

u3a in Scotland Charity SC030370 Newsletter Autumn 2023



Stirling Court Hotel, Summer School location 2024

Letter from the Chair

Here I am in my third and final year as chairperson of u3a in Scotland, which means we will be looking for a new chairperson in June 2024. We will also be looking for a new treasurer and are currently still looking for a secretary. Anyone appointed now could still serve a further 3 years from June next year. Some of the current committee members could continue in a different capacity but at the moment no one seems inclined to do that, so we will really need four new people for the committee next June.

We are currently able to co-opt two additional members on to this committee, so if anyone would like to come along, with a view to becoming a full member next year, please contact u3ascotlandchairperson@gmail.com for an invitation to a monthly committee meeting (held on Zoom).

This year's AGM in June went well with 25 people attending in person at the Quaker Meeting House in Edinburgh and a further 10 joining on Zoom, the technical side being excellently handled by George Cleland and Don Kennedy, both of Edinburgh u3a.

Liz Ervine, Trustee for Scotland, and Richard Peoples of Edinburgh u3a both gave excellent talks. Richard began with a short presentation on how to make meetings more accessible for members who have hearing issues, followed by a talk on Short Courses as a complement to regular groups.

Some functions of u3a in Scotland have been let slide since Covid. We intend to reintroduce face-to-face or online training sessions for committee members in Scotland with specific roles to enable them to share ideas and discuss best practice. Online has the advantage that it doesn't matter where you live and costs to u3a in Scotland and your own u3a are negligible. The first of these will be an **Online Forum for Treasurers on December 8th**. Details to follow. Two new u3as have started up since the last newsletter was circulated: Isle of Bute and Glasgow Southside. Cumbernauld has been more of a struggle but we are looking at other options in conjunction with a nearby u3a. Other areas are under consideration for new u3as.

Plans for the 2024 Summer School are in full swing. There is a separate item on this subject in this newsletter.

The Autumn Members Meeting will take place on Zoom on Tuesday 24th October. There will be a talk by Professor Alan Gow of Heriot Watt University on ***Keeping the Brain Active***. Only a youngster himself, he very much approves of the u3a and can be seen talking to our Trustee Liz Ervine in one of the YouTube videos released by the Trust for u3a Week. Tony Donahue from SOPA will give the second talk on ***Age Friendly Communities***. This presentation was initially devised by Catriona Mason, a member of their board and also a member of Hamilton u3a. Attendees will also have the opportunity to join others in break-out rooms to discuss specific questions. We would like to see all u3as in Scotland represented by at least one person, but there will be no limits on the numbers from any u3a.

There will be another All Members Meeting in March 2024 and if you would like to see a specific subject/topic covered, please contact u3a in Scotland with your ideas.

Anne Walsh, Chairperson u3a in Scotland.

Letter from the Trustee for Scotland

I hope you managed some good weather somewhere this summer but now we seem to have been catapulted into autumn! I hope you have all received a questionnaire from me to be completed by each u3a committee. Please return it as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact me on Liz.Ervine@u3a.org.uk.

Allana Parker is no longer the PR and Media volunteer for Scotland. We will miss her enthusiasm, sound advice and hard work and are very grateful for all she has done. I am hoping that a volunteer will come forward to take over the post for which there is support and training and a role description which I can email you if you are interested.

I have been trying to speak on Zoom to as many u3as as possible and more Zoom meetings are scheduled for the 5th and 12th October. The main issue facing u3as seems to be getting members to volunteer to be group leaders and committee members. I am also trying to organise a u3a awareness campaign in Scotland in Spring 2024. We are growing but we have room for more members.

Please watch the Positive Ageing Video in the most recent Trust Newsletter...not because I am in it, but because it shows how u3a involvement fulfils a lot of the requirements for a positive old age, such as learning, socialisation and fun.

There is a wide variety of approaches/ideas throughout Scotland and we can learn from each other. I believe informal networks, both local and national are the way forward.

As you may be aware, the Third Age Trust is piloting a more inclusive way of governance which is in the 'pilot' phase. An interim council has been created, on which Scotland is represented by myself as Trustee and by a member of my support network. The day meeting in September was face to face and various issues such as a national advertising campaign and social prescribing were raised as well as the introduction of short courses to complement interest groups.

Liz Ervine, Trustee for Scotland

Glasgow Southside u3a Launched

In May, the Glasgow Southside u3a held its inaugural meeting at the Glasgow Indoor Bowling Club. On that first day we signed up 45 members and we have since gone from strength to strength as we now have just under 100 members and 17 groups formed, which are all



meeting on a regular basis.

Our groups cover a wide range of topics: Art Appreciation, Indoor Bowling, Gardening, Walking, Theatre, Local History and much more.

We held our first monthly meeting in June with a talk about the History of

Holmwood House and have put together a programme of speakers for the next few months. At our September meeting Rosalind Holmes gave a talk about life in China over the past 100 years through the eyes of one family. In October, Hildegard Berwick, one of our Southside committee members, will introduce us to Bet Lowe, one of

the "Glasgow Girls". A huge thanks to our friends in Glasgow West End and East Renfrewshire u3as, and to Anne Walsh and Liz Ervine, for their support in guiding us through the maze of setting up this u3a.

Ellen Garner, Glasgow Southside u3a

Wigtownshire u3a celebrates double numbers with its 200th member.

The Wigtownshire branch of the University of the Third Age (u3a) is a local success story. Since



Covid it has doubled in numbers and this week celebrated the enrolment of their 200th member. Chairman Celia Heller and newest member Jan Hubble cut a huge cake together during the August meeting at County Buildings/Wigtown to mark the achievement of the 200-milestone. The u3a provides the opportunity for those no longer in full time work to come together and learn for fun. The Machars

boasts a wealth of expertise and knowledge and mixed with a big helping of enthusiasm makes for a dynamic programme of events run by and open to all members such as: art appreciation, astronomy, local history, Spanish conversation and table tennis to name a few of the 26 activities run by members for members.

"Thanks to our Groups Coordinator and his team of volunteers at the Wigtown Show for bringing in our 200th member. Covid set us back but we are on the road to recovery. Many thanks for a successful year". Celia Heller, Chair

Stage Craft Group in East Renfrewshire



East Renfrewshire started a new venture when they answered a call from local drama group, Giffnock Theatre Players who were looking for people not to act, but to help build and paint the scenery, dress the stage and help with wardrobe and props.

So ... we started a new group called Stage Craft to fulfil these roles. The group is currently working on the set for Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* to be performed in Eastwood Park Theatre at the beginning of November. The performance will, of course, be attended by our very

active theatre visits group.

The interesting thing about this group will be the variety of tasks to be undertaken and no 2 productions will ever be the same. The group's first task was to undercoat all the flats which were previously dark green when used for *The Slab Boys* earlier in the year. It just seems so much better fun splashing paint around in a workroom with friends rather than in your own home! Our own guys (and dolls!) certainly deserved their coffee break after all that painting!

Marbe McNeill, East Renfrewshire u3a

Congratulations to Oban u3a!

Oban u3a celebrated their 15th anniversary at our Open Morning and AGM on the 5th September. We now have over 120 members and 20 interest groups, having just started a new Pickleball Group. We had a magnificent birthday cake, decorated by one of our members, Sue Pollard. All our interest groups are represented, either in icing or for language groups by flags. It was a shame to cut the cake but it was good to eat too.

Below, three former Chairs (Joan Kemp, Bob Batty and Jennifer Shaw) cut the cake.



Bob Batty, Oban u3a

Isle of Arran Creative Writing Group Launches New Anthology



Tapping into the expertise and experience of those no longer in full-time careers, the University of the Third Age (u3a) was founded in 1982 on the theory that we learn most by doing and learn best from each other. Against all odds, the Isle of Arran u3a, which was launched in January 2020, not only survived the pandemic, but has actually thrived.

The Isle of Arran u3a Writing Group has been meeting for over a year now, and is *releasing The Wife, The Mistress, and the Guinea Pig & Other Stories* – its first anthology showcasing stories and poetry by its members.

Feeding off each other's ideas and enthusiasm, this anthology is the members' baby, child of many parents to whom it is dedicated. It is fitting that the release was formally announced at the September meeting of the Isle of Arran u3a when several of the writers read some of their short stories and poems to a record number of attendees.

Group moderator Barb Taub said: "As a writer, I'm always interested in the ways other writers see the world, so when I heard about Arran's new u3a, I hoped to join a writing group. Instead,



I ended up starting one. While most of our members didn't bring publication expertise, it was immediately obvious they had something much more valuable: experience. 'Write what you know,' writers are told. Well, our group knew a lot.

"We brought lifetimes of experiences, memories, and knowledge. We were bursting with stories only we could tell. As the months passed and we shared, commented, and edited each other's work, I was stunned by their stories told in their voices. Last December, we held a party, and each member of the group received a pin proclaiming them a writer. This anthology gives a taste of the variety, emotion, and confidence they've achieved. If you ask them, they'll tell you the truth. 'I'm a writer.' Truth, like stories, comes in many forms. Here are some of ours."

Barb Taub, Isle of Arran u3a

Rome's First Frontier in Britain



I was prompted to put this brief note together after spotting in the UK u3a monthly newsletter a comment about Hadrian's Wall and then a month or so later about the Antonine Wall.

Further north than either of these two defensive lines is what is thought to be Rome's first frontier in Europe. This is a line that runs from near the southern end of Loch Lomond in a north easterly direction towards Brechin and possibly on towards Montrose. This Roman line pre-dates both

Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine line and is thought to have been constructed around 70 to 80 AD. It is now more commonly referred to as the Gask Ridge. Construction of this Roman line is at least 40 years before Hadrian's Wall was built.

I first came across Ardoch Roman fort near Braco many years ago. This fort to me has the best-preserved Roman the UK. The set of banks and ditches are certainly spectacular. There are no stone works at the site. Maybe the fort had been entirely of timber construction. As I knew nothing of the history of the site I was intrigued as I thought the Romans had stopped at the Antonine Wall which is essentially between Edinburgh and Glasgow. How wrong I was. Further north I came across Inchtuthil Roman Fort near Blairgowrie from my researches. This site had been excavated



ramparts that I know of in and ditches are certainly entirely of timber construction. As I knew nothing of the history of the site I was intrigued as I thought the Romans had stopped at the Antonine Wall which is essentially between Edinburgh and Glasgow. How wrong I was. Further north I came across Inchtuthil Roman Fort near Blairgowrie from my researches. This site had been excavated

the excavators had discovered a large pit full of Roman iron nails and remains of cartwheel rims. The total number of Roman nails found was 875,400.

Mile posts between the forts have been found and excavated as have, to a limited degree, sites of other Roman forts. Some are easily visible from the ground, but many others are best viewed by aerial photography. Evidence of Roman roads also exist in the area to connect the various sites together, but much still remains to be done to help more comprehensively understand Rome's First northern frontier in Europe which just happens to be in Scotland.

To what extent the Gask Ridge forts, camps, mileposts and signalling stations formed a defensive line is open to conjecture. They may have had a trading role with the local population as there are the remains of iron age hill forts in the more northern section of the Gask Ridge. Who knows, but it is certainly much more northerly than either the Antonine or Hadrian's Wall.

Guy N Hindley. Cockermouth u3a.

Is Your Hearing OK? Are You Sure?

About twelve million people in the UK have hearing loss greater than 25 decibels. In other words, roughly 20 per cent or one in five of the population need help with hearing loss. That figure rises to 40 per cent for people over 50, and to 70 per cent for people over 70, yet only two million people in the UK have hearing aids. The message to retired people who have not yet done anything about their hearing is clear: get tested! Hearing tests are free with the NHS and with private audiologists, and taking a test does not commit you to purchasing a hearing aid.

If you decide to go private, it's certainly worth shopping around to find which hearing aids are best for you. Some of the well-known high street hearing aid providers only supply one make of hearing aid, while independent audiologists may offer a greater variety. The technology of hearing aids has changed hugely in recent years. The latest aids are more powerful and more flexible in different hearing situations, and some now have rechargeable batteries. NHS hearing aids now use virtually the same technologies as private ones, and they include free batteries, which in many cases can be collected from local libraries as well as NHS locations.

If you have any queries or concerns about hearing loss for you or one of your family, a good place to start is Hearing Link, part of a national charity that includes Hearing Dogs UK, which provides all kinds of advice and support. The RNID (the Royal National Institute for Deaf People) can also offer help, as can various local charities depending on where you live. Help is also available for people who have tinnitus or ringing in the ears, which can take a variety of forms. For example, some people with tinnitus use a special pillow which can play soothing sounds to help them get to sleep.

Many u3as already provide help for members with hearing loss. This may include use of a hearing loop which enables users to pick up sound directly in their hearing aids. Those organising meetings should check whether a loop is available and see that it works, and make sure that speakers are well lit. Advice to speakers includes making sure that they have everyone's attention before they start. They should be asked not to speak when turning away from the audience, for example to write on a whiteboard. To help lip readers, speakers should maintain eye contact and avoid covering their mouth. Visual aids and gestures should be used where possible. Speakers should be encouraged to take their time, be patient and speak clearly without shouting. It's important to check that everyone has heard and understood. When taking questions, repeat them, as hearing-impaired members may well not have heard them. If you have trouble hearing a speaker, don't be shy: you won't be the only one with hearing loss and you will probably be helping others if you ask for things to be repeated. For online and hybrid meetings, it's important to make sure that captions are enabled and to make copies of presentations available. Apps on mobile phone may be helpful too. For example, speech-to-text software such as *Google Live Transcribe* and *NAL Scribe* can be used.

Richard Peoples, Edinburgh u3a

Note: To contact Hearing Link, call or text 01844 348111., or email enquiries@hearinglink.org.

Summer School 2024

u3a in Scotland Summer School is back for 2024. It will take place once more at Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling University. It will be held from the afternoon of Tuesday 20th August 2024 until lunchtime on Thursday 22nd August 2024.

Accommodation will be in either the hotel or in student accommodation at Willow Court. Members living within easy travel distance of Stirling may choose to be non-residential.

We are hoping to offer the following 6 courses:

1. Nature Appreciation – Hugh and Mamie Munro, Penicuik u3a
2. Technology in the home – John Davies, Bearsden and Milngavie u3a
3. Medicines we use – Billy Martin, East Renfrewshire & Bearsden and Milngavie u3as
4. Playwriting – Richard Peoples, Edinburgh u3a and Frank Ledwith, Isle of Bute u3a
5. Drawing - Barbara Rimmington, Isle of Bute u3a
6. Working with Textiles – Eilean MacDonald, Inverness and Black Isle u3a

There will also be optional talks/activities for the last session of Tuesday and Wednesday, all given by/run by u3a members.

There will be a quiz on the Tuesday evening and entertainment on Wednesday evening.

For those interested, further information can be obtained by emailing summerschoolu3ascotland@gmail.com

We plan to start taking bookings in early January 2024. Some of the courses will involve an additional charge for materials/equipment.

Online Across Scotland (OAS)

OAS is a u3a aimed at those u3a members in Scotland who are unable or unwilling to attend u3a groups and meetings in person because they have no u3a locally, or their u3a does not run groups for a subject they wish to study, and for those members who have disability, illness or caring responsibilities.

OAS has an exciting programme of talks planned to which all u3a members in Scotland are invited. These will be held on the first Thursday of each month at 4pm.

Take a look also at the groups on offer through OAS: ranging from Astronomy and Archaeology to Laughter Yoga, French Conversion and Poetry Appreciation, to name but a few, these are being constantly added to as more groups and short courses come on line: Scottish Writers, Gaelic, Bridge, Qi Gong and Ancient History have just started and have plenty of room for new members.

Would you like to offer OAS a group, talk or short course? Please get in touch.

Thanks

The editorial team would like to thank all those who contributed to this edition. The Spring edition is due out in March 2024. Contributions should be sent by February 28 2024, preferably by email, to:

newsletter.u3ainScotland@gmail.com