



Guest speaker at the March AGM, on Thursday 7th March, will be u3a Dumfries member, Ian Gasse, who will talk about the 1909 Dumfries Burghs parliamentary by-election.

Charity Number SC021683

February 2024 Newsletter

A Time for Meeting

In this month's newsletter we are giving early notice of the u3a Dumfries 2024 annual general meeting, which will be taking place on Thursday, 7th March, at the Aberlour North West Resource Centre, commencing at 2pm.

This year's meeting is particularly important as several members of the current committee are standing down, and the organisation needs some members to come forward to replace them. The main office-holders on the committee are all staying on for now, but we need several new volunteers, in order to spread the committee work amongst a larger number of people. It's also vital to have more than a bare minimum on board to allow for possible absences through holidays or illness and still to remain quorate.

Please don't be reticent about coming forward. We can only be sure of the future of u3a Dumfries if enough people are prepared to take on some of the work – either as committee members or as group leaders. We are a self-help organisation, after all!

February Monthly Meeting

Our next monthly meeting is at the North West Resource Centre on Thursday, February 1st. We will have u3a secretary, Jeremy Shearmur, as speaker, with the title of his talk being *Lost in Translation?*

This will be a light-hearted discussion of some problems relating to translation. Topics to be discussed will range through colours, literary allusions, French politicians and some striking issues raised by the translation of the Bible.

Future Newsletters

Items for future newsletters should be sent to:

newsletter.u3adumfries@gmail.com

Please note the next newsletter will be out in early March.

The Loch Arthur Journey

January's guest speaker at the u3a monthly meeting – on Thursday 11th January – was Barry Graham, from the Loch Arthur Camphill Community, who gave an illustrated history of the community from its inception at Beeswing forty years ago.



U3a secretary Jeremy Shearmur (left) introducing guest speaker Barry Graham (seated) for the January u3a talk, 'Our Journey over the Past 40 Years'. (Photo: Ronnie Galloway)

The Loch Arthur Community at Beeswing was founded in 1984, when the Camphill Community Trust purchased 500 acres of land to establish what has become an extraordinarily successful community enterprise, which derived originally from the ideas of the early C20 Austrian educationalist Rudolf Steiner, and his view of basing children's education and the treatment of people on a holistic recognition of the entire person.

The first Camphill Community initiative in Scotland was in Aberdeen, where a follower of Steiner, Dr Karl König, established Camphill House in 1940, based on Steiner's view that a community should embrace the threefold sense of the spiritual, economic and social aspects of humanity. Gradually, the movement spread and

the Trust opened another centre in the Yorkshire Dales in 1950.

Barry Graham joined the Loch Arthur community at Beeswing in spring 1985 and has helped to develop it – over almost forty years – into the internationally known enterprise it now is. At first, there were five or six people looking after the land and occupying the buildings that were already there. Now, in 2024, 120 people are able to derive their livelihoods from Loch Arthur, with 75 people living within the community, including 30 people with learning difficulties, and with between 20 and 25 volunteers.

Loch Arthur has, in fact, become a fine example of rural regeneration, with a creamery, a bakery and large-scale gardens, enabling it to run a successful farm shop and restaurant, both of which are visited regularly by people from across Dumfries and Galloway – as well as from the wider world.

Barry Graham said part of the success was due to “letting the person’s true being shine out” and adopting a “can-do” philosophy, but it can be a very intense life, lived 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Mutual support for one another is a crucial aspect of the community, and has helped make it successful, both as a community of people, and as an enterprise which now has a turnover of between £4 and £5 million a year.

But Barry went on to suggest that the community is now more challenged than when it began. The demands of contemporary life – regulations and technology – present new challenges, and he acknowledged that Brexit has made things more difficult, in terms of continuing to offer opportunities for overseas volunteers. There is now, for example, a person working full-time for Loch Arthur on obtaining visas, so that people from Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, for example, can join the community.

Loch Arthur’s income is now from three sources. There is, first, money from the people living there in social care; second, trading income from the shop and restaurant, etc; and, third, grants from trusts and foundations. At the same time, expenditure is rising because of cost of living increases and from the number of people now being employed.

Several questions were put by audience members at the end of the talk, and, finally, Barry was warmly applauded, as well as being thanked by Jeremy Shearmur, on behalf of u3a Dumfries.

Group Updates

Byways and Beyond Group



Byways and Beyond recently enjoyed their first walk of the year, writes *Ann Beattie*. Irene, one of our members, has been involved with the setting-up of a cycle path from Penpont to Thornhill, the first part of which has now been completed. She invited us to come and enjoy a walk there and we were delighted to accept her invitation. The walk took place on a beautiful crisp sunny winter morning and the views of the surrounding hills were magnificent. We thoroughly enjoyed the morning and the delicious lunch, which Irene prepared for us after the walk had ended.

Discussion of Religion Group

Jeremy Shearmur writes: The Discussion of Religion group meets once a month in the North West Resource Centre. Our meetings are usually concerned with the history and sociology of religious ideas. We typically have an interplay between discussions led by a

member of the group – recent topics have included such issues as dowsing and problems involved in the translation of the Bible – and visitors from different religious bodies in the district. These have included a Catholic priest, a religious leader connected with the Rudolf Steiner movement, Church of Scotland and Episcopalian ministers, a member of the Society of Friends, and an Imam from the local Mosque. Our members have a wide range of religious backgrounds (or none), and our discussions are friendly and not concerned with trying to press views on anyone. If you would like information, please contact Jeremy Shearmur at secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com

Drama and Discussion Group

On February 24th the Drama and Discussion group will be visiting Dumfries Theatre Royal to see Nick Newman and Ian Hislop's *A Bunch of Amateurs*. Performances take place on 21st-24th February. (See: <https://www.theatreroyaldumfries.co.uk/whats-on/guild-players-presents-bunch-amateurs-nick-newman-and-ian-hislop>.)

It looks as if it should be very entertaining, and anyone from u3a Dumfries who attends and would like to join the Drama and Discussion group for on-line discussion of the play on Monday 26th February, at 17.00, should contact Jeremy Shearmur at secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com for details.

Non-Fiction Book Group

The Non-Fiction Book group meets once a month – currently at a member's house – for friendly discussion of one book, agreed in advance by members. The material we read is drawn from a wide range of topics, and for the next two months of 2024 the titles are: Friday, February 23rd, 14.00; Jonathan Freedland, *The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World* Friday, March 22nd, 14.00; John Mortimer, *The Summer of a Dormouse: A Year of Growing Old Disgracefully*. We would be happy to welcome new members: if anyone is interested, please contact Jeremy Shearmur at Jeremy.Shearmur@anu.edu.au

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

A Proposed New u3a Group: Slot-Car Racing



Antony Hawkes introduces Slot-car Racing as a new u3a group: Many people may be familiar with the principles of slot-car racing through the popular pastime known as 'Scalextric', developed in the 1950s.

Slot-car racing takes place in a number of different classes – saloon, formula 1, etc, and is usually run over a set time, eg three minutes. The race control and lap counting is computerised, and the track – hand-built out of wood – is 95 feet long with four lanes.

Drivers stand on a raised dais to drive and, when not driving, are expected to stand at the track corners to assist the marshalling of cars, that is, putting them back on the track, in the slot, if they fall off, which they do! The lanes are colour-coded to facilitate this.

The Dumfries Slot-Car Club was founded in March 2023 by Ant Hawkes, a slot racer since 1968 and national champion at various levels. The location at the YMCA building in the former Lochside Primary School is a very fortunate pairing of a great space with a great sport. As part of u3a Dumfries, the group plans to meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

Please note the Club provides all the cars and controls for use during slot-car sessions. There is no obligation on anyone's part to invest in these items. Just bring yourself and an open mind!

For more details email anthawkes@aol.com