



Clarion is the magazine of Edinburgh u3a and is published bi-annually with contributions from and about individual members and groups. The **Bulletin** is published monthly on-line and contains brief updates on forthcoming events and group news.



"The Wisdom of Age" by Flora Dickson (Art 2)

Oil on board

One of the entries in the "With-Drawing" Art Competition (see pages 4 & 5)

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Letter from your new Chair

Richard Peoples

Chair, Edinburgh u3a



I moved to Edinburgh in July 2019 with my wife Penny, having been an active member of Cambridge u3a for many years. I became a group leader just as the first pandemic lockdown started, then signed up to be one of Eu3a's five group co-coordinators, and took over from Bruce Cowan as Chair in October last year. (Something of a baptism of fire!) I am also a subject adviser for book groups for the Third Age Trust.

Before retiring, I was an associate lecturer for the Open University for 18 years, teaching courses in arts and popular culture and specialising in English literature. I later became a full-time advisory services manager for the OU, looking after a team of course and career advisers and, among other things, organising teaching for students with disabilities and students in prison.

A passionate believer in lifelong learning from my OU days, I found u3a a natural place to go after retirement. Within u3a, I have led play reading and play writing groups and taken part in book groups, philosophy and art history groups. I also started a u3a debating society in Cambridge, which ran debates on a number of serious and not-so-serious subjects.

Since joining Edinburgh u3a, I set up a new play reading and discussion group just as the first lockdown began, so the group has only ever met online. I also organised a survey on the use of online technology by our groups and have played a part in the *u3a: Online Across Scotland project*, (see next page) which will help to make u3a groups and courses available to people throughout the country. It will particularly benefit members who live in remote locations or have

limited mobility.

My contribution to this project is an online playwriting course, presented in partnership with Citadel Arts of Edinburgh. The course will enable new and experienced playwrights to develop their writing skills and produce original drama. With funding obtained by Citadel Arts, it is hoped that some of the plays produced by course members will be performed by professional actors – probably online in the first instance.

Ever since my student days, I have been interested in drama and have acted in and directed a number of plays, and then turned to writing them after moving to Cambridge. A number of these plays were staged there and I also ran workshops for playwrights and took part in collaborative writing projects. I am now hoping to bring this experience of the theatre world to Edinburgh through collaboration with Citadel Arts.

A few years ago I experienced some hearing loss and now volunteer for the Edinburgh-based charity *Hearing Link*, which provides help and advice for people with hearing problems. I am an occasional volunteer with the NHS, taking part in their simulated patient programme for medical students at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Western General Hospital. A good outlet for practising my acting skills!

I am delighted to be given the opportunity as Eu3a Chair, to take an active part in Scotland's largest and most successful u3a. Our hard-working committee and group leaders have risen magnificently to the challenge of keeping activities going at this difficult time. I look forward to the day when we can all meet again and continue to provide vital learning and social opportunities for all our members.

Richard

u3a: Scotland

u3a: Online Across Scotland

The start of 2021 sees the launch of **u3a: Online Across Scotland**, a digital platform offering opportunities to socialise and learn from the comfort of members' homes, with groups, courses, discussions and activities. What makes the u3a different from conventional learning is that it is a peer learning model. People learn together and from each other sharing their wealth of experience and expertise.

The new venture will foster collaboration between Scotland's fifty-five local u3as. The online format will allow those who live in more remote parts of Scotland or without a local branch to share the joy of learning, knowledge and experiences with others. Online delivery currently ranges from playing the ukulele to French conversation, coding to creative writing.

Ann Keating, u3a Trustee for Scotland writes:

*"The Covid-19 pandemic has made it difficult for many u3a groups to meet but **u3a:Online Across Scotland** is our attempt to 'build back better' opening up shared experiences, new friendships and lifelong learning to more people than ever before. This does not mean the end of face to face learning. As soon as Covid 19 restrictions are removed we hope to move to blended learning."*

"Our new online network will enable anyone planning on using the new year to widen their horizons to do so from the comfort of their own homes. So those with limited mobility who find it hard to travel to meet people will be able to join in the activities on offer. Thanks to this new network, a member of a u3a based in the Highlands can join a group run by a member of a u3a based in the Central Belt (and vice versa) and learn alongside u3a members from u3as throughout Scotland. "

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

Third Age Trust

Rebranding u3a

Surveys of members in the last few years showed a significant decline in membership. The Trust decided that they should liven up our image to attract a new generation of members from among younger retired and semi retired people and help change the rather negative national perception of ageing.

The Trust hired a design company with a brief to develop a fresh, appealing image that would show the u3a in a more modern light, using a simple "bold and progressive look" and a limited but bold pallet of yellow and blue and related colours.

The logo has also changed. The **3** has become more prominent to place importance on the "third age" rather than "university" as many members have suggested that the use of the word university puts off many people from joining and the strapline "learn, laugh, live" has been added. A new font which is clear and modern is recommended should be used across all external communications.

There is also guidance on how to select photographs; these should have a clear sense of "capturing the moment", and show members being actively engaged in interest groups. They should be eye catching but not too busy and photographers should try to avoid shots that look staged for the camera. (those submitting photos for Clarion, please note!) Remember that consent needs to be obtained from recognisable individuals who appear in photographs.

Ann Keating

https://twitter.com/u3a_UK/status/1311244019339603968

In line with the new image, you may notice that we have changed the "masthead" for the front page of the Clarion and the typeface for the text. It's a little smaller but clearer. Let the editor know if you find anything difficult to read.

U3a Scotland “With-Drawing” Art Competition



The Exhibition of competition entries which took place in a cold week in October in the midst of Covid 19 restrictions, was a surprising success. We had on average 30 visitors a day (socially distanced and masked) and many of the artists sold pieces of their work.

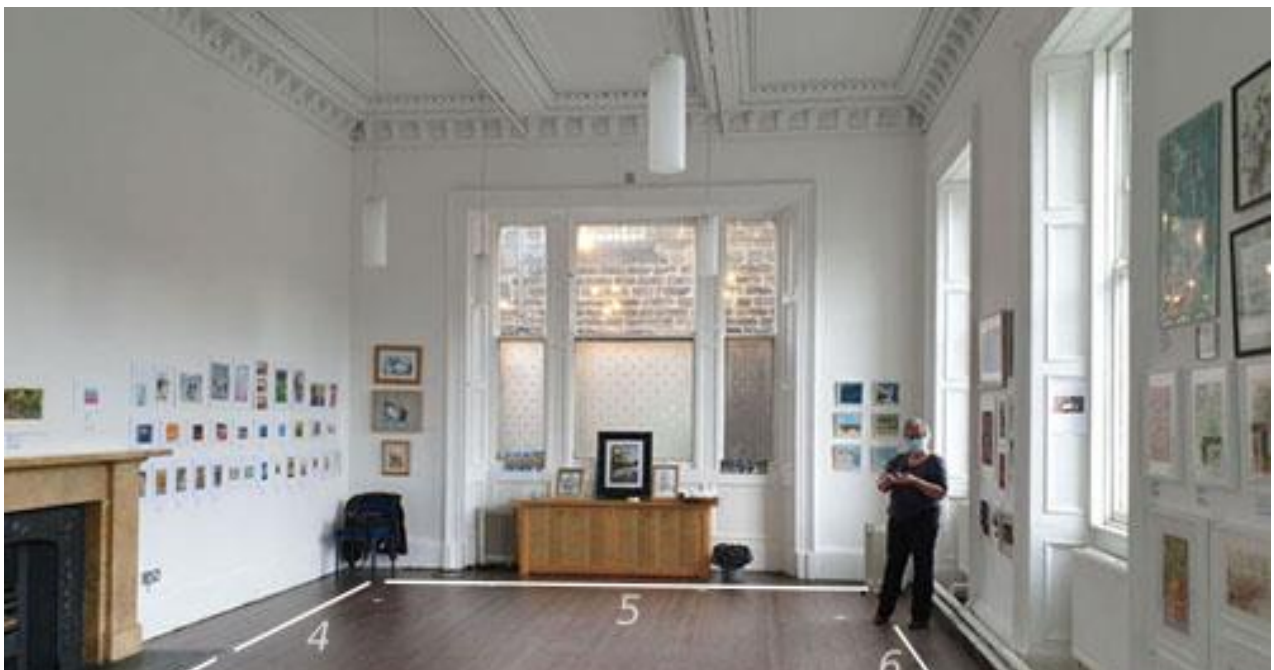
U3a leased the Custom House Gallery in Leith (see below) which is housed in the imposing, Georgian Custom House in the care of the *Scottish Historic Buildings Trust*. We were warmly welcomed and had great support from Meaghan McKeracher, the Custom House Property Manager.

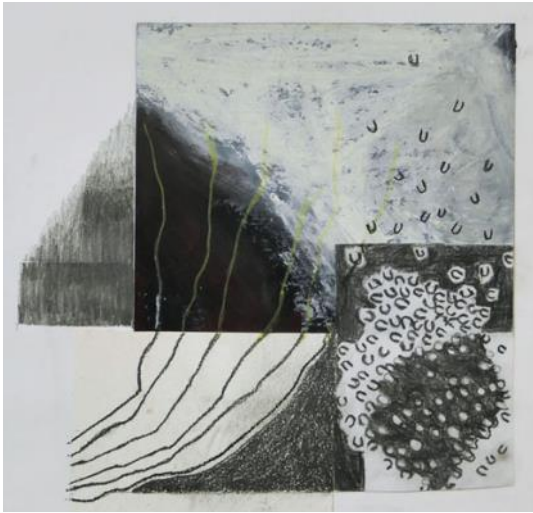
The 92 entries were of a high quality, showcasing the talent of u3a members from across Scotland and were displayed alongside a sample of work from the three judges: **Bridget Lanham**, **Annabel Toogood** and **Rosanne Wiseman**. Our thanks goes to them for all their hard work and to **Sandy Moffatt** who awarded the certificates.

The winning entry (above) was a triptych by **Lindsay Hewitt** of Ayr u3a. A selection from the exhibition is shown on the next page.

We hope that this is the first of many u3a exhibitions to be held at the Custom House.

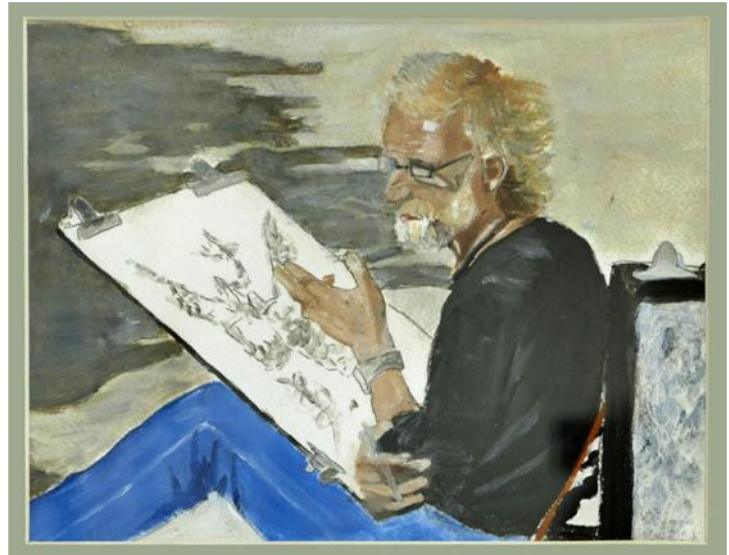
Ann Keating





"Floating Upwards" Bridget Lanham

Bridget, who was one of the judges, told us that when "lockdown One" was declared, she only had a sketch book, pencils and magazines in the house so she embarked on a series of collages using what she had!



"Portrait of the Artist" Flora Dickson (Art 2)



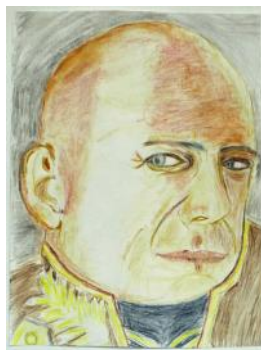
"Lunch Break" Loretta Whitcomb (Art 1)



"Carrots" and above "Washday in Summer" Annabel Toogood (Art 2)



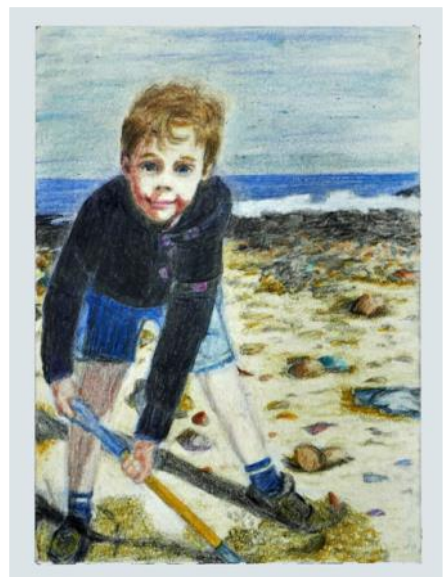
"Dandelion" Jane Schonveld (Art 1)



John Hughes (Art 2)



"Red and green chaos" Keith Guy



"Grandson" Linda Thomson (Art 2)

All photographs by Sonia & Neil Duffy
u3a photography groups 1 & 2

Monthly Meetings

Our Monthly Meetings are firmly established again using Zoom, thanks to Ann Keating and the Speakers' Committee. The recording of the Christmas Event was uploaded to YouTube (thanks to George Cleland) and has been viewed nearly 800 times. January's talk by Ian Archibald on Mary Somerville was seen live by 240 members. It was later viewed on the Zoom cloud 525 times and YouTube 789 times.

Bruce Cowan

On November 18th we were lucky to have James Robertson speak at our first virtual monthly meeting, attended by about 200 members.



James is an award-winning poet, novelist and short story writer whose books include *Joseph Knight*, *And the Land Lay Still* and *The Testament of Gideon Mack* which was long-listed for the 2006 Man Booker Prize. In his books he returns to the themes of Scottish history, language, politics, place and the passage of time. He spoke with great intellectual integrity and a modesty which belies his achievements in the Scottish literary scene.

He started his talk by speaking about how events of the last year have affected his work, the enforced slowing down with more time spent at home replacing time on the road travelling between book festivals and book launches.

His projects have included a new BBC Commission for five 15-minute episodes on the **"New adventures of Baron Munchausen"** broadcast in August & September. (available on BBC Sounds) This brought the adventures of the fictional late 18th Century German nobleman and adventurer up to date through a "direct descendant" of the first Baron. In the style of the original, this new Baron seeks to restore his ancestor's reputation and celebrates travel, adventure and the importance of storytelling. Demonstrating the resilience of the incurable optimist, our hero orbits the moon, travels the world, flies with swans, sails, kayaks, sledges,

works on a giant cruise ship and balloons his way round the world, encounters wolves and alligators, rescues koalas from bush fires in Australia, is swallowed by a hump backed whale and arriving in Russia, challenges Putin to a boxing match, and plays golf with the Donald Trump from whose utterances he collects "hot air" to fuel the next stage of his journey. In passing, he tackles climate change, waste mountains, encounters floods and "locks down" with a countess in Caithness.

His new book **"News of the Dead"** was due to be launched at the 2020 book festival but postponement until the 2021 event allowed time for a bit of rewriting. Set in the Angus Glens in an imaginary and remote Glen Connach this spans a period from Pictish times to the present day, linked together by place and stories. James then spoke about what he sees as the purpose of fiction; an ability to walk a path that real life doesn't always allow and give a voice to characters we may not always agree with, against the background of life's big themes and changes in society. He also identified the importance of a sound moral compass, social structure, and traditions, even when no longer subscribing to a personal religious belief.

Joseph Knight, published in 2003, explores the themes of guilt, liberty, and ever-changing values based on the true story of a slave (Joseph Knight) brought to Scotland from Jamaica by a sugar plantation owner (John Wedderburn) who took his case to Scottish courts, won his freedom and then disappears.

In **The Testament of Gideon Mack** (2006) he explores the changes in society brought about in an increasingly secular society, the relationship between father and son, duty and mental illness. (continued)

The protagonist, Gideon Mack, minister of the Church and a son of the manse is an unbeliever and a troubled soul, for whom the existence of God, let alone the Devil, is no more credible than that of ghosts or fairies.

"And the Land lay Still," written between 2006 and 2010, addresses the popular image of Scotland as a bit of a backwater of Britain and is set in the fast-changing political scene spanning the six decades from 1950s to present day. It covers the aftermath of war, loss of empire, the establishment of the NHS, the rise of the SNP, and multiculturalism, but with tradition of folk music and stories still at the nation's centre.

Although born in Kent, he was brought up in Bridge of Allan and living and working in Scotland he discovered a rich literary tradition that at the time was somewhat overlooked. He set about addressing this and in 2002, the establishment of **"Itchy Coo"** publications in partnership with Matthew Fitt helped bring the Scots language to life for many children through the translation of many popular titles and characters including- Gruffalo, Winnie the Pooh and Harry Potter.

Maggie Gilvray

On 16th December 160 members gathered (on Zoom) for a Christmas Celebration replacing our usual Christmas event.

Many entered into the spirit and wore party hats, Christmas jumpers or a bit of tinsel failing all else.

The concert lasted just over one hour and we had nine different acts with a range of music, poetry and short stories. It ended with everyone singing Jingle Bells, but only from their own room, to the accompaniment of Lesley Hartley on the Piano.

It's wonderful how many talented members we have. Ann Keating hosted the concert and George Cleland facilitated the technical side.

As part of the celebrations we had a Raffle in which ten winners were chosen at random from all current members. Each received a small hamper with the first prize being a larger hamper which went to Jennifer Farnell. Names of winners were posted to the December Bulletin.

Doreen Barr

Many thanks to all contributors.

Bruce Cowan



"Goodbye until the next time"

Featured Members

We always like to take the opportunity to celebrate the varied achievements of Edinburgh u3a members, whether in their working life or in retirement. Here we have contributions from or about two of our members. **Geoff Gardner and Jackie Tombs**

Geoff Gardner: Around the world with George and Peapod. (Part 1)

Sometimes in one's life, circumstances collide and create opportunities. For me the summer of 1996 provided such an opportunity. The end of a long and mostly happy partnership coincided with possibility of taking early retirement.

I had been teaching at the same college in Leeds for twenty years and I was becoming ragged with talk of amalgamation. I could either accept a change of role from biology lecturer to natural sciences coordinator, or take the package on offer and leave with dignity. Access to one's pension and a lump sum is an offer hard to refuse.

I have been a cyclist for most of my life. I got my first proper bike (with dropped handlebars and five Benelux gears) at the age of eleven. Once I was working, long tours were holiday experiences mainly in July and August once I had completed my stint of A level marking.

I once met a chap who claimed to have cycled all the way across the USA but I put that down as just a tall tale. Now I had the time and inclination to test out the possibility. Inspiration came from books such as Dervla Murphy's *"Full Tilt"* and Josie Dew's *"The wind in my wheels"* and a workable plan began to develop. *The Garden Route* from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth was a "must" ride. *The Great Ocean Road* from Melbourne to Adelaide and just about anywhere in New Zealand, known to cyclists as *Peddler's Paradise* had to be included. As a final spur I had to cycle across the USA.

There are a few basic rules for cycle touring. The most important is to travel as light as possible. What that means is buying the best equipment you can afford. "Ortleib2" panniers are not only light and durable but so waterproof they can

double as buoyancy aids in case of a nasty mishap. Tent, sleeping bag, mat and stove must be chosen with care. Every unnecessary gram of extra weight can be the reason for not reaching the top of a hill at the end of a long day.

My bicycle for this journey was a "Dawes Super Galaxy" or **George** for short; no fancy disc brakes or aluminium frames. There are bike shops in remote places that can weld steel but rarely will you find tools to repair broken alloy frames. My sleeping mat was a "Thermarest", my tent, **Peapod**, was an "Ultimate", and my stove, an MSR "Whisperlite". I used to travel with a primus and then upgraded to a "Trangia", but the Whisperlite ran on unleaded petrol which can be found everywhere, although filling up my red canister from a petrol pump was a bit hazardous.

In 1996 the internet was of the dial-up variety. It is hard to believe that only a blink ago, before mobile phones and universal connectivity, communication was by post and long distance phone call. There was email, but on the road this could only be accessed at public libraries and a few hostels.

I had no idea that planning to travel around the world was as easy as booking a "round the world ticket" with various stopovers. My journey involved landing in one place, such as Los Angeles and flying out from another place entirely, such as Orlando, Florida. It seemed that BA allied to Qantas, would provide the whole journey for under £1000. My lump sum would come in handy! The same journey today would quadruple the cost.

By Wednesday the 6th November, I was loaded up and ready to go. I had panniers front and back; a handlebar bag with cassette recorder and ten of my favourite cassette albums. In those days the Intercity 125 had luggage vans so George was safely locked away out of sight. (continued)



I had not really given much thought to cycling from King's Cross Station to Heathrow Airport. It turned out hazardous, frightening and confusing – twenty miles along some of the busiest roads in the world, and definitely not for the faint-hearted.

Unfortunately, as I discovered, airports were not really planned with travelling cyclists in mind. There was something a bit eccentric about arriving at a check-in desk with a bicycle and panniers. In 1996 the world was less alarmed by potential lethal objects being carried aboard. The panniers all went into one large blue plastic bag, and George with handlebars turned, pedals off, tyres deflated and polystyrene pipe lagging around his crossbar ended up on a moving belt with little dignity.

I was fortunate to be met at Cape Town airport by relatives of my next door neighbours, waving a placard in greeting. My first night was spent in their modest house in the suburbs. Although they were extremely pleased to meet me, their mood was one of anxiety and concern. For them, my problem was not how was I going to get around the world, but rather how I was going to cycle out of Cape Town through the black townships. It made no sense to them that a white person would dare to travel alone on a bike without an armed escort. My anti apartheid credentials would be of little value. They absolutely insisted in loading my bike and panniers onto their truck and escorting me well out of reach of the folk in the townships. I was on my way..

I was dropped off by my hosts on the road from Cape Town to the Hermanus. Cycling is perfect for appreciating local wildlife and here wildlife abounds. Egrets, Ibis and hawks seemed common place. The tail winds pushed me on to the beautiful resort of Hermanus where I established myself in a backpackers hostel and set off to catch a glimpse of the whales in the bay. Unbelievably I saw a southern right whale mother and calf and watched them for over an hour transfixed.

Cycling is a beautiful amalgam of physics, physiology and psychology. The friction-defying rolling surfaces between tyre and road and between chain and sprocket, work beautifully whilst rolling along on a downhill slope with a following wind, but circumstances change at the next hill.

I am an old school cyclist who learnt my trade in the 1950s; select a high gear and if required, get out of the saddle and stand on the pedals. In the 1970s and too late for me, "spinning" in a low gear was recognised to be more efficient. Big thigh muscles were replaced by long skinny legs designed for 100 revolutions per minute. Cycling is 95% psychology and 5% effort. Physically I can always cycle up the next hill and the one after that, but do I really want to? I have learnt tricks over the years to encourage myself to keep going. "Never look at the summit of the hill but focus on the next few yards or the next fence post" then congratulate yourself. This form of self deception seems to fool the brain into thinking the task is smaller than it really is. Cycling alone demands discipline, unlike cycling in a group, where fear of holding up the rest is motivation.

Geoff Gardner



Jackie Tombs



Photo with thanks to Gael

A passionate and lifelong advocate of penal change, social justice and fairness.

I met Jackie a few years ago at a u3a French class. Immediately I knew that there was something special about her. She had such great warmth and vibrancy.

Jackie was much better at French than I was, but she was always ready to encourage and help. Bit by bit, I started to learn about her career in criminology both in Scotland and abroad and I began to think that she would be an inspiring subject for a profile in the Clarion. Then the virus hit, Jackie was still active on our group WhatsApp page until May. By then she had been diagnosed with cancer and died on August 4th.

It was only then, when reading Jackie's obituary in *The Herald*, that I realised how influential she had been in the development of criminal policy in Scotland. This began when Jackie graduated in 1972 with a Diploma in Criminology from Cambridge; far more unusual fifty years ago than now. Jackie's love of travelling was reflected in her next move which was to study the history of slavery at the University of Pennsylvania. After this, she returned to Scotland and Edinburgh to complete a PhD on *"Law and Slavery in North America"*. Again Jackie was ahead of the curve!

Her next significant move was her appointment as head of the Central Research Unit in the then Scottish Home and Health Department. As Richard Sparks says in his obituary, it was *"in many ways a model for what a social science research unit within government can and should be."* During this time, Jackie both produced and commissioned much important work, while also mentoring many young researchers of whom she

was very proud. This was the first of many roles which were to make her one of the most important figures in the development of Scotland's criminal justice system.

She was a founder member of the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice and its first Director of Research. In 2004 she wrote an important and perceptive study, *"A Unique Punishment: Sentencing and the Prison Population of Scotland"*. In this Jackie looked at what she saw as the over-use of sentencing while accepting the dilemmas and constraints of the sentencers. The Howard League, of whom Jackie had been a former committee member, wrote *"Her passionate support for penal change reflected her lifelong commitment to fairness, social justice and decency – qualities that were evident to all who knew her in everything she did."*

Jackie wrote numerous papers and contributed to a number of books which reflected her commitment to the egalitarian and civic values of Scottish public life. She also taught, first at Stirling University as Professor of Criminology and ended her career as Professor of Criminology and Social Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University. Her vitality, knowledge and understanding must have made Jackie a wonderful teacher.

Jackie remained true to her radical convictions and was loyal to people and causes. So many of the tributes to Jackie mention her charm and empathy. She was one of those people who lit up a room, was at ease with everyone in it and always interested in what they had to say. Though Jackie was a true internationalist and had friends all over the world, she was always passionate about Scotland.

She loved the arts and always enjoyed hearing about and discussing exhibitions, books, plays and films. She lived close to the Botanics and was often found there, sharing her love of nature with friends. Most of all, she loved her two children, Gael and Mark, and lived to see the birth of her first grandson. As Dorothy, our French teacher said, Jackie was like a breath of fresh air, giving our class a real lift with her sense of fun, wit and vast knowledge about so many things in life.

Norma Emm

Visions for the Future

Do “Third Agers” have a particular view on Scotland’s future ?

While constitutional and governance issues seem likely to dominate many debates in the coming year, we report on two areas where Edinburgh u3a members independently look forward to the creation of a better future for our children and grandchildren.

On 14th December, Edinburgh u3a facilitated a focus group aimed at identifying actions members would like to see in order to progress towards a more prosperous, sustainable and fair society. This focus group was one of a series held with u3a branches across Scotland during December and January. It was hosted by the **David Hume Institute** as part of an “Action Project” bringing together the perspective of people with different life experiences to identify a programme of concrete actions.

The DHI is an independent think tank committed to objective, evidence based research aimed at bringing fresh insights about public policy and the economy.

Discussion focussed on two themes:

Joy: What makes a “good life” that allows us to be our most fulfilled selves. What has changed during “lockdown” that you would like to see continued?

An economy that works for all. We know that people in Scotland experience deep inequality. How should we value “well being” along with traditional measures of growth.

The foundation of this research was an assessment of current policy in Scotland. DHI analysed over 3,600 pages of policy research including 700 policy recommendations to identify areas of agreement and shared vision. Results from the discussions will be collated and published by the DHI in 2021.

<https://www.davidhumeinstitute.com/theactionproject>

Scotland 2070 – Healthy | Wealthy | Wise: an ambitious vision for Scotland’s future, without the politics.

By Ian Godden,
Hillary Sillitto
(Edinburgh u3a), and
Dorothy Godden.



What sort of country do we want our grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be living in? Can Scotland do better? These questions were exercising Ian and Dorothy Godden when they talked to Edinburgh U3A member Hillary Sillitto. They felt that no-one else was looking in a co-ordinated way at Scotland’s long-term opportunities, and reckoned they had something to say on the matter. Ian and Dorothy invited Hillary to join them in writing a book. The result is **Scotland 2070**.

How, they ask, could Scotland thrive in a post Covid, post oil, post Brexit, and maybe post SNP world? They tackle the issues of melting Arctic sea-ice, reforestation and regenerative agriculture, the transition to renewable energy and low-carbon infrastructure, seeking opportunities in these inescapable trends where others see only threats; and paint a vision of what a carbon-neutral Scotland might look and feel like in 2070.

Readers find it enjoyable, inspirational, and well researched. On Amazon it has six 5-star ratings out of seven, and a reviewer saying “visionary... very well paced... had the reader mesmerised at times.” Read more at <https://scotland2070.org>

Hillary Sillitto

Originally a physicist, Hillary became an internationally recognised expert in systems engineering and product development.

ED

Wildlife in Lockdown

Birth of a garden pond: Elaine Fyfe

For a very long time I have really, really wanted a pond in the garden but somehow, even when retired, I didn't get around to what felt like a mammoth task. Every year, two old friends have said they would dig the required hole, but we never named a date. Then, when news of Covid-19 began to circulate, I could not help wondering what the impact would be on me. I suffer respiratory problems and thought it likely I would have to self-isolate. How would I occupy myself?

One evening, completely out of the blue, a friend texted suggesting that she and her husband dig this overdue hole the very next morning. Why not, I thought, let them do it! They arrived, spades in hand and progress was quick.



Coffee breaks were allowed and suitably refreshed, they dug some more, packed the hole with sand and soon the liner was in-situ.



Hosepipe at the ready and after four hours hard labourvoilaa pond! I gathered rocks from around the garden and bought some cobbles for the 'beach'. Friends donated plants and tadpoles.



Then Lockdown! "Shielding" meant friends could no longer help, there was nothing else for it, I would have to carry on by myself. More rocks gradually "appeared", on the path, beside the gate and on the drive! I got to work, "manhandling" and positioning them. Not a bad effort I thought, but what about the huge pile of earth that came out of the hole? My youngest son suggested a rockery. Never having done anything like that, I looked on You Tube, asked for even more rocks (my 8-year-old granddaughter brought some too), laid them out, and came up with this:



Then, plants were both delivered and donated. The sun came out, a solar oxygenator was added, and soon the pond was quite pleasing to the eye. The tadpoles grew, but predation shrank them in number. After ten weeks it finally happened, the moment I had hoped for; Mr Frog appeared! This creature delighted me, never fazed as I sat beside him taking multiple photographs. Then during one hot day in May, a majestic, richly coloured damselfly flew in and rested awhile:



With some further offerings of plants, the bare patch behind the pond was populated, and almost four months to the day from the start of lockdown it was complete.

The pond has been an absolute gift. I have thoroughly enjoyed every hour spent in its creation. Incredibly grateful thanks must go to all those who helped in its creation.

EF

Irene Lavery writes:

During lockdown, and inspired by my daily walks around St Margaret's Loch in Holyrood Park, I started painting and writing poems, so thought I'd share some inspired by nature and wildlife.



Tree sparrow

I wrote this haiku after watching magpies, enjoying their noisy interchanges.

Nature's calling

*Flash of black and white,
coarse scolding from the tree top,
magpies chattering.*

Feathered feeding frenzy!

*Swans, pigeons, gulls, even a heron,
all clamour for food, fighting each one.
With flapping wings, or nip from a beak!
It's not the quiet haven I seek.*

*The swans gang up on the sole heron,
while the gulls flee, as do pigeon.
A riot of wings clap like thunder.
By the loch, I pause and stare in wonder.
Then with a splash, they return and land.
Peace restored for a while.*

Barnacle Geese: Elizabeth Scott



Watercolour
inspired by the TV
series "Islands on the
Edge,"

Each autumn, some 70,000 Barnacle geese migrate south from Greenland to spend the winter on the west coast of Scotland before returning in the spring to their breeding grounds in the arctic.

Night visitors to our garden.

Have you ever wondered what mammals use your garden at night? You probably expect cats and foxes, maybe a hedgehog and some mice, but that might be about it.

We bought a "Trailcam" to find out and set it up to monitor our garden. This is a camera linked to a movement detector, so it takes photos or short videos whenever it detects movement. As expected, there were lots of foxes every night, and occasionally three at once. It was interesting to see them reaching up to steal the raspberries off the growing plants, which explains why we didn't seem to have many raspberries for ourselves! There were quite a few cats too, and the occasional mouse, although not in the same video.

But the really surprising visitor was a badger. We live in a typical suburban area near the Braid Hills Hotel. It must have crossed at least two roads to reach our garden from either the Braid Hills or the Braidburn Valley Park, the only open areas nearby. And then it had to cross several gardens as well. At first it only appeared every month or so, but during the winter it has been coming a few times a week, eating any food that the birds have not managed to eat the day before. It usually appears about 2am, so we have not seen it with our own eyes yet. The image below is taken from the video, which is why it is such poor quality.



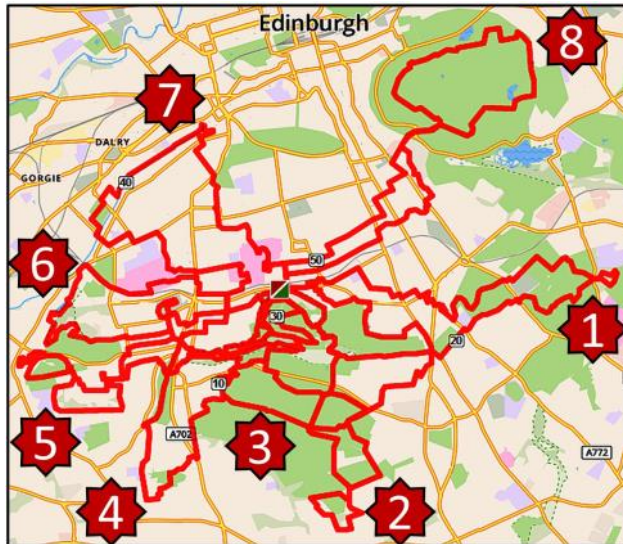
Peter Edwards

A number of organisations have or publish a list of live cover from wildlife cams. Search "Wildlife webcams" **ED**

Groups

Unmasking South Edinburgh's hidden gems: Roy Thompson

I first came across a range of local gems during the midnight walks that constituted my sole daily exercise during lockdown.



My top eight, all lying within a 5-mile travel limit, are:

- A late-medieval 'P'-shaped fishpond;
- The remains of a WWII radar platform and anti-aircraft battery on the flank of Alnwickhill;
- Ancient quarries and trackway leading through the middle of the Braids (superb, panoramic views to Fife);
- Small stone constructions dotted around Comiston and wall markers in the Grange marking the underground pipe network which first supplied drinking water to the Capital (1756);
- The magnificent geological exposure of well-formed, hexagonal columns of basalt lava on Wester Hill;
- A secluded, still-serviceable Victorian curling pond on Easter Hill;
- The understated, obtuse angles outlining the former terminus of the Union Canal at Lochrin Basin Lane (completed 1822);
- and finally:-
- A flight of ancient cultivation terraces on the far side of Arthur's Seat.

When the first lockdown was eased and formally organised, outdoor physical activities were given

exemptions from certain restrictions (e.g. the rule –of-six) if specific protocols were put in place, it gradually dawned on me that my 'midnight' discoveries might form the basis for leading "small-bubble" perambulations for established U3A walking groups. The Ramblers' Association helpfully summarised these exemptions, detailed by **Sportscotland**.

I decided to create walks that all began and ended at Blackford Pond: a good location for socially distanced assembly. Additional measures required were that before each walk the group leader should:-

1. Complete up-to-date compliance and risk-assessment records (e.g. note any pinch points and mitigate by re-routing)
2. Obtain contact information for Test and Protect
3. Remind members not to participate with flu-like symptoms
4. Advise that face masks and hand sanitizer should be carried
5. At the start of each walk, a Gate Monitor needed appointing along with a recap of the need for physical distancing
6. Finally, post-walk, the importance of booking a test, via the coronavirus helpline, if symptoms should materialise within 48h, was to be restated

To date I have devised eight routes (typically 5 to 7 miles long). All radiate outwards from Blackford Pond (see route numbers on map). Each visits one of my top eight hidden gems. Routes: **[1]** A Craigmillar Castle Circular **[2]** Mortonhall figure of eight (WWII defences, Ha-ha & Arboretum), **[3]** Le Tour de Braids, **[4]** In the footsteps of RLS (Morningside Cemetery, Cockmylane & White Lady Walk), **[5]** A War Poets 4-loop walk (Owen View & The Hydropathic), **[6]** A sweep past 16 old curling ponds (Royal Ed., Happy Valley), **[7]** The Canal Basin (Astley Ainslie, Plague Tomb & Harrison Park), **[8]** Outlying tops of Arthur's Seat (Salisbury, Haggis, Quarter Mile path, Dunsapie).

For route descriptions, notes, maps and GPX file visit <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/roythompson/home/edinburgh-walks/>

(Roy's article and the following article from David Syme was written before the early 2021 "lock down" **ED**)

Anyone for Jogging? David Syme



The **Eu3a** Jogging Group is offering to mentor new Members. Since we started in May 2019, all of us can now manage a 5 kilometre run, and we are

keen to assist others to reach this level. Using the Meadows, Saughton Park or Balerno as bases, we are offering to help and encourage beginners along the progression from "Couch to 5k" runner. Anyone interested should have basic good health, ie the ability to walk briskly for 20 minutes, a pair of trainers, suitable outdoor clothing for the season and a mobile phone with an App of their choice.

Recommendations are the NHS 9 week course, the BBC 9 week course or *Jogscotland's* "Learn to Run" course. We suggest a minimum of two sessions per week and offer at least one weekly contact with a mentor. If anyone is interested, but is not app-compatible we can still help!

Contact davidsyme@hotmail.com

Book Reading Group 10 (Non Fiction)

When I joined the Edinburgh u3a about 4 years ago I found, like many members, that lots of the groups I was interested in were full. My solution: propose a new group and see who would like to join. Mostly that is what I have done and found it a relatively easy process. I liked the idea of a non fiction group just as a change. We have always been a small group but meeting online due to Covid has in some ways made life easier in not having to find a venue to meet. We take it in turns to choose the book which means that we have ranged widely in our choices from

biography, history, politics and the law, animal behaviour and analysis of the state of the world. Virtual travelling too, has been a positive experience and I have found it a 'pastime in good company' of people and of books. We have been reading:

Too Many Pills. James Le Fanu. How much of modern medicine is endangering our health.

The Poor Had No Lawyers. Andy Wightman: Who owns Scotland and how they got it.

Sisters of Sinai Janet Soskice. How two nineteenth century Scottish sisters travelled bravely and became internationally respected scholars of the hidden gospels.

Frank Ledwith

The Allotment Gardening Group

Each autumn, the Edible Gardening Project, based in the RBGE, celebrates harvest with a Harvest Produce Competition open to community gardens and groups around Edinburgh. This year was a bit different with many people finding solace in gardens and allotments and particularly in growing food. So we decided to have a go and gain a bit of publicity for u3a. Evelyn Gourlay arranged this wonderful basket, as our entry. The *Botanics Magazine* had this to say "The submissions we received were truly wonderful. Lots of colourful snaps of tasty, healthy food flooded our inbox. We were delighted to show our shortlisted entries in the Garden over the first weekend in October".

Sunday was a beautiful autumn day with about

500 people taking part in the activities supported by the *Peoples Postcode Lottery* and imagine our surprise when we discovered that we had **won the Group entry!** The Edible Gardening Team commented "We particularly loved the addition of edible flowers, berries and flowering herbs in this submission from the u3a Edinburgh." **MG**



Current Committee

Chair: **Richard Peoples**

Vice Chair: **Ann Keating**

Secretary: **Jonathan MacQueen**

Treasurer: **Hugh Young**

Membership: **Ann Ryan**

Group Coordinator 1 (Groups A-C):
Doreen Barr

Group Coordinator 2 (Groups D-I):
Keith Guy

Group Coordinator 3 (Groups J-P):
Joanna Morris

Group Coordinator 4 (Groups Q-S):
Susan Miles

Group Coordinator 5 (Groups T- Z):
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Volunteers: **Tricia Allan**

Assistant Webmaster: **Jean Knox**

Visits: **Ann Kerrigan**

Contacts can be found in the password protected area of the website.

Editor's note

A big thank you to the many of you who contributed such a variety of articles and photos for this edition. Again, due to the technicalities of printing, we have to have pages in multiples of 4 i.e. 16 or 20! So, in the absence of visits to report on, we have restricted this edition to 16 pages.

We are always pleased to receive articles for publication: Remember, it's **your** magazine and everyone can have a story to tell – amusing or thought provoking, factual or imaginative.

At the present time, it doesn't look as though anyone is going anywhere fast, so for the **next edition** due out in September 2021, get your imagination going on **"My fantasy holiday"** Don't forget you can time travel or jet off to another universe!

We also hope to include a few more articles on that topic that we touched on in the last edition under **"Time to give technology a try"**

Contributions and any comments should be sent, by **late July** preferably by email, to clarion@edinburghu3a.org.uk

Guidance

Roughly 225 – 300 words (half A4 page) or 500 – 600 words (full A4 page) will give an article of the right length accompanied by good quality and interesting photographs. Shorter notes on group activities are equally acceptable. Articles should be saved as a Word or Word compatible document or just send in an *e-mail* (Click on "save as" and select appropriate format) Don't worry about fonts or text formatting, but if you include photographs, these should preferably be sent as a separate image file (JPEG or TIFF) rather than embedded in articles or e-mails as these might be compressed so much their resolution is too low for publication.

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