

Flower Power



Camellia, photographed by Bill Walker, one of the winners in a recent u3a Dumfries Photographic Group competition.

May's Monthly Meeting

Joanna Campbell, principal and chief executive officer of Dumfries & Galloway College will be the guest speaker at the u3a May monthly meeting at the North West Resource Centre on Thursday 2nd May (2pm). The title of her talk will be *Dumfries & Galloway College – One Step Ahead*. Ms Campbell has worked in tertiary education for over 25 years and was a vice-principal at the City of Glasgow College prior to taking up her post in Dumfries.

Dumfries's Forgotten Statesman



Ian Gasse reports on History group leader David Dutton's talk at the April monthly meeting on Robert Reid QC – later Lord Loreburn – who was Dumfries Burghs MP from 1886 to 1906, before being appointed Lord Chancellor in Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Government. Unlike his more famous fellow Liberals – Asquith, Lloyd George and Churchill, for example – Loreburn has largely 'disappeared' from history.

(Photo: via David Dutton and Ronnie Galloway)

Robert Threshie Reid became the Member of Parliament for Dumfries Burghs in 1886, having previously been an MP for Hereford. He was born in Corfu in 1846 and died in Kent in 1923, but there is no biography of him and he refused to retain any of his papers – “I never keep them,” he said. Yet he was a member of the Liberal Government that introduced reforms which became the foundation of the British welfare state – such as old age pensions and national insurance – and he occupied one of the most powerful positions in the British government, that of Lord Chancellor.

Reid's father was Chief Justice in Corfu, which was a British protectorate at the time, and Reid was educated at Cheltenham and Oxford University, where he was a successful sportsman as well as scholar. He studied law and became a QC in 1882.

Politically, he was an 'advanced Liberal', favouring Irish Home Rule, and was briefly Solicitor-General and Attorney-General in the Liberal Government in 1894-5, helping to pilot the 1895 budget, which introduced death duties, through Parliament.

He was amongst those Liberals who opposed the Boer War and the aggressive actions of the British during that war, and thus became close to Campbell-Bannerman, who appointed him Lord Chancellor as a counter-balance in his Cabinet to right-wing

Liberals like Asquith and Edward Grey. However, he faced a huge Tory majority in the House of Lords, which blocked many Liberal reforms, and his position in the Cabinet was diminished after Campbell-Bannerman's death in 1908, when Asquith became Prime Minister. Loreburn's opposition to Grey's foreign policy of secret alliances also estranged him from the Liberal leadership. He resigned because of ill-health in 1912, but published *How the War Came*, a book repudiating Grey's foreign policy.

Loreburn died in Kent in November 1923 and was buried in a relatively modest grave in the churchyard at Mouswald.

Group Updates

Art Appreciation Group



The opening of the Art Appreciation Group's exhibition of selected works from the permanent collection at Gracefield on Saturday 13th April, when D&G Council Art Officer, Dawn Henderby, introduced visitors to the exhibition. (Photo: Ronnie Galloway)

Birding Group

The Birding Group is running an excursion to RSPB Nature Reserve Campfield Marsh in Cumbria on 15th May (<https://>

www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/2019/places-to-explore/nature-reserves/rspb-campfield/). There are a few spare seats and anyone interested should contact group leader Monica Callender via monicacallender1951@gmail.com if they would like to go.

Computer/Smartphone/Technology Group

This group was set up to assist u3a Dumfries members who need help with problems relating to computers, smartphones and, more generally, technology. Group members are not experts, but they include people with some experience in these different areas. The group can provide background information on common themes suggested by group members; for example, the security of devices and content, the storage and preservation of data and the use of specific common apps. Each month, the group meets to discuss problems that have been encountered, share information and pose questions. If members can't resolve a problem on the spot, we try to find out and/or suggest when professional assistance may be required. So, unless you have a grandchild to hand who is on top of all these things (and, if you do, we'd welcome your sharing with the rest of us what you have learned from them!), do consider joining us. We meet on the last Monday of each month at 14.00 at the North West Resource Centre.

Discussion on Religion Group

Jeremy Shearmur writes: The 'Discussion on Religion' group is a friendly group concerned with issues in the history and sociology of religion. We sometimes have meetings involving discussion of a range of themes – from the Dead Sea Scrolls, through ley lines, to non-Christian religions, on which a member gives a brief introduction. We have also had a programme of visitors, who chat to us about their background and interests. These, over the years, have included a Latter Day Saint (Mormon), a local Catholic priest, two Church of Scotland ministers, a Modern Pagan, a Druid and an Episcopalian minister, someone who serves as a minister with the Rudolf Steiner organisation in Edinburgh, and an Imam from the local Mosque. In May and June, two members of u3a Dumfries will be joining us to talk about the United Reformed Church, and about the Covenanters. We meet at the North West Resource Centre on the second Tuesday of the month from 1.30-3.30, and are planning to meet right through the summer. Anyone interested in joining should contact Jeremy.Shearmur@anu.edu.au

Dowsing Group

The u3a Dowsing group has organised a day of dowsing with professional dowser, Grahame Gardner, on Wednesday 8th May from 9.30am to 4.30pm in the café at Lochvale House, Georgetown, Dumfries. A couple of places are available for anyone else who may be interested in joining the group; no experience of dowsing is required. The day will be very hands-on, and the topics covered will be map dowsing, geopathic stress, connecting spirit with landscape and searching for leys/nodes etc. The cost will be dependent on the numbers attending.

Please contact group leader Linda Russell on 07909 774 274 or via lindarussell7@btinternet.com before Friday 26th April, if you are interested. Linda is happy to answer any questions.

Sewing Group



The u3a Sewing Group meets on the second and third Wednesdays of the month at the Friendship Club in Thornhill, and currently has 15 members. There is, however, room for more if anyone wishes to join. Demonstrations are a regular feature and lots of people are available to provide advice, so beginners are very welcome. The group contact is Kathleen Simpson on 07810

387917 or 01848 331239 or via treasurer2.u3adumfries@gmail.com
(Photo: Kathleen Simpson)

Slot Car Racing – An Open Day

Despite an initial setback, Antony Hawkes remains keen to set up a u3a Slot Car Racing group and has arranged an open day for Thursday 16th May from 2pm to 5pm at the YMCA building in the former Lochside Primary School. All u3a members are invited. Below we repeat the piece, written by Antony, that featured in our February newsletter.

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 hopes 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

Apology

Our apologies to Joyce Gemmell and the Photographic Group for mistaking Joyce’s surname in a caption to one of Joyce’s photographs featured in the March newsletter.

Future Newsletters

Items for future newsletters should be sent to:
newsletter.u3adumfries@gmail.com