

U3A in Scotland

Charity SCO30370

Autumn 2019 Newsletter

New Trustee for Scotland



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Ann Keating, the new Trustee for Scotland. I am based in Edinburgh close to Waverley Station so ready and willing to travel the length and breadth of Scotland.

I see, as part of my role, the strengthening and development of networks. If you are already part of a network or would like to be part of a network can you let me know. I am still trying to get a feel for what is going on out there.

As part of that learning process, I would like to visit as many U3As as possible and look forward to invitations. I need to understand the needs of different areas. I think that Edinburgh U3A runs very differently, for example, from the Island of Coll.

A big part of the Trust's development plan is to raise the profile of the movement. If you have an activity going on that highlights the benefits of positive ageing, can you, please, post it on the Trust's Facebook page.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible. I can be contacted on

ann.keating@u3a.org.uk.

CUPAR U3A 10th Birthday Celebration Party



Cupar U3A was formed on 22 April 2009. Since that first meeting of interested parties, it has gone from strength to strength. On Wednesday 12 June Cupar U3A celebrated its 10th anniversary in the prestigious County Hall in Cupar's County Buildings and amongst the many members present, we were delighted to welcome Margaret Cameron, Pam Hulatt and Alan Hulatt who were on the original steering group and the first Executive Committee.

Alan Hulatt, one of our past Chairmen, gave a lively and amusing account of the first five years of the U3A, including details of some of the initial groups. All these groups are still going strong today and of course additional groups have joined them. There are now over 260 members and just shy of 40 groups.

Veronica Kirk, current Chairman, spoke about the following five years and some of the interesting talks we've had. Veronica also recalled the open meeting where the speaker failed to materialize and Trevor James gave an impromptu and entertaining talk on his research in tracking down the owner of a second-hand book he had purchased. The research led him across the pond to America – but sadly only by letter and telephone.

During the event, our Deputy Chairman Ruth Lear, read a poem about the origins of the U3A in Cambridge, to Cupar U3A in the present day. All her own creation and much applauded. Following a toast, gifts were handed out to the original Cupar U3A members and we all enjoyed a piece of celebratory cake.

A particular highlight, in an afternoon of highlights, was the chance discovery that one of our members is the daughter of one of the original Cambridge members. Jane Dawson spoke with feeling about how the Cambridge U3A had been a lifeline for her mother. She became heavily involved in it, leading groups and making new friends. We all agreed that this is what epitomises the U3A movement – making new friends whilst learning new things and having fun at the same time!

Fife U3A Jazz Group Visit to Edinburgh's Mardi Gras

Several members of our Jazz Group joined in the fun at the annual Mardi Gras in Edinburgh's Grassmarket on July 13th. This popular event showcases various bands appearing at the Jazz and Blues Festival. There are four stages on the go all afternoon, interspersed with stalls offering street food from all over the world. Together with all the popular hostelrys in the Grassmarket, it makes for a great day out.

Among our favourites this year was Bandakadabra, an eight-piece Italian Street Band. Their music mixes all kinds of Mediterranean music with Latin rhythms and jive. There is also a lot of street theatre and comedy involved. In fact we were drawn to their stage by the laughter of the audience.

We also enjoyed the Vintage Girls, who are Scottish based and specialise in close harmony singing. They sang from 40s, 50s and 60s classics, right up to the present day, with a retro twist. They were also great fun to watch and clearly enjoyed entertaining the crowd.

All in all, this event is to be recommended, especially if the sun shines!



Elgin

Elgin and District U3A has two very active French Language groups and, over the last two years, members have developed firm friendships with a French Group from Montelimar (from their equivalent national organisation).

We keep in touch by email and through visiting back and forth to each other's homes, learning about new areas and cultures. A group of seven of us and six of them met in Paris at the beginning of May; it was delightful (and very useful too!) to see them once more. We all know that these opportunities would never have come about without the U3A so we hope it continues to go from strength to strength.



Some Elgin U3A, French Group members joining members from the French equivalent, on a visit to Paris.



Bridge

An Inverness and Black Isle Experience

There is some evidence, courtesy of Nederlandse Bridge Bond, that playing bridge delays and slows the onset of dementia.

I have played Bridge at various levels since about 20 years old, initially very primitively and much later at highly competitive levels.

I retired from teaching about 15 years ago and embraced the ethos of U3A and enrolled in various learning situations. On the annual enrolment form, when asked what expertise I was willing to share, I put down Bridge and a year later, I was told that there were several requests for a Bridge group. I invited those concerned to my house on a weekly basis and had two tables. This entailed a fair amount of preparation of notes by me and preparation of hands, but it worked very well in the first year. The 2nd stage of the book I used seemed to step up too much for my class so I looked around for another source. Between myself and my husband, we wrote power point presentations for each lesson; an enormous task as there are 60 lessons. The class quickly grew beyond the capacity of our home and we moved to a community centre. By this time, my husband had also retired and the class kept growing. We recruited several Bridge playing friends to help – not all were U3a members, but they gave their time freely.

It soon became apparent that the 60 lesson course was too long. I have always felt that our aim should be to assist in the learning of the game and not in the running of a bridge club. There are plenty bridge clubs in the town, most keen for new members.

In our current accommodation we have two halls. In one hall we offer lessons from lesson 1 and at the other end we have a play section who play hands and have a discussion of bidding and play in the last half hour in the second hall. In the 2nd hall, lessons start at lesson 8 for those who have already had a basic introduction to the game.

For the last 7 years, members of our U3A have also been going into primary schools to teach minibridge to primary 6 or 7 pupils. Members enjoy the interaction with young people, the teachers see a huge improvement in concentration by pupils and the children love it.

Perth U3A Hill Walking Group

At the end of April, 9 members of the Perth Hill Walking Group set off for Torrion, on the western coast of Wester Ross. From Perth, it is just a pleasant half-day drive through dramatic scenery, where the mountains seem to become more and more grandiose as one approaches the road end. We had all elected to stay at the Hostel, which is a favourite for walkers in this area and provides excellent accommodation at a low cost. Those of you that have not used a hostel for many years may feel that your days of pretending you are a “Youth” to get into the local SYH are well and truly over, but fear not, the Y in SYH has been lost and all are welcome; and there is no need to turn up on foot or a bike; cars are fine.

On the first main walking day, the majority set out to climb the Munro, Ben Alligan and to include the Horns, a series of spikey summits, that dominate the ridge. We were blessed with great weather and fantastic views out to Raasay and Skye. During the rest of the stay, the group did a range of different walks including the Munro Ben Eighe and a circular walk of the Applecross peninsula.

For our brief stay of 4 days, the weather was kind and gave us the chance to see the Torrion area in its full splendour.

This is a haven, not only for walkers and wildlife enthusiasts, but also for budding geologists, with some of the oldest rocks on the planet.



Members of Perth U3A Hill Walking Group

Mull & Iona U3A Geology Group

Thursday 4th July

Eighteen of us were made welcome by the Lochaline Quartz Sand Mine Company who gave us a tour of the mine and surface plant. It is the only underground sand mine in Europe. Mining is carried out by a room and pillar system. The sandstone is drilled, blasted and carried by dump truck to the surface plant, to be crushed and purified. The resulting silica sand, which is then transported by ship, is extremely pure and white and is used amongst other things in the production of top-quality flint glass. During WW2 it was used to produce the lenses in submarine periscopes.

The mine was much more extensive than expected, reaching approx. 2 miles horizontally underground; we however ventured just a few hundred yards and then turned off our torches. It was pitch black!

We enjoyed a light refreshment in the Lochaline Private Members Club before catching the ferry back to Mull.



Bearsden & Milngavie U3A

House and Garden Visits

The House and Garden Visits Group is one of the largest interest groups at Bearsden & Milngavie U3A. Each month, between April and September, outings are arranged to various gardens and historic houses.

Hopetoun House

On a gloriously sunny day in June this year, we travelled to South Queensferry to visit Hopetoun House, often referred to as Scotland's finest stately home. After some suitable refreshment, we embarked on a tour of the magnificent 18th century house, assisted by a very knowledgeable and entertaining guide. Some of us then managed to climb up a (long!) staircase to the roof where we were rewarded with stunning views of the Firth of Forth.



Inside Hopetoun House



Newhall Estate

Our July outing also involved a coach ride across country. The venue was Newhall Estate, Carlops, Midlothian, where we were treated to a tour of the garden by the owner, Tricia Kennedy. The walled garden was established in the late 18th century and has a huge herbaceous border, together with shrubberies, fruit and vegetables. It has featured in a number of publications, including *Scottish Field*.

After the tour, Tricia provided us with a lovely lunch which was much enjoyed, amid a great deal of chatter, and fortified us for the journey home.

Aberdeen U3A 2019 Study Trip

When choosing a study trip, it is wise to consider a venue which has sufficient indoor interest as Scottish weather can be fickle.

Our destination was Glamis Castle, the ancestral seat of the Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne. Built on the site of a royal hunting lodge, the pink sandstone L-shaped tower house was remodelled in the 17C. Among the rooms we visited was the Crypt, lined with suits of armour, antlers and bearskins. This was the ancient heart of the old castle. The dining room and drawing room are splendid with carvings and paintings of the Lyon family and past royals. A notable painting in the Chapel, by Dutch artist Jacob de Wet, is of Christ wearing a hat and being mistaken for the gardener by Mary Magdalene. We were also shown the billiard room and royal apartments. The latter was converted by the Countess in 1923 for her daughter and her husband – the Duke and Duchess of York (later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth).



* * * * *

In the next edition we hope to have some news of two new U3As in Scotland, Arran and Blairgowrie, which are both currently at the early stages of formation.

* * * * *

Some articles, not included in this newsletter, will be used in the next one. Items for the next newsletter should be sent to u3ascotlandsecretary@gmail.com by Friday 14th February 2020. Please, try and restrict articles to one A4 page in Arial point 14, including photographs and send them in Word. The editor reserves the right to edit all articles.