

Charity Number SC021683

March 2024 Newsletter

A Snapshot of Shetland



A view of Lerwick, the capital of the Shetland Islands

This year's AGM, on Thursday, March 7th, will also feature a short illustrated talk by u3a Dumfries treasurer, Kathleen Simpson, on her years of living in the Shetland Islands.

This year's AGM is once again an important date and will require some members to volunteer to join the committee to help steer the organisation through another year of activity. Please don't be 'backward in coming forward', as the saying goes – the commitment is only to a dozen meetings in the year.

Nomination forms are available from u3a Dumfries secretary Jeremy Shearmur on secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com and should be returned to him by the end of Wednesday 28th February.

Lost in Translation

*The February u3a monthly meeting on Thursday 1st February at the North West Resource Centre featured a light-hearted talk by u3a Dumfries secretary, Jeremy Shearmur. His subject was the rather enigmatic *Lost in Translation*.*

Jeremy began by discussing the Google translation app. An article of his, a Croatian friend had told him, could be translated by Google into fluent Croatian. But sometimes the translation said the opposite of what he had originally written in English. He then discussed the way in which we may be involved in something like translation even in our own language. Each of us will have our own repertoire of words between which we choose – so that if someone, say, is an artist, their use of colour terms may be specific in a way that poses problems for the rest of us.

What we say in a particular language may also be affected by the influence of particular pieces of literature. It is striking the extent to which expressions in English which we use – or deliberately have to work to avoid – may come from Shakespeare. While, say, someone faced with translating the title of P D James' detective story *Devices and Desires* would face the problem that this is derived from the phrase 'devices and desires of our own hearts' in the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*.

Some special problems arise in translations of the Bible, as John Barton discusses in his recent book, *The Word*. Translators face a choice between a 'formal' translation, which tries to convey the structure of the original, and a 'functional' translation which tries to convey its meaning as well as possible in the new language.

Following Barton, Jeremy illustrated this by 'the banana problem'. Some modern translators were trying to translate the *New Testament* into an African language, used in a region in which figs were not known. How, then, to convey Jesus's references to a fig tree? They came up with a banana tree, judging that, for that culture, it had the same kind of resonance as would references to a fig in the Middle East!

Jeremy also discussed the problem that could be posed by literary form. A limerick has a standard structure and rhyme; it also carries mild sexual innuendo. But it may also, in its content, refer to what

are now outdated sexual roles and expectations in a way difficult to convey simply by a translation. A comparable problem may come up in the translation of the *Bible*. It was written in a society which differed in roles played by men and women from our own. This was reflected by what it said, but also in its choice of language. To what extent could a translator, say, legitimately make use of 'inclusive' language of a kind which we would today find appropriate, if the original had deliberately chosen a masculine rather than a non-sexually-specific form?

A further question arises with regard to the correction of errors. If an author is alive, the translator can ask them about a problem. But what of the *Bible*? An interesting case here arises with 1 Samuel 13, verse 1, which appears to read: 'Saul was one year old when he became King, and reigned for two years.' This makes no sense, given what else is said about him. But given how the *Bible* is regarded, can the translator correct it? It is interesting to see the different ways in which this problem has been tackled by translators.

Jeremy concluded by asking Scottish u3a member, Alistair Brown, to read out the first verse of Robert Burns' poem, *To a Mouse*. He then read out a translation into standard English. While what was being said was clear enough, something had, emphatically, been lost in translation!

Groups with Spaces for New Members

The **Enjoying Music Group** would welcome new members: the contact is eddie14892@gmail.com

The **Garden Group** can take a few new members: the contact is marypwaugh@gmail.com

The **Practical Gardening Group** likewise: the contact is Alistair Brown on 01387 811842

The **Religion Discussion Group**, the **Drama Discussion Group** and the **Non-Fiction Book Group** can all take new members: contact for these groups is secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com

The Smartphone and Computer Groups are now a single group and meet on the last Monday of the month from 2pm-4pm; contact Jeremy Shearmur via secretary.u3adumfries@gmail.com

Group Updates

Dowsing Group

Group leader Linda Russell reports on recent activities of the Dowsing Group.



We are a small, friendly group of eight members who have a keen interest in all aspects of dowsing. Some of us are members of the British Society of Dowsers (BSD), while others are novice dowsers who are keen to learn. We cover the four main areas of dowsing: Earth Energies, Archaeological, Water and Site, and Health, using dowsing rods and pendulums. We are a self-help group, sharing our individual expertise to help newcomers and each other.

Dowsing utilises 'subtle energies', and works with the aid of the sub-conscious and intuitional minds. At some deep level, our subconscious may be able to access the collective 'information field'. Scientifically, this is known as 'quantum entanglement'. Pairs of electrons, once connected, retain that connection, however far apart they are moved. Since all the electrons in the Universe arose from the 'Big Bang', everything is connected, so remote viewing and dowsing must be possible.

Lately, we have been investigating map dowsing of Sweetheart Abbey and our own living spaces, looking for energy lines and geopathic stress. Recently, we spent an interesting morning with a local dowser investigating the Twelve Apostles stone circle at

Newbridge (see above image), and we also looked for energy lines at Lincluden Abbey (see image below).

On May 9th we are joining a local dowsing group for a day of dowsing led by professional dowser and past BSD president, Grahame Gardner, who is an international teacher with a wealth of experience. It promises to be a very informative and exciting day! We are happy to welcome any newcomers to our group. Anybody can dowse, so come and learn!



Local History Group

Over the next few months, several members of the u3a Local History group will be carrying out research in the Archives at the Ewart Library into the life of Dumfries almost a hundred years ago – in 1925. The choice of the year is so that by the end of this year – and assuming the group has done enough research – it can produce a booklet about *Dumfries – A Hundred Years Ago*.

The main focus of the research is the Archives' microfiche of the two Dumfries newspapers of 1925: the *Dumfries & Galloway Courier & Herald* and the *Dumfries & Galloway Standard & Advertiser*. Both papers at the time published twice a week – on Wednesdays and Saturdays – and both retained the convention, which for many newspapers lasted until after the Second World War, of having advertising on their front pages. They were also in the much larger broadsheet format, rather than tabloid, and with comparatively few photographs – in marked contrast to today's local papers.

But by 1925 newspapers were including numerous illustrated advertisements, and several branded products, which were still being used up to the end of the twentieth, and even into the twenty-first century, had already been introduced. Examples are Individual members of the group are concentrating on particular aspects of life in the 1920s – health services, schools and education, shops and shopping, housing, politics and trade unionism. Whilst cars, telephones and radios were becoming more widespread, there was, of course, no television, no internet and no portable phones. How did people in Dumfries live a hundred years ago? All being well, by Christmas, the group should be able to say!

Slot-Car Racing

Despite the piece in the last newsletter about Slot-car Racing as a possible new u3a Dumfries group, it has not proved possible to arrange this for administrative reasons. Anyone interested in being involved in this activity should, however, contact the separate organisation that manages the activity, via Antony Hawkes on anthawkes@aol.com

Future Newsletters

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

Art Appreciation Group Exhibition

'Are you aware Gracefield Art Centre has a collection of over 700 pieces of art?' asks Art Appreciation Group leader Margaret Smith.

In 2023, Dawn Henderby, the D&G Art Officer based at Gracefield, invited the Art Appreciation Group to consider curating its own art exhibition, with selected paintings from this marvellous collection.

As no one in the group had any experience of such a task, it certainly was a challenge! But, in fact, it has been such a privilege, as we have been allowed, with Dawn's supervision, to see all the items held in storage. The twelve members of the group each selected four paintings from the collection – and the amazing result is that there were no duplications!

To accompany the selections, we have had to prepare information about each item, along with reasons for our choice.

The exhibition is scheduled to start on Saturday 13th April and run until 4th May. 'We do hope,' says Margaret, 'that Dumfries u3a members, their families and friends, will come and see the *Art Appreciation Group Collection Choice exhibition* at Gracefield.'

Photographic Group Competition



A recent competition joint winner – 'ET Phone Home' by Joyce Bellamy – an image from a Dumfries Museum exhibition on cycling.