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u3a
Helensburgh & District

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Helensburgh Heritage Trust

September 2026

Dear Member – please note that U3A Membership Renewal Fees were due on or before 1st July 2026

The final cutoff date will be 1 September for membership renewal - after this it will be assumed that anyone who has not renewed wishes to resign as payment will be 8 weeks overdue

If you have already paid - Thank You

The subscription fee is £15 per member.

Payment should preferably be made by BACS as follows:

Sort Code 80-22-60
Account No 18756663
Name: Helensburgh & District U3A
Reference: Your Surname and Initial

NOTE - you can also make payment by cash at any General Meeting

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

Find us on Facebook - click the logo

The monthly newsletters and u3a Matters online magazines can be accessed via the LINKS 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 here .

We have 301active members and growing

Current active groups include

Arts and Crafts

Board Games
Book Groups 1,2 & 3
Current Affairs 1,2 & 3
Dining Out
E-Biking
French Conversation
Genealogy
Gentle Cycling
German Conversation
In Our Time

Local History
Mahjong
Nordic Walking
Opera Appreciation
Philosophy
Photography
Poetry Appreciation
Quiz Group
Science Group talks
Social Bridge
Spanish Conversation
Swimming
Theatre Group
U3A Going Out! – Ballet, Opera, Musicals & Cinema.
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 talk and entry is free to members. If you can bring your own reusable cup or mug, it will reduce waste.

Next Monthly Meeting

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

Professor Gordon Gibb is an award-winning chartered architect, practice owner, expert witness, adjudicator and academic. Professor Gibb studied and taught part-time in Glasgow School of Art during a period spanning nearly fifty years. As a forensic architect, he investigated the causes of the fires and the reasons for their spread.

Future Monthly Meetings

Oct 5 - Helen Yaffe on "Cuba".

Helen lectures on Cuba and Latin America at Glasgow University. She has written books entitled '*We Are Cuba*' and *Ché Guevara: The Economics of Revolution'*

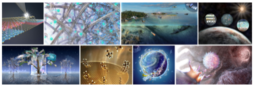
Nov 2 - Dugald Cameron - Engineering

Dec 7 - Christmas Lunch

Jan 4 2027 - Dougie Wylie - " 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.

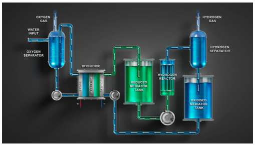
Science Group Talks



Next Monthly Talk

U3a Science talk Friday 18th September at 11.00am in Helensburgh Church Halls. (Small Hall)
The meeting is open to all u3a members. Coffee available from 10.40am. There is a charge of £2 towards room hire.

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 electrolyse water to make hydrogen, with this hydrogen then being used as a fuel that would release only water when it is consumed. However, although this idea has been around for many years, it sometimes seems like we are not getting any closer to realising it. In this talk, IProf Symes will discuss some of the challenges of producing hydrogen from renewables and how the work his research group has been doing in decoupled 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 developing new electrochemical processes and electrochemical technology for the more sustainable production of fuels and key chemical feedstocks. He is also a founder and the chief scientific officer at Clyde Hydrogen Systems, a spin-out from his research lab that is developing a new generation of decoupled electrolysers for converting renewable electricity into green hydrogen.

Future Monthly Talks

Oct 16th ‘An Endoscope the thickness of a single human hair’ by Prof. Miles Padgett

Summary: How we use holography, a digital projector, graphics cards, and a lot of physics to create a new type of endoscope the thickness of a human hair. Our endoscope can reach the places that other endoscopes cannot.

Speaker: Miles Padgett is a Royal Society Research Professor of Optics in the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Glasgow. He has held the Kelvin Chair of Natural Philosophy since 2011 and served as Vice Principal for research at Glasgow from 2014 to 2020. He was educated at the University of Manchester, the University of York, the University of St Andrews, and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was awarded a PhD in 1988.

Working with Les Allen, he conducted pioneering work on optical angular momentum, for which they were awarded 2009 the Young Medal. The research group he leads is best known for its work on the fundamental properties of light's angular momentum, including optical tweezers and optical spanners the use of orbital angular momentum states to extend the alphabet of optical communication (with both classical and quantum light).

Miles was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (FRSE) in 2001, in 2011 he was elected a Fellow of the Optical Society and in 2012 a Fellow of the Society of Photographic Instrumentation Engineers (SPIE). In 2014 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS) – the UK's National Academy of Science.

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 supply baseload energy for heating and hot water systems via district networks, easing pressure on intermittent green energy supply and our limited energy storage capacity across the UK. Yet, despite growing popularity overseas, our exploration and development of geothermal energy is surprisingly limited. The nearest functioning deep geothermal system to Helensburgh is in Southampton! We will first discuss how my colleagues and I are ramping up a new generation of geothermal exploration across Scotland's diverse geological settings. Then we'll look at how geothermal systems might be envisaged in different parts of Scotland and how they could tackle problems associated with our gradual transition away from hydrocarbon-based heating. We'll conclude on our own doorstep: what does the geology beneath Helensburgh consist of, and would it be worth exploring our own 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 lived in Helensburgh since 2015. Despite also working on the geology of locations as diverse as the Caribbean islands and the Caucasus mountains, he is an expert on Scottish geology and particularly the rocks of the Highlands. He is keen to see us explore and use the many geological resources around us to support common good. Alongside colleagues and students in Glasgow he promotes the deep geothermal energy potential of Scotland in partnership with a range of community organisations."

Dec 4th Title: Responsible Artificial Intelligence – does it exist?
By Prof Simone Stumpf

Summary: In this talk Prof Stumpf will cover the benefits and harms of AI applications and current efforts to make them more "responsible". She will talk about how you can use them more responsibly and get involved in shaping 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 interactions with AI systems. Her work has contributed to Explainable AI (XAI) and Responsible AI (RAI). The prime aim of her work is to empower everyone to use AI systems effectively. She previously gave an excellent talk on AI two years ago and a lot has changed since then!

2027 Dates

Jan 15th Title: Biodegradable electronics by Prof Jeff Kettle

Feb 12th Title: Control of human obesity by Prof Naveed Sattar

Mar 12th Title: Ageing in birds by Prof Pat Monaghan

Apr 16th Title: Sherlock Holmes and tropical diseases by Prof Mike Barrett (to be confirmed)

May 14th Title: Chronic Pain by Prof Barbara Nicholl

Jun 18th Title: Gut Biome by Prof Simon Milling

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
GOVERNMENT
SOCIETY
LEGISLATION
SOCIAL SERVICES
HEALTHCARE
WELFARE
REFORM
EDUCATION

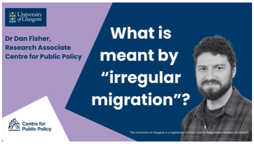
Following the success of our u3a Science talks programme (70 talks delivered to date with strong attendance numbers) we decided that in addition to maintaining the Science Talks programme we would introduce a new programme of talks on Social Science and Public Policy topics.

The Social Science and Public Policy talks programme began in January and be held monthly until June as an experiment to judge interest from our members. The talks will be held at 11am 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 Dan Fisher


University of Glasgow
Dr Dan Fisher,
Research Associate
Centre for Public Policy
What is meant by "irregular migration"?
Centre for Public Policy
The University of Glasgow is a registered Scottish charity: Registration Number SC004401

Summary: Immigration is one of the decade's most hotly debated topics. But what do global migration trends and recent political decisions mean for Scotland? Dan's talk will explore how migration and asylum policies are changing, and what these changes mean for refugees and people seeking asylum 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 Fisher is a political geographer working at the Centre for Public Policy (University of Glasgow). He researches how states manage their borders and govern people seeking asylum. His recent work supported the Scottish Government's *New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy* and informed the Scottish Parliament's review of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

23rd October

Title: 'Holding power to account? Looking forward to the U.S. Midterms elections and back to the Scottish elections' by Prof Chris Carman

Summary: It's often said that elections are how we hold those in power to account — but do voters really behave that way? This talk looks ahead to the US midterm elections in November to consider whether (and how) American voters will use their vote to judge the record of those in office, then looks back to Scotland's own Parliament election earlier this year. Using fresh data from the Scottish Election Study, it asks whether Scottish voters did the same.

Speaker: Prof Christopher Carman holds the Stevenson Chair of Citizenship at the University of Glasgow and has been part of the Scottish Election Study team since 2011. He is the author of several books and articles spanning Scottish and US politics, most recently *Dealmakers* (OUP, 2025), which explores public support for political compromise in the United States.

27th November
Title 'Adam Smith's economic legacy at 250' by Prof Alex Trew

Summary: Two hundred and fifty years ago, Adam Smith published *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. The book founded the discipline of economics, but Smith himself has become a caricature in the public imagination as a naïve champion of markets and self-interest. The real Smith is more interesting, and more important. This talk begins with his life, and in particular his long association with Glasgow: student at fourteen, Professor of Logic and then of Moral Philosophy, and later Rector, in years he called the happiest and most useful of his life. In his early essay on the history of astronomy, where he argues that scientific theories are inventions of the imagination, built to make a disordered world feel orderly — a view that tells us a great deal about what he thought he was doing in his own two great books. Then *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, on how our moral judgements are formed by imagining ourselves in the position of others. And then *The Wealth of Nations* itself, including the parts usually left out: his suspicion of powerful merchants, his sympathy for workers, and the clear role he saw for government. Finally, what became of him — the nineteenth-century claim that his two books contradict one another, the twentieth-century "greed is good" caricature, and a recent recovery of the broader thinker, with some reflections on what economists have learned about the wealth of nations since.

Speaker: Alex Trew is Professor of Economics at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, a member of the Council of the Scottish Economic Society, a fellow of the Royal Economic Society, and is affiliated with CESifo and IZA. Prof Trew is editor of *The Wealth of Nations at 250*, a volume of contributions from some of the world's leading economists and economic historians (https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/wealth-of-nations-at-250/CD2AD664B28766AC1B448158AF059E25).

2027 Dates

Jan 22nd : Jim Conroy - Scottish Education

Feb 19th : Louise Lawson – Pensions and pensioners

Mar 19th : Possible talk on urban planning for Rain or impact of Social Media

Apr 23rd : TBA

May 21st : TBA

June 25th - TBA

Coffee and a Chat

Next U3A Coffee and a Chat

Coffee and a Chat' events are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month in Helensburgh Civic Centre café, 38 East Clyde Street, Helensburgh G84 7PG at 10.30am.

Sometimes a U3A sign will be displayed on a table, but if not, the café staff will usually be able to tell you which is the U3A group.

Go to the counter and order your tea or coffee (which will be brought to your table), then go and join the U3A group, which usually numbers between 6 and 12 (it's not always the same members who attend the event and no booking is required, so numbers and attendees vary).

New members are particularly welcome.

The café is a relatively quiet environment, which makes it easier to converse and hear everyone at the table.

The Coffee and a Chat group details can be found on the website Groups page

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H&D u3a Group Leaders' Annual Lunch and Get Together

Many thanks to Glenda Caldwell for organising her annual lunch and meet up for our hard working Group Leaders. 16 people were able to make the event and it was great fun.

A good meeting, a chance to chat and a fantastic buffet!

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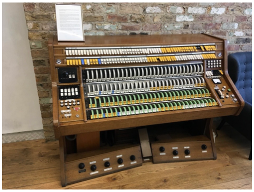
Photography Group - David Cunningham

Would you like to join the photography group? We have vacancies in the group. The format is as follows: We meet monthly for an hour in Room 1 of the Parish Halls. Each member brings along a memory stick with 5 photographs, which I then display on the video monitor there. We discuss the photo, where it was taken and when. (We don't go into technical details about camaras, lenses, exposures etc.) Each month we select a random letter of the alphabet. Last month the letter was O, so we had Oystercatchers, Obelisks, an Organ, a play by Eugene O'Neill and Operas.

The photo below is an organ modified to function as a lighting control desk. It was used in Wyndham's Theatre in the West End of London. I learned to operate it there in 1974. It's entirely electro-mechanical; no electronics at all.



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u3a Matters Magazine Paper Copy Opt Out

We are aware that some people do not wish to receive the monthly u3a magazine by post and, in the interest of saving waste and postage, would like to opt out. A large number of members have already opted out, following our email requesting preference.

Magazines will be made available at the monthly meetings to borrow or keep and a link to the online magazine will be put on the website LINKS page every month. The February, Spring , Summer , Autumn, Winter 2024 and Feb, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter 2025 and February, Spring and summer 2026 editions are already there.

I will add a link to the next edition when it is available online.

You can always opt back in again should you so wish.

If you would like to stop receiving the magazine by post, please let us know by clicking HERE.

Note - they do take quite a while to stop sending the paper copies once I have unsubscribed you but we have asked them to look into this.

Kind regards

The Helensburgh and District u3a committee

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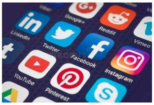
Social Media



The Helensburgh and District U3A Facebook group has a growing membership currently 88 members and growing. The group can be a useful source for the subjects, dates and times of monthly meetings, Science Group meetings and other information about U3A. It can be used to quickly contact group members and group leaders about current events and meetings. It is also updated regularly with news and interesting information. Please join the group, it is private and restricted to Helensburgh & District U3A members. The more people that join and contribute, the more information we can share.

The Helensburgh and District U3A Members Facebook page can be found using this link

Please note that our website has a MEMBERS page. If you have anything that you would like to share with the members, send me it by email and I can add it to the website and also to the Facebook page. The page can be found HERE .

Russell Mackie

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of Russell Mackie who used to be a member of Helensburgh u3a.

Our thoughts and condolences are with Maggie and family members at this difficult time.

Gordon Mackie (Chair)

SCAM ALERTS

The latest Trading Standards Scam news bulletins can be found HERE & HERE

Beware of ChatGPT shopping scam - see HERE

Be vigilant - Stay Safe

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u3a Mailing

National u3a News

Watch the u3a news video HERE

u3a friends

The latest (August 2026) u3a friends newsletter can be found HERE

To subscribe to the latest U3A friends newsletters - Click HERE

The u3a Scotland newsletters can be found on our website LINKS page. The Autumn 2025 edition is already there.

The online u3a magazine can be found on our website LINKS page.

u3a Scotland

find out more about u3a Scotland online groups HERE

Local Events

Helensburgh Bowling Club

Helensburgh Bowling Club have been holding coffee mornings (£3 for tea, coffee and scones) with craft stalls, game and toy stalls, plants, home baking stalls and much, much more to raise funds for the maintenance of the clubhouse. These are well attended, great fun and open to all.The coffee mornings are held 10:00-12:00 at the bowling club on the corner of East Abercromby St & Sinclair St on the **last Friday of the month.**

Millig Practice Bridge Afternoon for SANDS Charity

SANDS
Sands provides suppprt to grieving families of babies. Also training professionals to ensure families get the care they need and save babies' lives through research.

Place, Date and Time
Helensburgh Bowling Club on Friday 4th of September
Arrive at 13:30 for 13:45 start

Cost
£40 for a table of 4
Please bring cards and bidding boxes if required

Afternoon Tea
Please bring a basket with crockery and a table cloth.
There will also be a raffle

Contact Either
Kirsty Hassell 670904
Gwynneth Yates 701282

The Tower Cinema

Please support the Tower Cinema, a fantastic resource saved by volunteers and now in community ownership

Films	Holy Days (12A)	3 & 4 September
	Tony (15)	4,5,6 &10 September
	Don't Look Back in Anger (TBC)	9 September
Event Cinema	National Theatre Live: The Misanthrope	22 September @ 7pm
	National Theatre Live: Golden Boy (TBC)	5 November @ 7pm
Live Events	An afternoon with James McCracken	6 September @2pm
	The Big Quiz 2026 (max size of teams is 6)	12 September @7pm, doors open at 6pm
	The James Experience Born of Frustration	7 November, time tbc
	Spiders On Mars – The Music of Bowie	21 November, time tbc
	An evening with James Cosmo	30 January 2027 @ 7.30pm

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

Our mailing address is:
Helensburgh and District U3A
Lower Flat
1 Easterhill Road
Helensburgh, G84 9JE
United Kingdom

Add us to your address book

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You can update your preferences or unsubscribe from this list.