

Charity Number SC021683

**November 2023 Newsletter**

# **Taking a Long View**



*'Railings' – an image by Earl Gemmell of the Photographic Group, taken during a 'photowalk' in Dock Park in late October.*

On 27th October the Dumfries u3a Photographic Group embarked on a 'photowalk' in Dock Park, *writes group leader Terry Howat.*

The weather was dry and the Nith was as calm as a mill pond, which led to some great pictures with mirror images in the water.

Our annual competition, which starts on November 10th, is for images taken on October 27th. That's the only requirement, so our 'Photowalk' morning proved a great opportunity for everyone to get some good shots for the competition.

The group (formerly known as the Camera Group) will be reviewing other pictures taken by members, along with the competition, at the November 10th meeting at Kirkton. New members welcome.

# Bridge over Untroubled Water



Another image – ‘K M Bridge’ by Graham Johnstone – from the Photographic Group’s October ‘photowalk’.

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## **Your u3a Committee Needs YOU!**

Several actual and impending resignations from the Dumfries u3a committee – for health or family reasons – means there will need to be several new members on the committee at the 2024 AGM next March. Without new recruits it is possible the organisation may not be able to fulfil its legal obligations and keep things going. There is also the question of being able to spread the work across a larger number of people, in order that a handful of people are not faced with increasing amounts of work.

PLEASE consider joining the committee. The more people step forward the smaller amount of work each committee member has to do. If you wish to know more please contact Margaret Moffat at [u3adumfrieschair@gmail.com](mailto:u3adumfrieschair@gmail.com) or Jeremy Shearmur at [secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com)

# Not a Bowl of Cherries

*Dumfries u3a business secretary Jeremy Shearmur reports on the organisation's November monthly meeting at the North West Resource Centre.*

On Thursday November 2nd, Dame Barbara Kelly gave an engaging talk to members of u3a Dumfries, on the theme: 'Life is Not a Bowl of Cherries'.

She spoke about the range of different public duties which she had undertaken during the course of her life, and the way in which they were rooted in the tradition of public service which she had inherited from her parents.

She spoke with great warmth about Dalbeattie, where she had grown up, and where her father had been Head of the primary school. She discussed the wide variety of enterprises which had been there when she was a child, none of which are now operating.

Professionally, she decided not to take up teaching, and became a partner in the family's farming enterprise. She also faced challenges concerning the care of two children with cystic fibrosis.

However, she was also able to undertake limited work in the voluntary sector, and it was on this – by way of invitations to take on further duties – that she built, in the development of her career in the public service. This included becoming Chair of the Scottish Consumer Council, and subsequently holding a variety of other positions, national and local.

She spoke about the difficulties of operating in fields in which it was expected that positions would be held by men – and suggested that, on this score, there was still a lot of inequality. In this context, she clearly relished the role she played as Equal Opportunities Commissioner for Scotland.

In response to a question as to whether there was a professional career which she was sorry that she had not been able to pursue, she indicated that she would have liked to have been an artist.

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## Future Newsletters

Items for future newsletters should be sent to:

[newsletter.u3adumfries@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.u3adumfries@gmail.com)

*Please note the next newsletter will be out in early December.*

# Remembering the 'Paddy Line'



*Guest speaker Alan Maclellan, in railway uniform, during his talk about the former Dumfries to Stranraer railway line (the 'Port Road'), which he gave at the North West Resource Centre on Thursday 5th October. (Photo: Ronnie Galloway)*

The first u3a Dumfries monthly meeting at the North West Resource Centre featured an entertaining talk by railway enthusiast Alan Maclellan of Dalbeattie, who shared his interest in the 'Paddy Line', in a session that included excerpts from an archive film of a steam locomotive-hauled train journey along the line, intercut with his own footage of the condition of the line as it is now, when he walked much of it recently to raise funds for Cancer Research.

As Alan was able to show, much of the line as it is now, while often still visible on the ground, is not easily walkable or even passable, with gates, fenced-off bridges and viaducts, and overgrown stretches impeding progress, whilst, on the other hand, some sections have been covered in tarmac, enabling farmers to use it to access their land more easily.

The archive film, showing a journey made shortly before the line

was closed, following the recommendations by Dr Beeching in the 1960s, illustrated what a tourist attraction it would be now, running through the often spectacular landscape and scenery of Galloway. Alan augmented this with photographs of how rural stations and other features of the line appeared during its heyday. These images included Maxwelltown, Killywhan, Kirkgunzeon, Palnackie, Gatehouse of Fleet and Creetown, as well as the towns of Castle Douglas and Newton Stewart.

Alan included several amusing anecdotes in his talk and audience members commented on how enjoyable they had found it. Wesley Paxton, another railway enthusiast, thanked Alan and presented him with a book token as a mark of appreciation for the talk.

In conclusion, Alan also announced that a railway museum will be opening shortly at Dumfries railway station.

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## Group Updates

### Table Tennis Group



The Dumfries u3a Table Tennis group had a friendly match against players from the Dumfries Table Tennis Club's Over-50s group on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September.

Five two-player teams from each group took part, with Dumfries TTC lending a player to the u3a after one of their players went down with Covid. Matches followed the Dumfries league format, with each player having two singles and a doubles. Each game was

played up to 11, which needed a little getting used to for u3a players who normally play up to 21!

The final score saw Dumfries Over-50s win in three matches (5-0, 4-1 and 3-2), and u3a taking two matches (3-2 and 3-1). So though the u3a group lost 3-2 overall, everyone enjoyed some friendly competition against different players – though as several of the u3a group attend the Over-50s sessions, their styles were familiar.

Both groups contributed excellent cakes for half-time socialising, and are looking forward to a return match next year.

*u3a table tennis is on Friday afternoons at Kirkton Village Hall; contact Bill Todd on 01387 770340 for more information.*

*Dumfries TTC Over-50s group (organised by u3a member Anne Borrowdale) plays on Monday and Thursday mornings at the club in Shakespeare Street Dumfries, contact [ttdumfries@gmail.com](mailto:ttdumfries@gmail.com).*

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## **Birding Group**



*Group leader Monica Callendar (right) with some group members on a recent visit to Castledykes Park.*

# Off to See the Lights



*Blackpool's Heritage Tram (photo: Clive Brown)*

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*Dumfries u3a committee member Clive Brown reports on a recent trip to Blackpool illuminations with Stewartry u3a:*

When Stewartry u3a invited Dumfries u3a to join its coach trip to see the annual Blackpool Illuminations on 9th October, Patricia and I jumped at the chance to tick another item off our 'bucket list'.

On the Monday afternoon, therefore, along with five other Dumfries u3a members, we met the coach at Wickes car park at 1.30pm, to be welcomed on board by Stewartry u3a chairman, Stephen Bullock. En route, we called at Tebay services for a quick drink, as we had heard there had been a traffic accident on the motorway that might delay our arrival. All went well, however, and we arrived around 4.40pm, ready for our fish and chips at Lilys' restaurant.

Feeling well refreshed, most of us took a walk along the Prom, which was getting increasingly misty, so much so that we walked right past the famous Tower without seeing it. But as we returned, on the other side of the road, the lower half of the tower became visible, with the top disappearing into low cloud. A few minutes

later the cloud lifted and the whole tower came into view.

Returning to the coach we were driven to the Blackpool Tram Depot to have a ride on the resort's Heritage Tram, a lovingly restored 1930s tramcar that had been retired when new rolling stock was introduced a few years ago. It now runs special excursions for visitors – and, I suppose – for locals too.

The tram ride was the highlight of the trip; we joined it at 7pm, just as the illuminations were turned on. And what a ride it was! Having not seen them before I was quite taken aback at the numerous illuminated tableaux depicting several cartoon, local and historic events – they were incredible in their detail and complexity.

Our volunteer guide kept up a running commentary by running up and downstairs to keep us all informed, even telling us where and how in 1948 Harry Corbett originally found his puppet, Sooty. But I won't spoil the story; you'll have to go there to hear it yourself!

Our tram journey ended back at the depot where we boarded the coach for the return, again stopping at Tebay for a break, and arriving back at Wickes car park at 11.15pm, allowing us to make a leisurely drive home, with the 'bucket list' one item lighter.

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## More Park Views



*Two further images from the Photographic Group's October 'photowalk': 'Where's the band gone?' by Geoff Walter (left) and 'The size of trees' by Terry Howat (right).*

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**Keep up to date with Dumfries u3a by visiting:**  
<https://u3asites.org.uk/Dumfries>