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u3a Helensburgh & District

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

July 2026

Dear Member – please note that U3A Membership Renewal Fees are now due for the period 1st July 2025 - 30th June 2026.

If you have already paid - Thank You

The subscription fee is £15 per member.

WEBSITE ADDRESS - https://helensburgh.u3asite.uk/

Find us on Facebook - click the logo

The monthly newsletters and u3a Matters online magazines can be located on the U3ASoc2 page on our website.

Our groups are a fantastic way of meeting people with similar interests and to share your skills and knowledge with others. Please look at our posters on the notice boards at meetings and visit the group pages below.

We have 30 active members and growing

Current active groups include

Arts and Crafts
Book Club - Alternate outings group
Board Games
Book Groups 1,2 & 3
Bridge Groups 1,2 & 3
Dining Out
E-Biking
Family Genealogy
Genealogy
Gentle Cycling
Global Conversation
In Car Time
Local History
Mah Jongg
Nordic Walking
Opera Appreciation
Photography
Photography
Poetry Appreciation
Quiz Night
Science Group talks
Scottish Dance
Spanish Conversation
Tai Chi
Theatre Group
Wine Appreciation

For more information and to contact the group leads, please use the website by clicking HERE.

Monthly General Meetings

Our Monthly General Meetings are held in Helensburgh Parish Halls at 2pm. (Main Hall)

Coffee & tea are available after the talks and entry is free to members. If you can bring your own reusable cup or mug, it will reduce waste.

Next Monthly Meeting

July 1 - David Peat - "An eye on the Street" Photography from the Glasgow streets and around the world in the 1960s

Future Monthly Meetings

Aug 5 - James Day - "Charles and Margaret McKintosh - A lifelong partnership of excellence"

Sep 7 - The Glasgow School of Art Choir, by Gordon Gibb

Oct 5 - Helen Taffs as "Cuba"

Helen lectures on Cuba and Latin America at Glasgow University. She has published books on her life in Cuba and Chile because "the Guardian of Revolution"

Nov 2 - Dugald Cameron - Engineering

Dec 7 - Christmas Lunch

Jan 4 2027 - Douglas Wake - " The refurbishment of the Parish Church Tower and Clock "

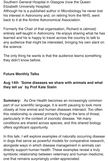
Our monthly events continue to be extremely well attended and very popular. If you have a topic that you would like to present at the general or science group events, please get in touch.

Science Group Talks

Next Monthly Talk

U3a Science talk Friday 17th July at 11.00am in Helensburgh Church Halls. (Main Hall). Entry is free to members. Tea & Coffee available from 10.45am. There is a charge of £2 towards room hire.

Astrobiology: The Search for Life - by Richard Stone



Summary: As a science, Astrobiology is in the same place as Cosmology was a century ago. It is a science without evidence and with only one example of life that it knows and seeks to confirm that life exists - Earth.

Richard will talk about what we know and what we can expect the coming decades to be and how it has moved on from the factors to colonise environments we once considered impossible.

We will look at why we shouldn't go to Mars and see direct evidence of Darwinian evolution. Controversy, science and a little fun. Come and bring your thinking head.

Speaker : Richard Stone grew up in the era of Gemini and Apollo and was inspired to become a scientist by the space race and astronomical. A series of accidents directed him into a long career in NHS Microbiology, eventually rising to manage the Microbiology laboratory at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the Southern General Hospital in Glasgow (now the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital).

Retiring early, he decided that a career in Microbiology he never lost his interest in Astronomy and, on retiring from the NHS, went back to it at the Anniva Astronomical Association.

Formerly the Chair of that organisation, Richard is (almost) entirely self-taught in Astrobiology. He enjoys sharing what he has learned, in the hope that it will encourage others to be the kind of any audience that might be interested, bringing his own slant on the subject to the table.

The only thing he wants is that the audience learns something they didn't know before.

Future Monthly Talks

Aug 14th - Some diseases we share with animals and what they tell us - by Prof Kate Sutherland

Summary - As One Health becomes an increasingly common part of our scientific language, it is worth pausing to look more closely at what it means in practice. Veterinary medicine offers this relationship is viewed primarily through the lens of threat, particularly in the context of zoonotic disease. Yet many diseases are shared between species, and the shared biology offers significant opportunity.

In this talk, I will explore examples of naturally occurring disease in dogs that serve as powerful models for comparative research, alongside ways in which disease management in animals can inform human practice. These examples will touch on the scientific relationship between veterinary and human medicine, and how shared biology can inform clinical practice.

Speaker - Kate Sutherland is a clinical lecturer in small animal clinical practice and specialist internal work before moving into academia.

She has spent over a decade at the University of Glasgow as a veterinary neurologist, combining clinical service, teaching, and research. Her research focuses on how disease in companion animals and how clinical veterinary medicine can inform comparative and One Health research.

Sep 18th Prof Mark Symes - "Green Hydrogen for a Green Future"

Talk summary: In theory, we could replace fossil fuels with a "hydrogen economy". This concept involves using renewable energy to produce hydrogen, which would then be used as hydrogen fuel being used as a fuel that would release only water when it is consumed. However, although this idea has been around for at least 50 years, it has never taken off, with not getting any closer to realising it. In this talk, Prof Symes will explain why this is the case, what the main challenges are, what renewables and how the work his research group has been doing to develop electrolysis might solve some of these problems.

Speaker: Mark Symes is the Professor of Electrochemistry and Electrochemical Technology in the School of Chemistry at the University of Glasgow. His main research interests are in electrochemistry and electrochemical technology, electrochemical technology for the more sustainable production of fuels and key chemical feedstocks. He is also a founder and the chief scientific officer of a University of Glasgow spin-out company based on his research, which is developing a new generation of decoupled electrolysers for converting renewable electricity into green hydrogen.

Oct 16th - An Endoscope the thickness of a single human hair! by Prof. Mino Padgett

Summary - How we see holographic a digital projection graphics in the future, and how it will change our lives and enhance our health and well-being. A Scottish first. This endoscope can reach the places that other endoscopes cannot.

Speaker: Mino Padgett is a Royal Society Research Professor of Optics in the School of Physics and Astronomy at University of Glasgow. Her Royal Society Chair is in the School of Natural Philosophy and she earlier earned her Vice Principal for research at Glasgow from 2014 to 2020. She was a Fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and a Lecturer in Optics at the University of St Andrews and Trinity College, Cambridge, where her was awarded a PhD in 1989.

Working with Lab Alive, her conducted pioneering work on optical angular momentum, for which they were awarded 2009 Institute of Physics Duddell Medal and Prize. Mino was chosen for its work on the fundamental properties of optical angular momentum, including optical tweezers and optical spanners the first to show that light carries angular momentum, and the first use of optical communication (with both classical and quantum light).

Mino was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE) in 2005. In 2011 he was elected a Fellow of the Optical Society of America (OSA) and in 2012 a Fellow of the International Society for Optical Engineering (SPIE). In 2013 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) – the UK's National Academy of Sciences.

Nov 13th Title: " The heat beneath our feet" - by Dr Iain Neill

Summary :
"Should we extract natural geothermal heat from several kilometres underground? Geothermal sources could reliably provide low-carbon heat for homes and businesses, reduce district networks, easing pressure on intermittent green energy supply and our limited energy storage capacity across the UK. Scotland's geological and geothermal conditions are ideal for the development of geothermal energy to surprisingly limited. The nearest functioning deep geothermal system to Helensburgh is in Southern England. Why? Why are Iceland and Germany both on-targeting up a new generation of geothermal exploration across Scotland's diverse geological settings. Then we'll look at the technical challenges of developing geothermal energy in Scotland and how they could tackle problems associated with our geological heritage. Does North Sea experience mean that Scotland's oil and gas industry is well placed to develop a Scottish geothermal concept or: and would it be worth exploring a Scottish deep geothermal energy potential?"

Biography:
Iain Neill is a geologist originally from Dingwall in Easter Ross and he currently lectures at the University of Glasgow. He has worked in the oil and gas industry for 40 years, mainly in the geology of locations as diverse as the Caribbean islands and the Caucasus mountains, he is an expert on Scottish geology and has written a book on the geology of Ireland. He is a keen hill walker and uses the many geological resources around us to support common good. Alongside colleagues and students in the University of Glasgow he is a founding member of a charity of Scotland in partnership with a range of community organisations."

Dec 5th. Title: Responsible Artificial Intelligence – does it matter? - by Dr Ivan Porro

Summary: At this talk Prof Porro will cover the benefits and harms of AI applications and current efforts to make them more responsible. Finally, he will talk about how we can use them responsibly and get a brilliant strategy a better future.

Speaker: Simone Stumpf is Professor of Responsible and Interactive AI at the University of Glasgow. She joined the University of Glasgow in 2021 and her research focuses on user centred AI, with a focus on explanations, transparency, Explainable AI (XAI) and Responsible AI (RAI). The power aim of her work is to empower everyone to use AI systems effectively and responsibly. She has presented talk on AI two years ago and a lot has changed since then!

As always, dates and reminders will be sent out nearer the dates.

New u3a Talks Programme on Social Science and Public Policy Topics

SOCIAL POLICY

Following the success of our u3a Science talks programme, (70 talks delivered to date with strong attendance numbers) we are pleased to announce that a complementary talks programme we would introduce a new programme of talks on Social Science and Public Policy topics.

The Social Science and Public Policy talks programme began in January and he held monthly until June as an experiment to see how it would go. We will now hold the talks on the 3rd Tuesday in the **Small Hall** on the following dates. There will be a charge of £2 to cover expenses.

NEXT MEETING

25th September

Title: Immigration: A Scottish Perspective and How Scotland Supports Refugees by Dr Sam Fairley

Summary: Immigration is one of the decade's most hotly contested issues. But what does "irregular migration" and research political decisions mean for Scotland? Dan's talk will explore how migration and asylum policies are changing, and what these shifts mean for people seeking protection and those living in Scotland. He will be joined by a representative from Argyll and Bute Council's resettlement team, who will discuss local work to support refugee integration.

Speaker: Dr Dan Fairley is a political geographer working at the University of Glasgow. His research focuses on how migration law shapes marriage their borders and governance spaces, drawing on ethnographic research with the Home Office, Government's New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and informed the Scottish Parliament's review of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

German Conversation Group News

The Infamous 5 Have A Most Splendid Adventure – The U3A German Conversation Group Goes to Munich!

"I say, wouldn't it be simply topping if we went to Germany?" cried Lynn, bursting into the weekly meeting with her eyes sparkling with adventure. The suggestion was met with a chorus of cries 'It really sure rather extraordinary – within the very same fortnight, every single member of the group had agreed it was a splendid idea! And so, on a fine May morning, off set Helensburgh's group of people on truly good friends, and they had a splendid time indeed.

New Berlin seemed the obvious choice at first, but the group were far too sensible to be fooled by the obvious. The much English spoken there,[1] was someone firmly, and everyone agreed that, if they were to learn the language and meet real German property, we needed somewhere where real, proper German was spoken at every turn. Munich it was, then! Jolly good show!

Eight members put their hands up straightaway, little permitting, and what followed was a tremendous amount of organising – passports, currency, tickets, hotel reservations, travel insurance, insurance particulars, and more than a few urgent telephone calls. But soon enough, the date was set and the adventure was properly underway.

Rather than have one poor soul do everything, the group very sensibly decided to share the responsibilities of tickets, money and tasks. The costs were sorted, down payments made, and before long they had speedy boarding and speedy security with Lynn, who had kindly offered to organise the trip, ticking off another box waiting at the other end in Munich. Everything was ready, and everyone (Dr. Jo they like to say in Germany — Jolly good show!)

Once arrived, it seemed, no sooner than we had left, that our group had to separate, but each and every member found herself themselves and with the people of Munich. What a very fine plan!

There was still the small matter of packing, of course, since everyone had to be ready to leave the next morning, and rather easier for some than for others, though no names will be mentioned.

Early Morning Departure

On the morning of the very first day, everyone was up before the sun had properly got going, and was ready by half past five for the taxi to arrive. Well, almost everyone was ready, including the most thoughtful person imaginable — she had prepared a small breakfast bag for each of them, stuffed with snacks and a cup of tea to go. Well, almost everyone was ready, including almost certainly each, and they would have been deeply right.

The airport went smoothly enough, and soon the group were in the lounge having second or even third breakfasts — for one really couldn't have too much breakfast on a day like this. Unfortunately, however, the flight was full and there was trouble with rather heavy luggage, but nobody minded a bit, for there was plenty of help from the others, and we were all abuzz! In no time at all, the plane was ready to board, and there was a number full of bags from passengers who had cheerily left behind luck, or perhaps, more accurately, a lot of juggling over-stuffed things in and out.

The Most Comfortable Bus Journey

Munich the last school trip I had taken to Munich was a bus journey was our pre-booked taxi driver — a very starting and charming young man, who was very, very, very,

The grand spectacular of the Frauenkirche

Later that same afternoon, the group somehow wandered into the Hofbräuhaus, (a favourite with a certain Mr Hitler), with its famous beer hall and beer garden, where everyone enjoyed the ability to purchase by pint photographs and encouraging everyone to finish their drinks smartly – the group discovered the very delicious beer, and the very delicious food, and everyone willingly rose to you and taught a commentator! Everyone was wonderfully friendly and happy to chat in German, and everyone enjoyed their English too. This seemed true for the entire four days.

(There was also the small matter of it being the final match of the Euro 2024 Championship, Germany v Spain, and everyone bustling with very happy fans from all over Germany. Everyone was very happy with the result, and the ensuing celebrations, and the quite spectacular quantities of beer being consumed. Not to underestimate, of course, it was noted, from Glasgow in the same weekend.)

Dinner that first evening was at the Augustiner Hofbräuhaus – a very, very, very,

At last - The Tower Cinema reopened on 6/6/26 and first Silver Screen for seniors was on 11/6/26.

Please show your support by attending the events and our thanks go out to the team who have worked tirelessly to save the tower!

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The Board and co-opted committee members agreed at the 2025 AGM are as follows :-

Chair - Gordon Mackie
Vice Chair - **Post Vacant - would you like to join?**
Treasurer - Anne Bernard
Secretary - Ed McGrachan
Minute Secretary - Peter Holmes
Membership Secretary - Archie Westwood
IT Coordinator - Gordon Mackie
Groups Coordinator - Glenda Caldwell
Programmes Coordinator - David Cunningham
Advertising and Publicity - Norman McNally
Committee Member - Wendy Jones
Committee Member - David Clark
Committee Member - Geoffrey Holliman
Committee Member - Debbie Gourlay

Honorary President - Malcolm Brown
All the above can be contacted via the website contacts page HERE

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