

u3a in Scotland

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2025

LEARNING, LAUGHING, LIVING

Letter From The Chair

This is my first letter to you all as the new Chair of the u3a in Scotland network so let me briefly introduce myself and the new committee to you all.

First though I would like to thank my predecessor Anne Walsh who worked tirelessly in recent years to steer the committee through the pandemic and its aftermath - no mean feat!

I have been a member of Glasgow West End u3a since retiring in 2020 and have the privilege of being the current Chair (I step down at our AGM later this year). I am passionate about the u3a - I think it is a wonderful organisation which offers so much. I am excited about taking on the position of Chair of the Scottish network. We have 54 u3as and it seems to me that no 2 are the same! I love the variety of what we offer and also the way that the u3a brings us all together.

u3a in Scotland is a network that was set up to provide support and assistance to local u3as in Scotland. I like to think it is also important that we help foster a sense of belonging to a larger organisation than just your own u3a. A network is a great way to share ideas and expertise. If you would like to be more involved with the network please just get in touch.

We are lucky to have a committee that has a good geographical spread across Scotland. Our vice chair Bob Batty is from Oban u3a and our new Treasurer Anne MacLean is from Edinburgh u3a. Jenny Brogden our Secretary is from Dingwall u3a and Linda Matheson, our Webmistress and Online Across Scotland Co-Ordinator is from Ayr. Anne Walsh from West Lothian u3a, Margaret Moffat from Dumfries and Galloway and Norma Taylor from Dundee u3a make up the elected members on the committee. Our two Council Representatives - Liz Ervine and George Cleland are now automatically committee members. This is great as we can all work together to promote and advance the u3a movement in Scotland.

We were delighted to help Liz and George with the very successful Jamboree and we have lots of ideas for the coming months and I hope you are able to join us for some of these.

Our first event is our Autumn Event on Zoom on the morning of Tuesday 28th October. For the first time this event has a “theme”. We are focussing on u3a travel. Many u3as are organising holidays and trips for their members and we are hoping to share experiences and provide lots of helpful tips. There will be a chance to sign up for this soon - all u3a members and prospective members are very welcome.

We have also started a programme of informal “coffee and chat” catch ups - these take place on zoom at 7pm on the third Thursday of every month. Join us if you can for a chat on all things u3a and beyond!

Gail Donaldson
Chair - u3a in Scotland

u3a in Scotland Autumn Event

Our Autumn Zoom Event is taking place on **Tuesday October 28th** at 10am.

This time we’re trying something a bit different — an event focused on u3a group travel. We’ll hear from Riviera Travel and Glenton Holidays on planning group holidays both in the UK and overseas. Dundee and Fife u3as will share how they organise their travel groups, and member Rob Lightfoot will speak about his group holiday to Japan.

All members are welcome, not just committees! For the Zoom link, email u3ascotlandchairperson@gmail.com.



Time: Oct 28, 2025 10:00 AM London, Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81176330401> Meeting ID: 811 7633 0401

Best Practice Workshop – The Barracks, Stirling, 31st October

The Trust, in liaison with the Council Reps for Scotland (Liz and George), is organising a Best Practice Workshop for committee and prospective committee members. There will be three themed threads: Volunteering, Communication, and Activity Groups.

Booking is via Eventbrite (link circulated separately). u3as can book up to three delegates now. **Contact** Liz.Ervine@u3a.org.uk or George.Cleland@u3a.org.uk for details. Venue: The Barracks Conference Centre, Stirling.

Spring Event 2026

Watch this space for the Spring event as it will be Face to Face as well as on line and it will be held in Ptilochry Theatre. Just who might you see there????

Jamboree

A huge thank you to all who attended and volunteered at our sold-out Scottish Jamboree! Over 300 members participated in 40+ activities. A special Jamboree Newsletter is available, crafted by Vikki Kirby (Edinburgh u3a). Consider linking to it on your u3a's website. <https://scotland.u3asite.uk/>



National News

Welcome to our new Vice Chair– Sheila Crawley has been elected Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust. She brings a strong background in marketing and communication.

u3a Festival 2026

Save the date! The next u3a Festival will be held 1–3 July 2026 at the University of York. To stay updated, subscribe to the u3a Friends Newsletter and tick 'Festival Updates'. [Email festival@u3a.org.uk](mailto:festival@u3a.org.uk) to contribute workshops or activities.



Regional News Highlights

Online Across Scotland

The nights are drawing in, nothing much to watch on the TV, not looking forward to the long boring evenings? Why not join us at groups and events at Online Across Scotland?

Online Across Scotland (OAS) was launched during the pandemic to offer opportunities to Learn, Laugh, Live online when many u3as closed or offered little for their members. Groups and talks have continued as OAS offers members who are unable to travel to face to face meetings an alternative way to meet other members.

We would really like to expand our portfolio of groups and courses. Do you run an online group with room for others to join? Could you start a new group? Please get in touch.

We are starting a monthly Coffee and Chat group meeting Thursdays at 7pm. Please get in touch if you would like to attend, and we will send you the zoom link.

West Lothian – Congratulations to a member who raised nearly £1,200 in the 'Walk for Parkinson's' event at Callendar Park.

Cupar u3a Foodie Group – Preparing delicious, healthy meals together a We come together to prepare simple, nutritious, tasty, light meals, in our kitchens, to eat them, and to share recipes and expertise. We have garden gluts, which we want to get the best use of - and we need to learn how to understand recipes - they can assume knowledge which isn't there!

Above all, learning by doing!! and sharing garden gluts! Recipes include risotto, gooseberry crumble, and more.



Dundee u3a Scottish Dance Class - (GROUP LEADERS IRENE GEOGHEGAN & BRUCE KIDDIE)

Celebrating 10 years of fun and fitness! Certificates of Endurance (and chocolate gold medals) awarded to long-standing members.

Well, would you believe it! The Scottish Dance Class has reached its 10th anniversary.

The first class was held on 14 September 2015 in the 'Small Hall' of the Ardler Community Complex, with eight curious people coming along, and by the Christmas party of 2015, we had 16.

To celebrate our Decennial anniversary, on the 15 September, we were delighted to present 'Gold' medals and 'Certificates of Endurance' to two of our longest serving class members;

Elizabeth Merchant and John Richmond. (Note to U3A treasurer; the gold medals were chocolate wrapped in tin foil). Both Elizabeth and John have been with us since the group started in 2015.

The class is all about the members. The fun and laughter in the class comes from a fantastic group of people who are out to enjoy themselves, and as group leaders, we are delighted to be part of it. As ever, new members are always welcome to come along and we would be really pleased to see you here



Elizabeth getting her certificate.



Irene presenting John's Certificate

U3a OAS Bridge Group

Bridge is a sociable stimulating challenging and fun game and can be played in small social groups or more competitively in clubs. We aim to enable people to play socially, in U3A bridge groups or if keen more competitively.

The group meet online on a Friday mornings & there are two sections.

The beginners start at 9.30, starting on 26th Sept. All learning materials are provided and help is given with the technology.

The Play and Learn play every week at 10.30 but fortnightly, in the winter, there is a tutorial at 10.00. This group meets on Fridays all year, except for Christmas, Easter and sometimes the October school holidays. At the end of play we have a zoom session where Tim goes over the bidding and the play and members ask questions or discuss their thoughts on the hands.

The Refreshers can join the beginners around 1st November but can join the **Play and Learn** prior to that or simply switch to cover the topics they wish. Topics are always shown each week on the website.

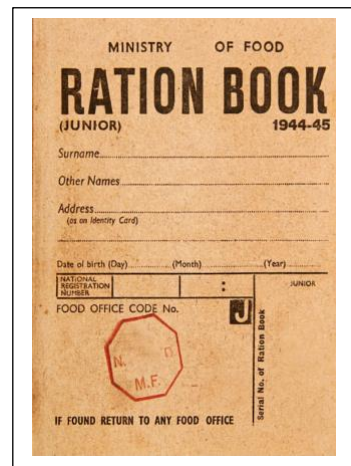
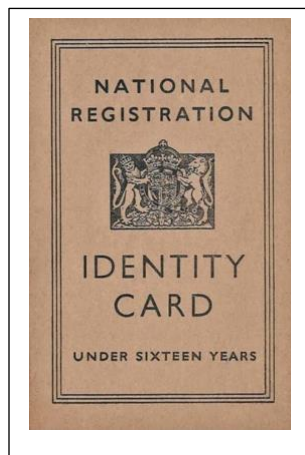
We use a platform called RealBridge for the Play and for the beginners. In both sections you can see other people and talk to them.

Sometimes there is some hilarity especially when the wrong contract is reached.

Callander & West Perthshire – Have produced a wonderful booklet ‘Wartime Childhood’ sharing memories from WWII-era

May 2025 saw the eightieth celebration of the end of the Second World War. A few of the members of Callander and West Perthshire U3A, who had been children during the war, met together to share their memories of wartime and as a result have produced a booklet to share those memories with others. The stories come from London, Greenock, Birmingham, the south coast of England, Aberdeen and the Isle of Man, to name a few! Our booklets are available for a suggested donation of £3.00 simply to cover printing costs.

We would be only too pleased to offer our booklets to other U3As. To obtain copies please contact me by email at Alan.barbara1@gmail.com or by phone 07709 859 894



East Renfrewshire –

The 'Out and About' group visited the Scottish Fire Brigade Heritage Museum in Greenock for a fascinating tour of firefighting history. Last May our Out and about group had a very interesting visit to the Scottish Fire Brigade Heritage Museum in Greenock. This museum only opens to the general public on the last Sunday each month, however is happy to open specially to any group wishing to visit on a day of their choice. Most of our group travelled to Greenock by train as the museum is only a few minutes walk from the station.

On the comprehensive tour, conducted by a retired fireman, we learned about the history of the Fire Brigade from its early beginnings when pails of water were used to douse the flames to the modern- day fire tenders.

The guide explained the changes in breathing apparatus since the early days and the development of the modern uniforms. Several old fire tenders were on view including one painted grey which was used during the last war, as there was no red paint available. The guide had many stories of the fire-fighters' bravery and explained how the type of fires had changed over the years with the inventions of plastics and other toxic highly flammable materials. Afterwards we made our way to the local Weatherspoons, The James Watt, for lunch.

Marbe McNeil



Fife u3a

Poetree

The Fife u3a writers creative group produced a word cloud from contributions to the Poetree on Fife u3a Members Day. 114 individual words were gleaned from the three words about the u3a you wrote on a 'leaf' and hung on the 'tree'.



From these words some of the group created poems about u3a using the words you gave us. They are written in different styles and reflect the diversity of the writing groups work

Elise's poem used 97 of the words collected, a feat in itself. She produced a warm free verse poem that reflects the ethos of the u3a.

Poem about the u3a

It is informal, inclusive, inspirational and sociable

Friendly, welcoming, stimulating and admirable

Together with others the groups are engaging, entertaining and uplifting

Creative, exciting, sharing and inspiring

Lifelong learning, educational and informative

Topics of interest, useful and varied

Excitement, enthusiasm and always innovative

Beginnings of friendship, warmth and happiness

New social horizons, fun and company fabulous

Active, adventure, travel, exercise, excitement

Busy organisation everything about trust fellowship and enjoyment

Calming tea and coffee, therapy, smiles and laughter

Experience interests, community and life together.

Elise Shaw

Muir was inspired to create a haiku and a cleriheW.

A haiku is a form of poetry originating in Japan and made up of 17 syllables in a 5 7 5 formation.

Walk, Talk, Read, Write, Lunch.

Travel, Gardens, Spanish, French.

Is that all? Oh no!

Muir Shaw

A cleriheW is a four-line biographical poem in AABB form. The first line must end with the name of the subject and overall, it has an amusing twist.

On the 12th of June Fife u3a

Opened their doors for their annual Members' Day.

Learn, have fun, meet new friends.

Our list of interest groups - it never ends!

Muir Shaw

Ruth's poem uses free verse minimalism to capture her thoughts.

The u3a

It is about a widening world.

You.

Tea, coffee, social

Narrow, old-fashioned, enervating.

Inspire, horizons.

Open-minded, stimulating, interesting.

Creative, experience, life.

Fellowship.

It is about a widening world.

Ruth Cross

They might inspire you to try and write your own poem. Why not use the words from the word cloud to create your own poem about the u3a and send it for inclusion in your Newsletter.

Ruth Cross Fife u3a

Glasgow West End and Glasgow Southside.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

The date is 1st May 2025, a date etched in my mind. It is a beautiful warm spring morning. I am standing in the magnificent splendour of the quadrangle, the epicentre of the University of Glasgow. My overriding emotion is "it's great to be back, carpe diem". It's not often in life you get an opportunity to address a regret that has left a hole in your being.

It is university open day where the gates are unlatched to a flood of would be students and you are greeted with a sea of energetic young people at a stage where they are unburdened by what life has not yet thrown at them and have an unbridled zeal for the possibilities that lie ahead. I am immediately swept along on this wonderful wave of enthusiasm. I make a pact with myself: You screwed up the opportunity nearly fifty years ago; you ain't gonna screw up again! Sure, I bagged an honours degree first time round but to my regret, I did not embrace university life. I adhered to my life outside university. I did not grow. I was not adequately prepared to step into the big wide world. It is a truism that university is indeed the university of life, as much about being equipped with the plethora of life skills required to navigate the big bad world as it is about academic achievement.

I scour the various university resources and my heart skips a beat at the size and variation of clubs and societies. I am particularly enthused by the Mature Students Association; I smile wryly at the oxymoron of the first two words. I suspect I may be the only sixty six year old man to have joined

the Taylor Swift society! Hell, I am going to let my hair down before I have none to let down! It will be fun watching the young upstarts trying to outlast me on the club scene! I am trying to envisage a conversation with an (immature) student. **Immature Student:** “So do you think you’ll be able to survive on a student grant?”. **Mature Student:** “I’ll be fine, I have started to receive my state pension”. The conversation ends abruptly.

I am going to study Mathematics, one of the loves of my life. I studied Statistics first time round but soon learnt the meaning of lies, bad lies and statistics! I love the beauty and elegance in Mathematics. In first year, I will also study Astronomy and German....I am sure there is a good joke that links these three subjects.....all suggestions welcome!

I am often asked “Why the bleep are you going back to university; I couldn’t imagine a worse torture”. My response is multi-faceted.....I love learning.....I love to embrace new experiences.....I am excited to be immersed in an environment of like minded people with a positive disposition who are not weighed down with years of weary cynicism.....I intend having a fun, interesting and stimulating retirement.....what better way to keep the grey matter ticking over.....it beats spending your life glued to streaming services.

I also get asked, “So what are you going to do with your degree?”. I respond simply, “I will hang it on my wall so that I have a lasting reminder of a retirement well spent”.

Carpe the bleeping diem!!!

Many thanks to everyone for their contributions – keep them coming for the next edition

u3a in Scotland | Learning, Laughing, Living
Stay connected with the u3a movement across Scotland.