



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.



"Salisbury Crag and Castle by Stewart Roberts. One of the exhibits for Photography 3 Exhibition "Best of our Best"

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Letter from your Chair

**George
Cleland**



On becoming Chairperson.

Rumsfeldisms – Donald Rumsfeld was (in) famous for some of his tortuous wisdom. In assuming the Chair of u3a, I've tripped up over many of his "Unknown Unknowns" – in my mind one of his more profound utterances.

Last year I was persuaded to not just join the Committee, but also to Chair it! Before agreeing, I talked to several previous members, including our past two Chairs, Richard Peoples and Bruce Cowan. They (probably deliberately) gave me a slightly narrower description than what the role has turned out to be! Based on that, I drew one of those spider diagrams of all that was involved – 27 'things'. This has turned to be accurate, in that all the things drawn I have had to do.

What Bruce and Richard didn't tell me was all the unexpected issues that arise that take more effort than the *Known Knowns*, or the *Known Unknowns*. Some of these will come up later. First however I'd like to thank Bruce and Richard (and indeed other now retired Committee Members) who steered us through the years of Covid, maintaining much of our activity. I stepped in just as we were pulling out of the restrictions, albeit into a somewhat changed way of working.

What's special about u3as?

At a recent workshop (see page 3) we were trying to think what was special about u3as. One answer was the organisation's 'umbrella' nature. Where else can you get so much in one place? ... and for only £10? It's not just individual group activities, it's about the cross fertilisation that happens as well. Thanks to u3a, I've done things I would never have dreamed of in my second age. These have both broadened and enriched my life in retirement in both unexpected and unplanned ways.

As a member of the Third Age Trust, Edinburgh

u3a is largely autonomous in how it runs itself and its activities. However, all u3as sign up to the Third Age Principles. I didn't know about these until I became Chair but, having to adopt them, I find them radical and enlightening. <https://bit.ly/3URgr2C>. They are characterised by the three ideas of: **promoting education** for those in their third age; **self-help** – we are run by our members for our members; and **mutual aid** – u3as are independent but provide mutual support both within themselves and to other u3as.

Edinburgh u3a is a little different to most others. We are one of the largest with almost 2,500 members – this brings special problems. The committee has been reviewing the overall health of Eu3a, and while good in some aspects, we do not have as good a ratio of activity groups to members as would be expected in a u3a of our size. Nor are we as diverse as we would like to be.

A Trust survey found that the average age of u3a members UK wide has increased from 69 to 74 in the past ten years. We have no reason to believe that Eu3a is different. We will start addressing these issues over the next year. The problem lies in recruitment, not numbers – we continue to grow healthily – but in the demographic from which we attract new members.

Join in and help

As a Group Leader I was always a bit sceptical with the 'unnecessary' Committee interfering in MY Group's activities, requesting this, or ensuring that... Turned gamekeeper, I see that much of this is needed to ensure the ongoing health of Eu3a. However, 'internal' recruitment remains an issue. To rebalance our organisation, we need volunteers to step up, (remember the '*self-help principle*') not just to form and lead groups, but to help in little ways, like making the tea, setting out the seating. Or maybe for other jobs such as volunteering for a committee role, supporting activities such as helping produce or edit our publications that help to cement the organisation together: the Clarion; our Website; the Bulletin: or by supporting our membership team which has a huge job especially at this time of the year.

Lots of us have work skills which could be transferred into volunteer activity to support and develop Eu3a. Do please think what you can give to our organisation. I've found in contributing, I've got back far more in fulfilment, and it has given me both new opportunities, and new meaning and direction in my Third Age.

Other unknowns!

Last year a major *Unknown Unknown* hit our **Website**. In October, most of you will have noticed that it vanished completely for about 2 weeks without any explanation. This was due to a contractual breakdown between the Third Age Trust and the hosting company used to host not just our web presence, but also about 700 other u3as. This was not the Trust's fault, and Trust volunteers have spent huge amounts of time fixing things as has Maureen Rooney, who maintains our site. Maureen put in many, many hours of effort, effectively re-building our site on new servers. A few parts have not been able to be recovered fully, but most of it is now functional again.

Moving forward, the Trust is developing a new Web infrastructure, to which we should migrate this year. This will allow us to support a more modern looking website, with significantly improved facilities. The structure and content of this website is entirely down to us so, if you have appropriate IT or editorial interests, we would love you to become involved.

Another unfortunate *Known Unknown* – **The Methodist Church** has been our de facto home for many years. We have outgrown it because of our size, and to be frank, while the local staff continue to provide sterling support, relations with the Hall Management have become strained since it became part of the London based Central Hall Venues Group a couple of years ago. It will be sad to leave such a wonderful space within this light filled A listed building, I think it likely that we will move to a new location for our Monthly Meetings in the next year. (Nothing is settled yet.)

Finally, I've become conscious of a lack of a documented **history** of Eu3a – a *Known Unknown*. It's important that we don't let this become an *Unknowable Unknown*! While I fear that some records have been lost, we do still have many boxes of archive material in storage. Investigating that and re-constructing some picture of our history would be a challenging but valuable project. The paper records could also be augmented by interviews with past office bearers and Group Leaders – a fascinating exercise in social archaeology for some volunteers!

Until next time – take care, but keep active!

George Cleland chair@edinburghu3a.org.uk

Third Age Trust – What does it do for you?

George mentioned the Third Age Trust. On 15th March, Allan Walmsley led a workshop for our members. Allan is Vice Chair of the Board of Directors for the u3a national body – the Third Age Trust – looking after all the u3as in the UK, by providing educational and administrative support.

The Trust is overseen by a *Board of Directors*, to which any u3a member may be elected by becoming a Regional Trustee. This is made up of 12 trustees elected from the u3a regions (our current Scottish Trustee is Liz Ervine) and three officers elected by the whole u3a membership. They all volunteer their time and are supported by a small office staff at Blackfriars Road in London. Across the UK, there are almost 430,000 members and more than 1,000 u3as.

However, if you are confused about the role – or even the name – you're not the only one! A recent survey of members found that many found the structure of the u3a nationally obscure and overcomplex and the trustees were being overwhelmed by day to day queries as well as having to deal with complex governance, legal and financial issues. Finding people to fill trustee vacancies was increasingly difficult. Consequently, there are proposals to change how the Trust is governed and among the changes being considered are the creation of a **Council** of elected representatives concentrating on support for u3as, while the **Board** would exist to run governance issues.

Our affiliation fees cover insurance, the running of the web infrastructure (currently Beacon) legal help, a programme of national educational initiatives, free on-line talks & workshops which include, for example, a monthly radio podcast and weekly math challenge. For example, did you know about the u3a "off the wall" event in which u3a members from all over the UK descended on Hadrian's Wall on 10 May 2023 to celebrate the building of the wall and the influence that the wall has had on our creative lives.

If you want to read more check out <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

Maggie Gilvray

A Life Less Ordinary

We always like to take the opportunity to celebrate the varied achievements of past and present Edinburgh u3a members, whether in their working life or in retirement.

Pat Thomas

It was with sadness that we learned of the death of Pat Thomas on 15th March at the age of 95.



Pat was the inspiring Head of James Gillespie High School for 16 years from 1975. (attended, no doubt, by many members, their children, and grandchildren)

After retiring in 1991, she transferred her educational talents to adults in their third age and became a well-known figure in the then fledgling Edinburgh u3a, especially known and admired by many for her energy and the number and variety of groups which she ran from her house. She oversaw the running of the Lunch Club, was heavily involved with the Summer Visits programme and for several years was Convener of the Speakers' Committee which organised the yearly list of speakers for the Open Meetings. She still found time to lead various groups including Sew & Sew, Play Reading 1, "Press Gang," Bridge for Fun, Armchair Travel. She found time to volunteer as Eu3a Chair for three years between 2002 and 2005.

There was an article in Clarion Spring 2014 in which Elisabeth Hutchings describes a visit to her "Press Gang" group where members brought press cuttings to read and discuss around the dining room table, "reminiscent of after-dinner talks among friends." It is interesting to note that in 2004, the history and economy of the Ukraine and Scottish independence were on the agenda.

Elisabeth recalls a personal and cherished memento of Pat. "She was a very good needlewoman, and when I despaired of ever completing two little needlework kits I'd been given, I asked Pat to do them for me (in return, I think, for something modest like a pot plant), which she did – the finished results hang framed

on a wall, where I often look at them and think gratefully of Pat. I also remember an informal conversation with her, perhaps at a Group Leaders Lunch, when she spoke with great insight and sympathy about a particular school pupil whose bad behaviour was, she realized, all too closely linked to a lack of love at home.

Marjory Landon also recalls meeting Pat Thomas in the late 70s, as a parent with children at James Gillespies,

"An exceptionally tall lady, one never missed her at school events and she was always "Dr Thomas" to us, although the children invariably referred to her as "Auntie Pat".

I didn't meet her again till I joined U3A in 2000 and attended her Bridge Group, hoping to improve my game. She was very welcoming, a very good Bridge player and I learnt a lot from her – but it took a while to get used to calling her "Pat". I'm pleased to say that my bridge must have improved as I partnered Pat on several occasions at her Bridge Club when her usual playing partner was on holiday!

I thoroughly enjoyed a course on Hardanger embroidery and have a cushion to remind me of it still. Needlework was her forte and cross-stitch especially; the pictures throughout her house showed many years of this work. After supper at my home one evening, when I had been using amusing paper napkins, she presented me, only a week later, with a cross-stitch version she had made. A treasured memento!

She talked me into serving on the Committee and taking the role of Secretary (because we need someone who can use a computer) and I had the privilege of working with her while she was Chair. Things were always well planned and detailed, in her quiet but thorough way. It was during her tenure that we welcomed our 1000th member, quite a milestone then.

Her obituary appeared in the Scotsman on 21st March:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/scotsman-obituaries-dr-patricia-thomas-go-ahead-head-of-james-gillespies-4071964>

Christmas Concert

And a Good Time Was Had by All!

It may seem a long time ago now, but this was a watershed event as it was the first "live" Christmas event since December 2019. The committee thought there would be enough interest in celebrating Face to Face for a concert and some pre-Christmas cheer in the Methodist Hall.

In the early afternoon of 14 December the five participating groups arrived, and after a brief Rehearsal, the audience filed in despite the cold, icy conditions that day.

George Cleland, Chair, started things off with a warm welcome to all. The Recorder Group were first up and played a variety of traditional Scottish songs and Christmas carols including Jock o'Hazeldean, Ae Fond Kiss, I Saw Three Ships. Their performance was followed by the Guitar Group, Singing Group, and Circle Dancing Group. The lights were dimmed as the circle dancers moved rhythmically to the music, holding small candles that glowed on the darkened stage. The Ukulele Group brought the concert to a rousing conclusion, inviting the audience to sing along to well-known Christmas songs including Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, Rudolph and We Wish You a Merry Christmas.

After all the merriment it was time for tea and a chat in the café. Mince pies and biscuits, tea and coffee were served by the venue and much appreciated by all in attendance.

Louise Grimm

Monthly Meetings

Monthly Meetings (for members only) have now, for the time being, returned to the Epworth Halls of the Methodist Church, 25 Nicolson Square, Edinburgh EH8 9BX and are held on the third Wednesday of most months from 2.30 to 4.00 pm.

Since the beginning of the year we have been treated to talks by **Ed Heather-Hayes** on the *Fife Coast and Countryside Project* on 18th January, **Charlie Guy** on "Dead & Buried" **Michael Keating** and **Brian Taylor** on Scottish Politics in March and April. In May, June and July we look forward to hearing **Caroline Watt**, **David Clarke** and **Andrew Wilson**.

There is a fascinating list of speakers line up. Details of these future talks and speakers are listed below and on the Website. There is no charge for attendance, and the church will supply refreshments.

May 17th: Professor Caroline Watt : *From Seance to Science: The Work of the Koestler Parapsychology Unit.*

Professor Watt holds the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh. She gives a whistlestop tour of KPU research ranging from field-work, investigating the Indian Rope Trick, to controlled laboratory tests of hypothesised extrasensory perception. Along the way she reveals the sometimes surprising scientific lessons that are learned through investigating allegedly paranormal phenomena.

June 28th: David Clarke: *"A Most Cantankerous Country .. The Early Malawi-Scotland Story"*

David is a secondary level History teacher in Edinburgh with a passion for connecting the heritage of the city to the wider world. He will be looking at the birth of the mission movement in the late 1870s, and how the Church of Scotland mission became a hotbed for radical anti-racist action in an age typified by the worst excesses of the imperial government and the white plantocracy. He will also focus on the incredible lives of Mungo Murray Chisuse and N'timawanzako Nacho, perhaps the first Malawians to be educated in a European school, when they came here to Edinburgh in 1885.

July 19th: Andrew Wilson: *"From Hadrian's Wall to the Antonine Wall – the Romans in Caledonia"*

Andrew Wilson, BA, BD, FSAScot, is a specialist in archaeology and ancient history with a particular interest in Roman frontier systems and Byzantine mosaics. He is a member of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, a member of the Hadrianic Society and the Pictish Arts Society. He leads tours to the Byzantine and Hellenic world, and is known as a good communicator combining in-depth knowledge with a sense of humour.

He will talk about the background to the North-Western Frontier of the Roman Empire, with images of the extant remains.

In the meantime, our roving reporters were at recent monthly talks for those unable to attend in person.

Brightening up a Dreich Month

On the **15th of February Charlie Guy** entertained us at the monthly meeting with a talk titled "Dead and Buried." It was all about 19th century funeral traditions and superstitions, with a generous helping of fascinating old photographs and non-politically-correct stories and nursery rhymes and songs. It will be hard for us in the audience to eradicate the memory of all the things that happen to the contents of a coffin, whenever we see a hearse go by! The sound system cooperated in creating an ominous atmosphere by shutting down in the middle of the talk, at which point Charlie led us in a singalong until the power was restored. In a difficult year it was good to be reminded that life for most people in the Victorian era was so much worse in so many ways. Charlie is an anatomist and social historian; she leads ghost walks in Old Town in addition to presenting her work at professional conferences. We were fortunate in getting so much esoteric information in such a lively form.

Joanna Morris

Our speakers for March and April both tackled the weighty subject of "Whither Scotland " but from the different perspectives of academic and journalist. These issues affect us all and both talks remind us how lucky we are in Edinburgh to have these speakers on our doorstep.

Scotland and Europe

"I think it's a bit more complicated than that!"

On March 15th Michael Keating came to talk to a full house at Nicholson Square about Scotland and Europe.

Michael is Emeritus Professor of Politics at the University of Aberdeen. His most recent book is titled "*State and Nation in the United Kingdom: The Fractured Union*" so he was well placed to try to explain some of these complexities.

Part of his address concerned the fact that in our short-term news media world, complex issues are simplified and defined by a single word such as "*Unitary State*" or "*Sovereignty*" often without any real understanding of what those terms really mean. So he set out to put the record straight. Indeed, the complexity of the issues is well illustrated in that it took three of us to put pen to paper and summarise what was said! We all had slightly different angles. His talk was followed by some lively questions from the floor.

He has been fascinated by Scotland's place in the Union since he was studying in Oxford where the view (and that of Westminster) was that the UK is a Nation State. He didn't believe it and did a PhD at Glasgow Caledonian University trying to prove that while the UK might be a political "Union" it is not a Unitary Nation State. The Act of Union never meant that parliamentary sovereignty in Westminster was to be absolute.

So what do we mean by these terms? He compared the Union against four conditions he saw as necessary for a "Unitary State"

Demos: There are four nations not one single united "British" people and there are nuanced differences between these nations including the retention of separate identities and institutions. The majority of Scots think of themselves as Scottish AND British while many in England think themselves English rather than British.

Telos: This would imply that there is a single vision or purpose for the British state.

Ethos: Implies shared values such as democracy, fair play, concern for the environment. While we might share similar social and economic values across the four nations, these are also shared with many countries in Europe and across the world.

Sovereignty: Identifying where this lies is perhaps the most difficult to define in a union where traditions are different and there are many different understandings of what sovereignty is. The view that sovereignty is absolute and lies with the Westminster parliament tends to be in conflict with devolution.

Big challenges have been created by Devolution, Indy Ref 1 and the Brexit referendum and have made hypothetical problems and debates more real.

While the European project has diverse meanings, to many, the EU provided a scaffolding that held the Union together while Brexit has created an opportunity for centralisation and the rolling back of devolution. Although the Council of Europe isn't an EU institution, an example of the multinational status of our Union might be that while the ECHR definition of Human Rights is built into the devolution settlement, there is no equivalent British or English Bill of Rights.

After the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016, in Scotland, support for independence and remaining in the EU has tended to become more aligned while there is a correlation between those identifying as English and voting for Brexit. Moreover, those who identified as being "English" are more likely to be happy to give up the union.

The current Westminster approach seems to attempt to consolidate UK as unitary state, so we carry on as a "*Fractured Union*." with two sides talking past each other without defining the issues.

Hillary Sillitto, Alison Bramley, Maggie Gilvray

Stands Scotland where it did?

Brian Taylor April 19th

Brian Taylor, as raconteur and journalist – former political editor for BBC Scotland, co-presenting the politics programme "Left, Right and Centre" – needs little introduction. His presentation was an interesting stylistic contrast to Michael Keating's talk in March while covering some of the same ground. His title "*Stands Scotland where it did*" invited him to range widely from the state of the nation's current political parties to the evolution and distinctive place of the devolved Scottish Parliament.

It was a particularly challenging task to come and talk to us in the present climate of turmoil in both UK and Scottish politics.

We had another capacity audience at Nicolson Square for the meeting. As an experiment this was a ticketed event with the "live" audience joined by another 100 members on Zoom. While there were a few problems for those joining

virtually with sound quality during introductions and questions, the ticketing system worked well with only a couple of seats unused and there seems to be enough interest among members not present to attend on "Zoom," for the format to be repeated for future meetings allowing members who are unable to be there in person, to hear our speakers.

Brian talked animatedly about what made the road to devolution in Scotland different from independence movements elsewhere in Europe and beyond. The former has its origins starting from the Act of Union in 1707 which was partly a response to recouping some of the losses incurred by the disastrous Darien project and in finding a way to stop ongoing border skirmishes. But in the present day, it extends to the influence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which has never shied away from discussing the big issues of the day and the precedent set in the Scotland Act of 1978.

In contrast to some other independence movements in Europe, there is not the same sense of escape from persecution or oppression, but more an assertion of confidence in matching the performance of other small nations.

He contrasted this with the climate of escape from modernism and seeking solace in past history that often seems to colour Westminster politics. He discussed alternative forms of governance; the problems presented by federalism where the participating parties are of disparate sizes; touched on the issue of trade borders and the discussions about regionalism in England for which there is little appetite, and which is more an arm of local government than devolution of power to the regions.

We were reminded that devolution is about governance, the day to day running of the country and the continuity and stability provided by Civil Service as much as about government and independence politics.

He concluded that while Independence was not a preposterous idea, it needs sustained support from people on all sides.

MG

Groups

Eu3a has just under 200 groups run by and for our members. They are about meeting other like minded people, sharing skills and knowledge, maybe trying out something new and learning along the way. Some are about doing things together (like photography), others about exploring a subject and maybe learning from each other and guest speakers (science or geology), while others are about keeping active, such as walking and cycling.

For a list of groups and contact details, please see the website which is updated monthly .

Here we feature some recent group activities.

Chronicle of a Eu3a Writing Group

'The group meets tomorrow at my house at 10am. If you would like to come along, the subject this month is volunteers or volunteering, but you don't need to stick to the suggested topic.'

'Oh! Would I have to write a piece tonight to bring to the meeting?'

'It doesn't need to be long, but better to come with something you can share with the group. Look forward to seeing you then.'

My shoulders slumped as I put down the phone. Of course I couldn't produce a piece on volunteering or any other subject, to be read publicly at such short notice. Being recently retired and somewhat adrift, with all this newly acquired free time, I had a notion to see if my schoolgirl enthusiasm for composition writing could translate into adult creative writing. So, following the instruction from Helen Stuart, the group leader, I sat down at the computer and started to write a rather staid account of my volunteering experiences.

Helen's house was easy to find and there was no problem parking. Good sign, I told myself as I approached the front door, only slightly less nervous than on the first day in a new job. After a cheery welcome, Helen introduced me to the rest of the group, all relaxing in a circle of comfy armchairs in her spacious living room.

Then, after allocation of the reading order, we were off to a brisk start. Fortunately, my turn wasn't to come until near the end, so I was able to get a sense of how erudite these people were. My spirits wilted a little as I listened to a humorous account of hospital volunteers from

John Shaw, followed by Kay's gently lyrical story set in the Highlands. By the time Helen read her acerbic, but astute tale of a fictionalised dinner party, I felt very conscious of my own dearth of inspiration. Fortunately, there followed a fairly pedestrian contribution from a woman, whose name I can no longer recall, which gave me the courage to share my offering.

The kindly responses from Helen and the other members, as I finished my contribution, may have been overstated, but it served to calm the nerves and provide a much-needed boost of confidence. I was able, finally, to relax and enjoy Rosalie's witty account of an incident from her Antrim childhood and Jean's story of intrepid activities during a Canadian winter. Clearly, these people could write, both fiction and memoir. If I stuck with them, perhaps I could learn from them.

I not only stuck with them, but the monthly Friday meetings at Helen's house in Ravelston and later in Blackhall, became a significant and enjoyable part of my retired life. Feedback was kindly, but constructive. Helen, as a retired English teacher, used her extensive knowledge of grammar to ensure that any grammatical errors were gently highlighted thus building confidence in our abilities.

In the 14 years since that first meeting, there were gradual changes in the membership. Christine and Ann joined not long after me and over many years provided intriguing stories of Cambodia (Christine) and of sailing exploits and tales of war time London (Ann), until they both moved to be with family in England.

Norma also joined the group around this time and soon established her place with a distinctive talent for both poetry and prose.

Jenny, who had been a pilot in Africa, fascinated the group with riveting tales of her daring exploits. Likewise, Claudine, who brought a touch of Gallic chic to our meetings as her 'histoires' were narrated with a charming French intonation.

Two more Helens joined. One Helen was memorable for a nail-biting account of being stuck in a lift for several hours. The other Helen not only produced impressive stories and poems, but also read her contributions with the skill of a professional actress. The Helen of the lift incident stayed with us for a year or so and our actress Helen finally decided, during the pandemic, that meeting via Zoom was not for her.

When I joined the group, John Shaw was the only male participant. His wide-ranging stories, many based on his career as a brain surgeon and various other aspects of his life, covered a broad spectrum from humour to pathos. John was a mainstay of the group for many years, outlasting other male participants. These included another John, also a medic and Walter, neither of whom attended for long – too many females?

Then along came David, who transferred from Helen's Wednesday group. David coped admirably as the only male among a band of females, providing consistently entertaining and diverse tales, ranging from his international career in the military to walking in the Pentland Hills and many other detours in-between.

Maggie joined us for a while, but proved to be so dedicated to the craft of writing that she set up another Writing Group. We were also fortunate enough to have the talented Laura for some time, but other commitments eventually lured her away.

Susi joined our lockdown Zoom meetings and stayed with us as we tentatively moved back to face-to-face meetings. Then, after a handful of sessions she drifted away, to be replaced by Brian, who brought an added dimension to the group with diverse missives ranging from nights with the Edinburgh Care van to lyrical poetry. So, to paraphrase Brian Hanrahan in the Falklands war, *'I've counted them joining and I've counted them leaving.'*

However, the final accolade must go to our late and much missed leader, Helen, who organised, hosted, supported and encouraged members for so many years. Although we continue without her, her name is regularly invoked at meetings, often with affectionate humour when it comes to grammar issues. Helen also leaves a lasting legacy in the two booklets of the group's work, that she edited and which were published and sold to raise money for charity.

Trish O'Brien

Easy Cycling

Get on your Bike: Ready Steady Go!

After I joined Eu3a's 'Easy Hill Walking Group' in February 2022, headed up by Susan Whitehead, Susan (who'd recently purchased an e-bike) was persuaded to start another group 'Easy Cycling' The idea was to do an average of 8 to 12 miles trying to stick to the numerous cycle paths throughout Edinburgh and beyond.

We had several enjoyable runs:-

Lochrin Basin/Union Canal to Hermiston Gait.

Broughton to Silverknowes.

Meadows to Musselburgh.

St. Margaret's Loch/Arthur's Seat to Musselburgh.

Trinity/Silverknowes to Newhaven.

Shawfair/Loanhead to Roslin.

The Group varies in numbers between 3 and 6 people (but the more the merrier), who have a mix of bikes from pedal power to e-bikes. It didn't take much persuasion for me to upgrade to an e-bike!

The cycle runs are usually monthly on Monday or Tuesday (afternoons) with a degree of flexibility and are always good fun.

Barbara Finnie



Jogging Group



Jogging? Me? If you'd told me a month or two beforehand that I was going to join the Edinburgh u3a jogging group, I would have thought you were having a laugh. I hadn't jogged since secondary school (not exactly last week) and I hated every minute of it then. So I seemed the last person to get involved in jogging. But, like Donald Trump, I thought that I needed to lose ten or twenty pounds (this is the only thing I have in common with Donald Trump). As one of the measures to bring this change about, I made contact with the local u3a joggers and went along for the first time in April of last year.

The group consists of a range of experiences and abilities but what we have in common is that we are very supportive of each other. Even slow jogging (and in my case it's more like shambling than real running) is better than no jogging at all and we encourage and congratulate each other on our achievements, however modest.

We meet every Friday except the first of the month in different parts of Edinburgh. The routes are circulated in advance and are around five to six kilometres long, sometimes along pavements but more usually along paths and cycle tracks, with which Edinburgh is well supplied. Sometimes I even cycle from home to the meet and back again – how healthy is that – but most of us use car or bus. There are regular stops during the jog to get your breath back and have a chat (or a grump, if you're that way inclined) with the other joggers. The group is not competitive and is held together by a shared belief in the benefits of jogging.

There are many sorts of specialist jogging kit that you can buy but it is not necessary to do this. All you really need is a pair of trainers and something

loose to wear that won't impede your jogging. The photo above gives you some idea of what we look like (well, in socially-distanced mode anyway) and the kit we turn up in for a meet.

Oh, and by the way, I have lost fifteen pounds since April 2021 so it worked for me. Try it – it could work for you too.

David Syme

Padel and Circle Dance

The two groups that we visited for this addition of the Clarion both help Edinburgh U3A members to keep fit, but in very different ways.



First on a grey, cold, Tuesday morning in March we went to the Thistle **Padel Group** in Craiglockhart. Padel is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK. It is similar to tennis and is played on an enclosed court. However, as in squash, the walls form part of the game with the ball bouncing off them. The paddle, unlike a tennis racket, has no strings and the balls are slightly softer. Peter Gordon the group leader describes the game as being easier to pick up than tennis and less strenuous than squash.

Everyone we talked to was very enthusiastic about padel, praising it as a great way to keep fit and to improve or learn new skills, and make new friends. On one court a doubles match was taking place with the ball whizzing back and forth. The scoring is the same as in tennis. On the other court less experienced players were being coached by Luis so there is no need to worry if you have never played tennis. There are two sessions 10 – 11.30 and 11.30 – 1pm.

Norma Emm

Circle Dance

On the following Friday afternoon, another dreich day, we went to the Salisbury Centre in Newington to see the *Circle Dancing Group* in action. Unlike Padel, Circle Dance dates back many centuries. In earlier times people would have danced around a fire. Kate Daly, the group's leader always has a centre piece for the group's dances. The dances themselves vary and be can be reflective and gentle through to very lively indeed. No partners are needed.



When we arrived the group was in the middle of a dance which didn't look too complicated. As Kate explained all the dances are first walked through to help new members. Everyone we spoke to, both those who had been dancing for years, and those new to the group, agreed how much they enjoyed it, especially as no one has to do a solo turn! The music was lovely and the dances come from many countries. The first dance after the break was from Bulgaria which looked quite complicated in the walk through. However, everyone seemed delighted with it. If a dance becomes too much you can easily step out from the circle.

As with the Padel group, members enjoyed both the physical and social side of their activities, and it's a great way to start the weekend. Kate and Peter said that they would be very happy to welcome new members to their two very different groups.

Norma Emm

Craft Group

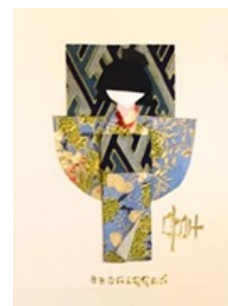
On Friday, 12 April, I went along to the Pentlands Community Centre to meet with the U3A Craft Group. This group has engaged in a variety of activities over the 20 years, since it was started by Moira Peters (now in her 90s), but the current

focus is on greetings cards. Margaret Garden, the present group leader, took me round the 3 tables where members of the group were making cards.



Members of the Craft Group:
Standing (left to right) Carmen Duncan, Yvonne Stables, Edith McDougall, Linda McKinney
Kneeling – Maxine Wincott and Margaret Garden

Edith McDougall had before her several cards, made using a variety of techniques. Her beautiful card, featuring a Japanese figure in a kimono, was more than equal to the intricate cards my daughter used to send me when she lived in Japan.



Yvonne Stables' use of folded paper and applique produced several different images and styles. It was difficult to pick out any one of them, but a sophisticated design of the silhouetted head of a woman, wearing a boater hat had real appeal.



Margaret Garden demonstrated how a die machine was used to cut intricate shapes that could be coloured and used in a variety of ways. A delicate Christmas wreath with a robin and foliage was impressive, especially the skilful hand colouring.



I saw many more examples of exquisite creations during my visit, but I can't show them all. Sadly, none of these amazing cards are for sale commercially, but some members take commissions from family and friends (lucky friends and family). They also donate cards for competition and raffle prizes.

Trish O'Brien

Photography Group 3



Our Photography Exhibition – Best of our Best Morningside Library. 6th – 24th March

We are Edinburgh's u3a Photography Group 3, a small group of like-minded people who share a passion for photography. Our philosophy is simple: we take photographs for pleasure. We also like a challenge.....

So, in summer 2022, we decided to hold a photography exhibition. We were all novices at organising such a venture but various tasks were identified: find a suitable free venue; decide how and where to get our photos reproduced and, most difficult of all how to choose which photos from the 1000s we have each taken.

We meet together one afternoon a month, alternating between outings and meeting at Napier University. We set a theme for our meetings, with each of us entering two 'theme' photographs. We collectively review on-screen all our photos, encouraging all to share knowledge and experience to help us to help us become better photographers.

Our exhibition theme saw us each entering (uploading) our six best photographs from all-time. We then chose our top three from each member's photographs ranked in order. Our group leader Stewart produced a spreadsheet which worked out our top three with some surprising results. A decision was made to allow each of us to substitute a favourite.

Each of our three photographs was produced on MDF at A3 size. The day came to collect them and apart from the pictures seeming huge, tiny marks unseen on a screen were suddenly massive,

colours looked different, some photos just didn't look so good but, generally, everyone was pleased with their exhibits.

New skills were learnt – curating and hanging photos, and also trickier areas like promotion and producing flyers. We decided on a soft launch (learned a new lingo too!) with an enjoyable family and friends evening.

Our exhibition, at Morningside Library during March 2023 was well received and the feedback has been really positive. We're all feeling rightly proud of our achievement. I wonder what our next challenge will bring.!

A couple of quotes from our comments' book sum up the overall response.

"Wonderful photographs. Such a variety of subjects"

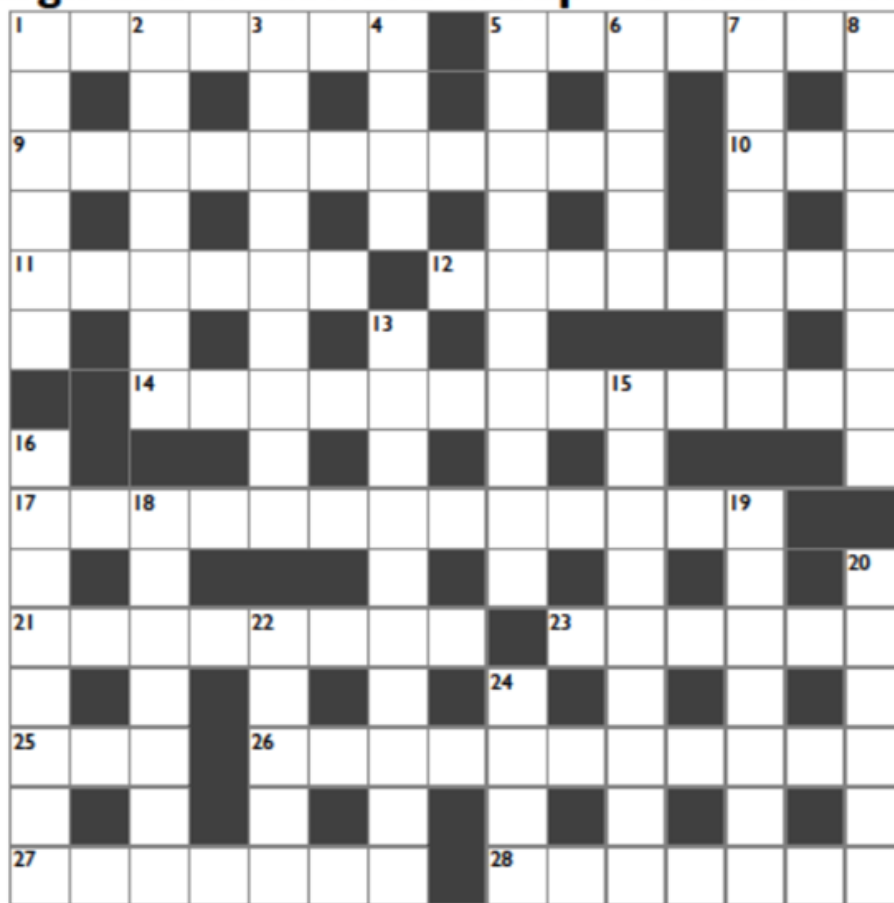
"Excellent pics, some wonderful contrasts. Very much enjoyed the exhibition"



Stewart and Pat busy mounting the exhibition

Sheila Capewell

Edinburgh u3a Crossword Group – October 2022



Across

- 1 Hidden plot by Heath (7)
- 5 On National Service initially within satellite produces seasonal wind (7)
- 9 Two-ton liner renovated by lucky investor (5,6)
- 10 Poor actor takes credit from charm (3)
- 11 Some can't orate, but can be the lead singer (6)
- 12 Twice allowed to create a small stream (8)
- 14 Time to mop up? (5,3,5)
- 17 Very disappointed by caged bird (4,2,1,6)
- 21 Boycott foreign octet on the radio (8)
- 23 Persuade Church of England to absorb centre in disrepair (6)
- 25 Possibly some thinker's writing material (3)
- 26 Wicked spirit sounds simple, and can show it (11)
- 27 Channels on the point of dying out? (7)
- 28 With direction, wives no longer have gaps in their schedule (7)

Down

- 1 This body of people needs to keep order (6)
- 2 Needed to receive and order ten naan (7)
- 3 Some refreshment provided at 2:40, say? (3-3-3)
- 4 Dry run in Perth, initially, preferred by weak character (4)
- 5 Regal, like a butterfly (10)
- 6 Drug dealer in lunar conspiracy? (5)
- 7 Help to exchange penny for pound, and nothing for this character (7)
- 8 Don't eat me! Time just once to be destroyed by parasite (8)
- 13 Pupils have fun in these moments (5,5)
- 15 From Riga, out at Berne, taking turns with no memory of it (9)
- 16 Getting away from every such critically acclaimed performance is not guaranteed at first (8)
- 18 Unfair? Not this game (7)
- 19 This twister can be a twisted donator (7)
- 20 Stole parts of rare Cessna and went for a U.S. break (6)
- 22 Press gently and undergo transformation, or not (5)
- 24 Fresh, it's said, and understood (4)

Marjory Dunbar

Summer Visits

We are pleased that these have started up again and are open to all members. Relax and enjoy a good day out by coach with someone else looking after you.

You are invited to join one, some or all the visits which are being arranged for this summer. As you can see, the programme is varied so there should be something to attract you. If not – why not suggest your favourite destination to one of the committee.

Full details and booking forms for the visits are available on the website <https://u3asites.org.uk/edinburgh/events> as well as at Open meetings. For further information visits@edinburghu3a.org.uk

June: Thursday June 15th Falkland Palace

This Historic Renaissance Palace and formal garden lies on the edge of the conservation village of Cupar and is owned by the National Trust for Scotland. It contains one of the country's earliest "Real Tennis" courts built for James V as well as the opportunity to learn about some of the Trust's conservation work.

July: Tuesday July 14th Verdant Works and RRS Discovery, Dundee

The Verdant Works tells the story of Dundee's industrial textile heritage in the setting of a beautifully refurbished Mill. Dundee was a major whaling centre and had long experience of building ships designed to travel through pack ice. It was here that RRS Discovery, the last of the 3 masted barque rigged sailing ships was built in 1900 to take Scott and Shackleton to Antarctica in 1901

August: Tuesday August 8th Pittenweem Arts Festival.

Now in its 39th year, the annual arts festival transforms the village of Pittenweem into a vibrant arts hub over the 8 days of the festival with over 100 artists and makers from all over Britain exhibiting and performing in houses, studios, galleries and public venues throughout the village and around the harbour.

September: Wednesday September 27th New Lanark.

The purpose-built 18th Century mill village of New Lanark was declared a World Heritage Site in 2001. Here David Dale and Robert Owen created a model of an industrial community that became a milestone in social and industrial history

Crossword solution

Across

1 Planted
5 Monsoon
9 Lottowinner
10 Ham
11 Cantor
12 Brooklet
14 Aftertheflood
17 Sickasaparrot
21 Alienate

23 Coerce

25 Ink

26 Demonstrate

27 Gutters

28 Windows

Down

1 Police

2 Antenna

3 Twofortea

4 Drip

5 Monarchial

6 Narco

7 Othello

8 Nematode

13 Breaktimes

15 Forgotten

16 Escaping

18 Cricket

19 Tornado

20 Recess

22 Nudge

24 Knew

Giving a home to a Ukrainian refugee

When the war in Ukraine started over a year ago my husband and I wanted to do something to help. We applied to the Scottish Government scheme and offered a room in our flat to a refugee. Months went past but in January this year we eventually heard from a woman in Kiev. Anjela, who has been with us now for three months, has been an easy guest and done her best to fit in with our way of life even down to helping with the daily crossword puzzle. The long walks in the Pentland Hills were maybe a challenge too far.!

It can't have been easy for an independent, professional woman to give up her life in Kiev but she lived in fear of being bombed. Her aged mother refused to leave Ukraine and is a constant source of worry.

From the start she showed an interest in learning about Scottish culture and some of her first trips out were to the Edinburgh Art Galleries. She was very impressed by the beautiful collection of art and especially the fact that she could get in free. At the Balerno Burns Supper she tasted haggis and recited My Love is Like a Red Red Rose in Ukrainian. Ukrainians know and love the work of Burns.

Stockbridge is her favourite place. She has thoroughly enjoyed picking up bargains from the charity shops and browsing the Sunday Market.

It has been a two way exchange. We have learned a lot about the Ukrainian way of life and have had the pleasure of tasting her delicious soups and pancakes.

People in Edinburgh have been very supportive and have gone out of their way to be helpful. The local chemist helped her deal with an outbreak of eczema, brought on by stress. My hairdresser offered to cut her hair at a reduced rate and the man from the Stitch and Repair shop repaired her broken backpack at no charge.

The only criticism that Anjela has of Edinburgh is the weather. She found the winter damp and cold but hopefully she will soon forget the cold now warmer Spring weather has arrived.

Ann Keating



Anjela on a visit to the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens

I want to share my impressions of the trip with Ann to the island of Bute. It was an exciting and interesting journey. First we went by train to Glasgow. Looking out the train window, I saw many beautiful old buildings. Then we sailed on a big ship. It was just wonderful. The weather was fine and you could see the coast. The sky was blue, white clouds and the sun sparkled, everything was like a fairy tale. We were on our way to a meeting of the u3a. I got to know the locals. At the meeting, I liked the fact that people of different ages were interested in how they could spend their free time, what they could do. Many people filled out questionnaires, where they indicated what they would like to do, wrote about their interests and hobbies. It was very interesting. Looking at them, I realized that it doesn't matter how old you are and what you do, the main thing is communication. The desire to communicate, tell something interesting and listen to other people. It was so wonderful.



Anjela Anje

Current Committee

Chair: **George Cleland**

Vice Chair: **Louise Grimm**

Secretary: **Chris Young**

Treasurer: **Alistair Christie**

Membership: **Liz Bell**

Group Coordinator 1 (Groups A-C):
Anne Cardew

Group Coordinator 2 (Groups D-I):
Louise Grimm (temporary replacement)

Group Coordinator 3 (Groups J-P):
Dave Duncan

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

Group Coordinator 5 (Groups T-Z):
Louise Grimm

Internal Communications: **Graham Golding**

External Communications: **Pat Williams**

New Members: **Dierdre Duffy**

Web Administrator: **Maureen Rooney**

Technical Support: **Andrew Robertson** handing over to **Don Kennedy**

Information officer:

Others behind the scenes

Bulletin Editor: **David Baird**

Assistant Treasurers: **Jenny Clarke & Colin Kidd**

Assistant Membership 1: **Vacant**

Assistant Membership 2: **Graham Golding**

Clarion Editor: **Maggie Gilvray**

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion: **Suhail Shehade**

Safeguarding: **Jane Garrett**

Assistant Technical support: **Allan Mathieson**

Speakers Committee: **Joanna Morris**

Volunteers: **Tricia Allan**

Assistant Webmaster: **Jean Knox**

Visits: **Ann Kerrigan**

Contact details can be found in the **Contact** (password protected) area of the website.

Editor's note

A special thank you to all those who contributed to this edition. The range of topics covered from politics to creative skills and physical activities help to illustrate the broad church that our Chair finds so enriching in his introduction.

Guidance for submitting articles will be available in the Bulletin and on the Website.

Contributions should be sent, 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 (Click on "save as" and select appropriate format) or just send in an email. 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 emails as these

might be compressed so much their resolution is too low for publication. If you don't have access to a word processing device (computer, tablet etc) contact Maggie on 07808 319485.

The Clarion team currently comprises **Norma Emm, Trish O'Brien, Colin Stevenson** and myself and we would welcome new volunteers with publishing, writing or editorial skills. Thanks too to **Joanna Morris** for her always thorough proof reading. Except where otherwise credited, all photos are taken by the author(s) of the article.

Paper version. If you want a paper version of this magazine, please contact the membership Secretary, Liz Bell membership@edinburghu3a.org.uk

Maggie Gilvray