



## Falkirk and District U3A Newsletter

August 2020



Editor – John Giovanacci      [j.giovanacci@sky.com](mailto:j.giovanacci@sky.com)

### From the Chair

Dear Members,

I hope the time since March, and the lifting of some lock down restrictions, has seen you emerge in good spirits, as we all attempt to adapt to the 'new normal'. As part of the new normal we will be holding our monthly open meetings using Zoom, until such time as we can once again meet together in a large group. Hopefully you will find using Zoom straightforward. It surprised me, a social media sceptic, how easy it is to use, as long as you follow the instructions from the meeting host. Many of you may have already been using it to keep in touch with families and friends, and some of our U3A interest groups have been using it to successfully hold meetings. The Coffee Morning meeting we held on August 12th as a trial was very successful, and convinced the Committee that we should use this method of meeting for the foreseeable future. I am sure you will find it a straightforward and enjoyable experience.

You will have read that the Trustees Committee decided to temporarily waive the membership fee, and renew all existing members in September for the 2020-21 session. The administration of members renewing and paying fees remotely would have been very onerous, and we also wanted to ensure that we don't lose touch with our members, so everybody will continue to receive information. Recommended ways of keeping up to date with information about our U3A includes the website and Facebook, and also the U3A Trust website. A regular monthly Newsletter, commencing with this edition, will once again be circulated. More than ever it is important we all communicate with each other and as part of this I encourage everybody to think about sending a newsletter item to the editor, John Giovanacci. The Newsletter could be much more than the Committee giving updates, so I hope you will contribute. Perhaps how you coped during lockdown would be of interest to members.

### AGM

As part of Falkirk and District U3A constitution we need to have an Annual General Meeting, giving members at least 21 days notice. This year's AGM will be held during the **6th October Open Meeting**. In early September there will be a separate notification which will include all of the relevant documents to be approved by members. This will also invite applications from any member interested in becoming a Committee Member/Trustee.

Thanks

Glenn

## Update From Membership Secretary

While we did enjoy lots of lovely weather in the early days of lockdown, July & into August has seen extremely changeable weather. It is disappointing that we cannot yet begin to meet each other again except in difficult circumstances with social distancing. Keeping in touch is so important. I always look forward to the open meetings when I can chat to everyone and hear how friends are getting on. It was good to see something about the 1820 Uprising in the last Third Age Matters magazine knowing that our U3A group was involved and had given a talk about their involvement and findings at one of our Open Meetings. I have now ordered members' copies of the next issue of the magazine which should be coming through your letterboxes in mid-September. I'm sure it will contain many items of interest to you or could it even contain an item written by you.

You are probably aware that our annual membership for 2020-21 has been waived due to Covid-19 which caused us to discontinue many of the planned activities for 2020. Because of this, **there will be no need for members to complete registration forms for next year** as is usual at our open meeting in September. **However, any new members will be charged the full amount of £20 should they wish join us for the next year.**

Louise Westall

## Groups Update

We currently have a number of our groups running via Zoom, Skype and Facebook. All the information is on our website, and if you have any questions please contact the relevant Group Leader. Website link <https://u3asites.org.uk/falkirk/groups>

We had a very successful recent Zoom Coffee Morning. As it was a trial run we had Vicki Blackmore from Dogs for Good who explained their Charity and what they do, which was very much enjoyed by all the attendees. It was a great chance for a catch up and a chat. If anyone is interested in taking the Zoom Coffee Morning forward please let me know. Of course if you want to start a new group please let me know by completing the form below. Or contact me on [marionmerrett@mail.com](mailto:marionmerrett@mail.com)

<https://u3asites.org.uk/files/f/falkirk/docs/newinterestgroupproposal2.doc>

Thanks to all the Group Leaders who have been inventive in keeping their groups running in these challenging times, it is very much appreciated by us all. Lastly a very big thanks to Pamela Chambers who is our Zoom facilitator, who has enabled the smooth running of the Groups via Zoom.

Marion Merrett

## U3A Online Tutorials

During the U3A Virtual Coffee Morning last week there was some discussion about using Zoom as a platform for our various meetings. I have been asked to share the following link <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/online-events> which gives access to Zoom tutorials offered by TrustU3A to all U3A members. I found out about this initiative through an article in TAM Summer 2020 (page 15) and have done the introductory and group leaders' training. They were excellent and very helpful. I would thoroughly recommend them and I hope you find them useful.

Jennifer Knightley

## Lockdown – What's Been Going On?

### Zooming In

Our Interest Groups are discovering the value that Zoom meetings can provide in the present climate, The Film Group have been discussing films that members have been watching on TV. The Mindfulness Group continues to meet each Friday and the Computer Group is now holding regular virtual meetings The Reading Group has a regular Zoom session on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month to discuss the book of the month and enjoy the social occasion of sharing and chatting generally, As the group has a wide range of reading likes/dislikes each member takes a turn in selecting the book for discussion. August's book is 'When God Was A Rabbit' by Sarah Winman, a delightful novel about siblings, friendship and love told with sadness and much humour. The Current Affairs Group has decided to take a break and will meet up again on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

Morven Mack

### On Yer Bike



I have been a cyclist nearly all my life. On my recent 80<sup>th</sup> birthday my wife suggested I purchase an electric bike which would enable me to keep cycling well into old age. I investigated electric bikes and found there were varieties just like ordinary bikes. I did not want a specialist bike, like

a mountain bike, and decided on an everyday day bike with mudguards, lights, step through frame, a big comfy seat and an acceptable price. I selected a German make, Wisper. (see photo).

I find my bike is perfect. It has been designed for comfort. There are five levels of assist. The first one is on permanently which I think compensates for the heavy weight of the electric bike and feels just normal. If you meet a hill or a head wind it will sense your extra effort and give you a gentle push. Being a fit cyclist I can operate on level 2 which saves the battery. Also as an experienced cyclist I am familiar with the gears which further saves on the battery. After a long run, if I am a bit knackered coming home, I can press the 3rd level button. If you are coming to cycling after many years and carrying a lot of weight, level 4 or 5 are there to help, however you will have less range. As it's not a motorcycle you will only get assistance if you are pedalling. If it worked without pedalling you would need a license and number plates. Also under the law it cannot do more than 25kmh(15.5mph). There is a throttle at the left handle giving you a really powerful boost which you can use if you hit a very steep hill but you still have to pedal and it will reduce your range significantly if used often.

The controls are fantastic. Everything can be reached with thumbs. On the right there are the thumb-controlled gear lever and the bell. On the left there is the small instrument panel indicating the level of assist, the extra boost at any time, the miles covered and how much battery is left. It also has the assist level buttons. The bike can be bought with three ranges of battery, 30 miles, 50 miles and 70 miles. These figures are very arbitrary as the range depends on how the bike is used.

The only flaw with the bike was the seat which my wife and I both found it impossible to get comfortable and as result we visited Halfords and were given good advice. It appears that a bike seat is a very individual thing and serious cyclist always buy their own seats. I now have the perfect seat.

Archie McIntyre (Speaker Secretary)

## **Crafty Hands**

Louise Westall found time away from her garden to turn her hand to some imaginative soft furnishings by using odds and ends of fabrics lying around the house to make these cushions.



## Sheds U Like

My 6x8 wooden shed was starting to rot and let water in so it was time to get rid of the old thing. I found a local handyman who came with a helper and had it all dismantled and taken away inside an hour. I had already bought, and with the help of a neighbour, assembled an impressive looking new plastic shed on my patio. Next thing was to lay down the separate plastic base, fill with gravel, make sure it was all level then move the shed onto the base. Again, with the help of neighbours we placed straps under 2 sides and 4 of us carried it over the short distance. It now looks rather good in place of the rather decrepit looking wooden shed.



John (Editor)

## TV Licence – Scam Alert

As you will probably know anyone over 75 is now required to pay for a TV Licence. Scammers are taking advantage of this new legislation by sending a fake email to elderly people. The email looks very official with requests for details including bank account & sort code. Unfortunately one of our members has been 'caught' by this scam so please be extra vigilant if you are 75 or over and receive such an email.