



Hello. Welcome to this new session of Fife u3a! We have a new committee as shown in our last newsletter and you will see their profiles in this and subsequent newsletters.

We will be pleased to hear from any members who feel they would like to contribute more to the running of our local branch. There are many opportunities to help out: We need more volunteers to help with the running of the monthly meetings: You could join the welcome group, help with refreshments, give a vote of thanks or help with the sound and visuals during the meeting. Please contact any of the committee if you feel you would like to get involved: 01592 562207.

We currently have 22 groups, some of which continued to meet during the summer break. Look out for details of a new group starting on the 2nd Monday of each month in KUSI at 10.30 am: Meditation and Mindfulness. This will be run by Anna Bennett.

I would like to say A Big Thank You to all the group leaders who have kept things going, especially Sean and Christine Gillan for all the work they have done over the years with the Travel and Lunch groups, and of course, their time as committee members. They have also organised summer outings and New Year Lunches! Their hard work is very much appreciated.

Fortunately we have new teams to take over from Sean and Christine to run the Travel and Lunch Groups. We have an interesting programme ahead and our thanks go to Sheena Lawson for organising the speakers for the monthly meetings for this session.

I look forward to seeing you at the first of these meetings on 14th September in St Bryce Kirk at 2 pm to hear Charlie Guy's talk about 19th Century Funeral Traditions and Superstitions. Please check the events page of our website to find out details!

Best wishes **Val Robertson, Chairperson**

UPCOMING MONTHLY MEETINGS

Dead & Buried – Thursday, 14 September, 2pm



Our Monthly Meetings return on the second Thursday of September, when Charlie Guy, anatomist & social

historian, will be speaking about 19th century funeral customs and superstitions. The fascinating world of the Victorian dead will cover everything from booby-trapped coffins and body-snatchers to post-mortem photography and funeral souvenirs!

Home Start – October 12

Mary Cormack will be with us to explain about the support, friendship and practical help available for parents with young children in Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn, Burntisland & Cardenden.

Climate Action Fife – November 9

Our speaker will explain how individuals, communities, local government & businesses are coming together to tackle the climate emergency and make Fife a greener & fairer place to live.



There is a **SOUND SYSTEM** in St Bryce Church used at the monthly meetings. Whilst we do have some members who can operate this, in order to take the pressure off them, and ensure we always have cover, we are looking for anyone who is willing to develop the skills (basic) or revive previous ones and who would be willing to spend a little time with the current team getting to know what it involves.

If this is something you could do, please email Val Robertson on valerierobert77@gmail.com or talk to the current team members at the end of the next meeting.



TENABLES

- *List 10 European cities
- *List 10 UK garden birds
- *List 10 Autumn events
- *List 10 soap operas
- *List 10 orchestras

A-Z Draw up a listing of traditional boys' names



Thursday 17th August proved a wonderful experience in our annual outing and, as it has been 5 years since we last visited Dumfries House, the house and gardens proved to be fascinating and inspiring, especially to plant lovers as on our previous visit some of the gardens were only being laid out. Those who took the tour of the house were treated to the



collections of Georgian Scottish and English furniture.

In July 2007, the then Prince of Wales headed a consortium which bought Dumfries House - to save it and its contents for the nation. Though in a dilapidated state then, the group has brought the large walled garden back to life, as well as adding a horticultural and education centre, a cookery school, textiles centre, STEM unit, and adventure playground.



We had hired Merlin Travel for the first time and our journey was exceptionally smooth and our driver John very considerate and helpful.

The weather also was beautiful. **Sadie Seath**

***Noo it's back tae auld
claes an parritch . . .***

an the u3a . . .



Marion Lackie is the first of our new 2023/24 Committee members to be featured.

"I joined Fife u3a when we were still in lockdown so my first experiences were via Zoom or meeting outside.

Once we got 'back to normal', I joined several groups: travel, walks, and quizzing and have enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends."

Just a REMINDER that membership fees are now due for renewal for our new session:

1st September 2023 - 31st August 2024.

Emails have been sent out and letters in the post for those not on email.

Information can be had on our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/fife>

A handy sheet giving Committee and Group contact information is provided once membership renewals are received.

Sadie Seath, Fife u3a Membership Secretary



The programme of the **Garden Visits Group** started at the end of February at Millfield in Falkland to view

their collection of over 100 varieties of snowdrops. Home baking and a plant sale was provided by the local Falkland gardening group.

In March, Cambo estate at Kingsbarns was next with woodland trails & walled garden areas. April saw us at Backhouse of Rossie estate near Auchtermuchty to see their national collection of daffodil species. Glendoick Gardens near Perth allowed us to view their collection of rhododendrons and azaleas.

Upcoming visits were then intended to be to Earlshall Castle topiary gardens, Kellie Castle, Aberdour open gardens event and the Japanese garden near Dollar. Regrettably, the wonders of Scottish weather this year meant that not all of these could be completed. **Steve Petts**



As reported in the last Newsletter, the **Scottish Heritage Group** in its first year explored a range of social, political & cultural events & activities from the past & reflected on their

impact on contemporary society & culture through a variety of lectures and visits. The subjects explored were diverse & eclectic, reflecting members' knowledge & interests. On a visit to St Andrews University Museum members also discovered a memorial plaque at the place where the Protestant reformer & first Reformation martyr Patrick Hamilton was burnt at the stake.

We are now ready to kick off the new session with a visit to the Scottish Parliament, and Witchcraft aptly the subject for October. November finds us on a walking tour of the history of the Royal Mile led by Historian and Author Eric Melvin and an intriguing talk led by a group member entitled from the Culdees to the Coaltown Daisies in December. Details of the rest of our programme can be found on the Fife u3a website. u3a members wishing to join our group should contact the Group Leaders to have their names added to the waiting list.

Fiona Brooking Thomas

Groups Update

The *Travel Group* has recommenced with Marion Lackie & Carol Watson leading. Their next meeting is on Sept 14th.

There is now a *Meditation group* run by Anna Bennett. The first meeting is on 11th Sept at the KUSI.

The *Lunch Club* has luckily now got three people to run it. Niall Shaw, George Michael & Olive Inglis have agreed to be the points of contact. There will be information before the first lunch in September.

Many, many thanks to all who volunteered to allow these three groups to go forward.

Jean Black, Groups Co-ordinator

Meditation Group

Meditation is a new Fife u3a group which will be held on the second Monday morning of the month from 10.30 to 12 noon from September. It will be based on Mindfulness which is a very simple form of meditation which was borrowed from

Buddhism – little known in the West until recently - and is totally secular.

A typical meditation consists of focusing your full attention on your breath as it flows in & out of your body. Focusing on each breath in this way allows you to observe your thoughts as they arise in your mind &, little by little, to let go of struggling with them. You come to realise that thoughts come & go of their own accord; that you are not your thoughts. You can watch as they appear in your mind, seemingly from thin air, & watch again as they disappear, like a soap bubble bursting. You come to the profound understanding that thoughts & feelings (including negative ones) are transient. They come & they go, & ultimately, you have a choice about whether to act on them or not.

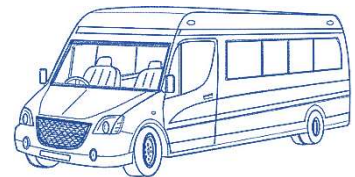
The group will meet at the KUSI club in the small front room at what I believe should be a quiet time. If this venue does not suit we can talk as group about an alternative.

I look forward to seeing you in September.

Anna Bennett

Getting Around

Since COVID many services offered to retired people have changed, eg Fife



Council Free Transport is no longer called Ring a Ride or Dial a Ride. The phone number is the same: **03451 551188**. But the name is now Fife Bus. Anyone who has mobility problems using public transport or anyone over 80 years is eligible. The service will collect you at your door & bring you back to your door. They will drive you anywhere in the area you live – be it Dunfermline or Kirkcaldy. The service is free for anything - shopping, social visits, or to theatres or films or appointments with hospitals, dentists, opticians, etc.

To join up for this free service phone the number above first to leave your details and join. Then to book the bus you ring the same number and book the day before you need the transport. The Council office hours are Monday to Friday 9 am - 2.30 pm. If you need the service on a Saturday, Sunday, or Monday please remember to book on the Friday before. Fife Bus is also used to transport some children to & from school so do try to avoid those peak times.

The use of the free Fife Bus is also ideal at weekends when other lifts with families or friends might not be available. Remember the number is: 03451 551188. The bus is equipped with all types

of access aids, easy steps, and grab rails, etc Members of Fife u3a who use the service frequently find the service excellent. The staff and drivers are kind and helpful, the members soon got used to how to book & take advantage of what is on offer.

Some Fife Taxis eg Duloch Taxis (01383 840555 or 07983 524162) will offer a discount on permanent bookings depending on the mileage. There is no discount on short distances. But, for example, if once a month a retired person wanted to go from Dunfermline to Kirkcaldy to visit a relative for the day and it was a regular booking, there could be a discount of between 10 & 15%. It is worth asking your local taxi firm if they also would offer that type of discount. **Sandra Mills**

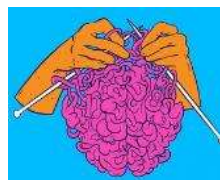
Out & About Group on a Driverless Bus trip!!!

Janice was watching nervously for the driver to take his hands off the wheel. The journey was reassuringly smooth, though perhaps a little heavier on the brakes than a 'human'. The explanation was that as soon as the bus 'saw' a 40 mph sign on the overhead gantry it would obey immediately - a 'real' driver would continue until convinced slowing down was absolutely necessary. I was concerned to hear the bus couldn't 'see' colour. I was about to ask a stupid question re traffic lights until I realised red is always at the top & green at the bottom. That bus is smarter than me!

Before the trip **Isobel** felt confident this would go well as drivers were on board & the technology would have been well tested. It would be interesting to experience what was possible & so it proved. The trip was enjoyable & the drivers informative. I wondered it could lead to unemployment with other advances. I also wondered if this arose from "technology push" or "market pull" and whom it would benefit. Perhaps this will depend on how it was implemented.

Sadie found it an interesting journey with the driver & guide taken aback with so many people on the coach. They'd never had so many people on one journey & had to take a photo to send back to Stagecoach. Anyone interested & who has a disability wouldn't be disappointed as the bus was easy access. Might it be an electric coach? No – they weren't a 'thing' when these buses were planned.

For the photographic evidence - look at the Out & Group section of our website!



.KEEPING YOUR MIND ACTIVE

As well as providing great opportunities to socialise, our interest groups can have surprisingly powerful benefits in improving brain health & helping keep the mind active. So, as you start working out how you're going to maximise the benefits of your 2023/24 membership, why not consider some of the benefits that these groups can offer?

A Walk in the Park / Tenpin Bowling / Walking / Wanderers

Exercise has been shown to reduce brain volume loss, which can lead to reduced cognitive function, & prevent shrinkage in the parts of the brain associated with memory. One study found that exercising for just six months can increase brain volume in older adults.

Craft 'n' a Cuppa A 2011 study of people aged 70 to 89 found that those who practised crafts like knitting had a reduced chance of developing cognitive impairment and memory loss. Studies suggest that because knitting keeps the brain cells fired up, it can even reduce the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's & dementia by 30%–50%.

Meditation An article elsewhere in this newsletter gives a flavour of this new group. Another benefit is that a 2007 study showed that just a couple of weeks of meditation improved people's memory & focus & improved their performance in tests by 16%.

Reading According to the National Institute on Ageing, reading can ward off age-related cognitive decline, with research showing that older adults who read every day don't just maintain their cognitive function, but actually improve it.

Scrabble Puzzles and word games are excellent ways to boost brain plasticity, which relates to thinking and remembering. A 2019 study of adults over 50 found a strong correlation between playing word games and improved cognitive function.

So, get checking the Groups timetable on the website - [Fife u3a: Groups \(u3asites.org.uk\)](https://u3asites.org.uk) - to see which activities to improve your brain health you can fit in!

Sheena Lawson



Stay safe . . . Stay well . . . Stay safe . . . Stay well

Newsletter and/or Website info to:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/fife/contact>