoom over two weeks in August.

All the courses and lectures were quickly booked up. Participants were from 36 u3as all over Scotland – Shetland to Wigtownshire, Mull and Iona to Dundee. As ever, there was the extra buzz of a live session, with many penetrating questions and very positive feedback. A big thank-you to our speakers who all survived the occasionally unpredictable technology.

There were four Creative Writing sessions hosted by the tutor Gilly Beckett, East Berwickshire u3a. 'She made us write, rewrite, think, shorten and drew out ideas and skills we didn't know were there. An all-round excellent course', said participant Anne Walsh.

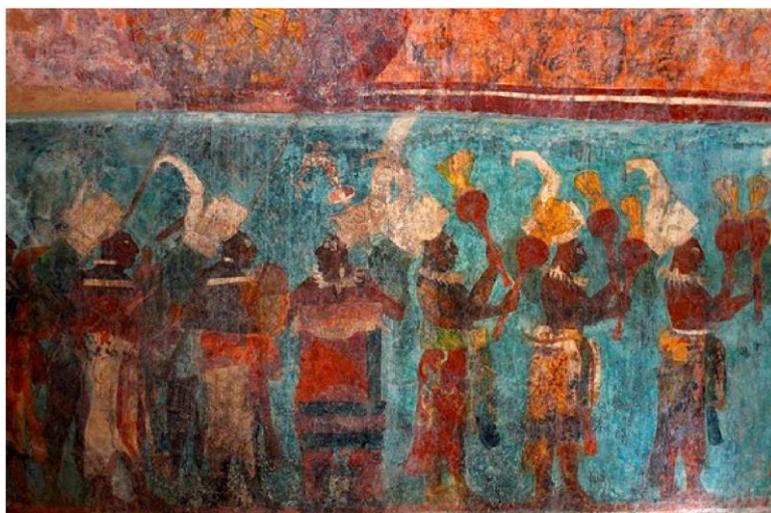
The history course covered aspects of 'Scottish history from 1750 to 1850' in four talks.

Speakers Bill Bedborough, Sheena Bedborough and Robert Hough are all members of Forth Valley u3a. Bill gave us a whistle-stop tour of technological innovation, education, the economy and social conditions as Scotland entered the industrial age, while Robert used the example of Glasgow and the Clyde to highlight these dramatic developments. Sheena introduced a number of the major influencers of the Scottish Enlightenment in this period.

Guest speaker Sir Geoff Palmer enthralled us with a powerful account of the effect of Empire and the slave trade on his two home countries; Scotland and Jamaica.

‘Bonampak: The Sistine Chapel of the Maya’ was a beautifully illustrated and fascinating introduction to the art and history of the Maya people by Maria Chester of East Berwickshire u3a, while David Stott of Bearsden & Milngavie u3a gave us an immunologist’s view of a very topical subject: ‘Vaccines from Edward Jenner to the Present’.

We look forward to the fleshed-out courses next August at the [u3a in Scotland Summer School](#)



Bonampak Janet

*Holland*

## Art Installation at Dumfries House

East Renfrewshire u3a answered a call from Ashleigh Douglas, Future Textile Manager for the Prince's Foundation at Dumfries House, Cumnock, Ayrshire to knit squares no smaller than 20cm (8 inches) which would form part of a colourful art installation. This was Prince Charles's idea and aims to celebrate knitting as a traditional craft form and highlight the mental health benefits which practising a skill can bring as well as promoting training in sewing and textiles.

Several people immediately volunteered to start knitting and we were also joined by the Knitting and Crochet group. As this is a sustainable project, we were asked to use ends of yarn or unravel knitted garments and reuse the wool. There wasn't a pattern given for the squares, so after much discussion about how many stitches to use, Myra Dyer designed a template showing u3a in the centre.



I started collecting the finished squares at the end of May and we were so impressed by Rosalind Holmes's contribution that it was decided to keep Rosalind's beautiful blanket and use it on u3a Day instead of donating it to the 'Knitwise' project and then keep it for future ERu3a events.

Nearly 100 squares were completed. The variety of colours and styles was superb.



The squares were packed up together with an East Renfrewshire u3a Come and Join Us leaflet and then delivered to Dumfries House on the 18<sup>th</sup> June.

Over 9000 squares were donated from as far afield as Australia, United States and of course Newton Mearns! The squares were sewn together by staff from the Foundation and prisoners at Cornton Vale as part of a rehabilitation initiative. The final art installations weigh a staggering 130 kilos and measure 112m x 3m.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> September the finished art installation was unveiled by the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay. After a countdown of 3-2-1 the huge art installation was lowered and unfurled down the Adam Bridge, which dates back to 1760, and was originally the main entrance to Dumfries House. Prince Charles offered his congratulations to all the knitters, who ranged in age from 9 to 101, saying that the art installation was wonderful and Camilla remarked on the colours.



Some of our blue and yellow squares can be seen on the bottom right of the picture and some more neutral squares are at the top of the middle blanket. Unfortunately the finished article was only on display for that afternoon and the members of the Garden Visits Group are disappointed that they will not be able to view it when they visit at the end of September. However, it will be on public display again later in the year before it is cut into smaller blankets, which will be donated to charity for members of the Homeless community in Scotland.

*Allison Kershaw*

# Cupar u3a Gardening Group

One of the aims and joys of gardening for so many of us is to have colour all year round. Cupar u3a's first Gardening Group (we now have two) meets monthly from March to October in members' gardens and discuss what needs done throughout the gardening year with practical sessions on subjects such as pruning, dividing perennials etc. We also take cuttings, share ideas, plants and often frustration! Before breaking up for the winter last year, we had a look at what was still blooming in our Scottish east coast gardens and took photos to illustrate our "top tips" for Autumn colour.

## Interu3a Quiz

“Of which country did one of its leading politicians say ‘How can you govern a country that has 246 varieties of cheese.’

“The surname of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Flemish artist matches the forename of a Brazilian Formula One racing driver. What is the common name?”

Are you a keen quizzier with a head full of random facts? Join us!

The above questions were asked at recent InterU3A quiz nights. This U.K. wide quiz has been running monthly since June 2020 on Zoom. Teams from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland compete on the last Wednesday of the month.

Quiz 17 will be held on 27<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm. Teams of up to four people are welcomed.

For more details and to submit an entry form go to [https://www.ayru3a.com/index.php?page=extra\\_page&no=5](https://www.ayru3a.com/index.php?page=extra_page&no=5)

*Linda Matheson, Ayr u3a*

## u3a:Online Across Scotland

Difficulty accessing u3a groups and activities? Interested in subject areas not available locally? Most of us prefer to meet up personally with other people, especially after the last few months, but this is not always practical.

Check out the new u3a:OnlineAcrossScotland.

This u3a was formed as a consequence of the pandemic to enable people to participate in groups and activities permanently online. These include languages (French and Spanish conversation), Ukulele, playwriting, Sustainable Sewing, Laughter Yoga and many more. Recent additions include art lectures on The Glasgow Boys and Girls and The Scottish Colourists, Italian literature and Astronomy. The new Archaeology Group will also offer an exciting programme of talks. New subjects are being added regularly. Monthly online talks are also offered.

Maybe there is a subject you could offer to Scottish members outside your local u3a? Contact u3a:OnlineAcrossScotland to discuss your thoughts.

Any member of a Scottish u3a can access these activities for free. If there is no u3a accessible to you, joining Trust u3a will give access. This is just £10 per year.

Check out the website for the full range of subjects offered.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/onlineacrossscotland/groups/>

*Linda Matheson, Ayr u3a*

## FACEBOOK PAGES

u3as based in Scotland -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2679956865626999/> For members of a u3a in Scotland or for Trust u3a members who live in Scotland.

u3a: Keeping in Touch -

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch/> For anyone who is a member of a u3a. I believe it was originally supposed to be confined to members in the UK but there are members who live in Spain and Australia.

Craft u3a - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CraftU3A/> For any u3a member interested in crafts and crafting, whether or not you belong to a craft group in your own u3a.

u3a: Let's Talk Tech -

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%3A%20let%27s%20talk%20tech&\\_epa=SEARCH BOX&\\_eps=comet.group](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%3A%20let%27s%20talk%20tech&_epa=SEARCH%20BOX&_eps=comet.group) This is a new group where members can mention issues they have, particularly with hybrid meetings. There are some members who are able to offer advice and there is a weekly drop-in Zoom session from 1.00 till 2.00pm ish on a Wednesday. The link will be posted on the page, probably each week. u3a Gardening Group -

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%20gardening%20group&\\_epa=SEARCH BOX&\\_eps=comet.group](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%20gardening%20group&_epa=SEARCH%20BOX&_eps=comet.group) For members who are interested in gardening, whether or not you belong to a gardening group in your own u3a. u3a: Online Across Scotland -

<https://www.facebook.com/u3aoas/> This page is associated with the Online Across Scotland network for sharing groups activities throughout Scotland. U3a Scotland PR club –

[https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%20scotland%20pr%20club&\\_epa=SEARCH BOX&\\_eps=SERP TOP TAB](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=u3a%20scotland%20pr%20club&_epa=SEARCH%20BOX&_eps=SERP%20TOP%20TAB) This page is for members of the u3a PR club, Scotland.