

# Fife u3a Newsletter Summer 2025

## From the Chair

What a wonderful start to summer with the long sunny days. Although my lawn is definitely suffering from the lack of rain. The sunshine made me decide to go camping for a couple of days. I went to stay near Ayr and camped in the grounds of Culzean Castle and Country Park. The castle was beautiful and built on the cliffs looking towards Isle of Arran, an amazing country park which was wonderful for walking in. Some nice beaches were accessible from the grounds. There were also a couple of beautiful sunsets over Arran.



On the way back I visited the interesting Robert Burns Museum and his birth place. I very much enjoyed my few days away.

*Tina Cox*

## Annual Outing

Our annual outing this year is to The David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre on 14th August 2025 where you'll have the opportunity to explore the life and legacy of this remarkable Scottish missionary, explorer, and abolitionist. We have arranged transportation with Festival Travel, providing a wheelchair-accessible bus equipped with a toilet. The cost is a fixed price of £38 per person and this includes the cost of the bus, a welcome coffee and biscuit on arrival and also lunch. Included as well is the Guided Tour of the centre which is completely accessible. Further details on how to book are available on our website. Places are filling up fast so don't miss out.



*Sadie Seath*

## Report from Fife u3a AGM 2025

The Annual General Meeting on 8th May 2025 which started at 2.00 pm was well attended and quorate with 55 members present and several apologies received. The 2024 AGM minutes were approved and the annual report and accounts can still be found on the website. This year's minutes will appear on the website to be presented at next year's AGM for approval.

10 Executive Committee members were elected unopposed as there were less than 12 nominees. We welcomed two new trustees, Julian Berg and Doreen Somerville. If you wish to be coopted onto the committee then please make your interest known. We will need a new treasurer in May 2026 as Susan Kirkwood will reach the limit of her time and it would be preferable if we could have a deputy for her on the committee sooner rather than later. If you would like to take up the challenge, get in touch with Susan Kirkwood [treasurer.fifeu3a@gmail.com](mailto:treasurer.fifeu3a@gmail.com) or Secretary, Ruth Cross, [fifeu3a@gmail.com](mailto:fifeu3a@gmail.com) to find out more.



We said goodbye to group organiser and long-time committee member Jean Black. She will be missed as a font of knowledge and will need to be replaced as Group Co-ordinator. Of course, we do not lose her experience totally as she is still a Fife u3a member.

Two resolutions were passed at the meeting. There is now a joint membership for 2 members at the same address of £20 with only one u3a Matters magazine delivered. This starts in September. The single member's fee remains at £12 and both will be due when rejoining in September. The new constitution was also approved.

This year's AGM was 4 minutes longer than last years and finished at 2.14 pm.

*Ruth Cross*

## Garden Visit/Out and About Groups

The Garden Visit group recently went to Lauriston in Edinburgh. After meeting at the café near the Castle, we walked round to the Japanese garden. Edinburgh is twinned with Kyoto and this garden was opened in 2002 to mark the link between the two cities. Perhaps there is a Scottish garden in Kyoto. The many cherry trees were in in bloom and the traditional elements of a Japanese garden were evident in the design - stone, water, ornaments such as lanterns and "shakkei" or borrowed scenery. This is the incorporation of the surrounding landscape into the design of the garden. In this case, from the highest point, there were views of the Forth and its islands and of the Fife Coast.



Leaving the garden, we walked through the grounds of the castle, passing an apiary where members were speaking to the apiarist attending to his bees - an interesting subject. We continued to follow the pleasant woodland path around the perimeter of the grounds, emerging once more at the foot of the drive.

We made our way back to the café for further refreshment before embarking on the Out and About

part of our day. This was the one hour tour of the castle itself, bought in 1903 by Mr. and Mrs W Reid and Mrs Reid's brother, William Barton. The three were a cultured, wealthy local family. Mr. Reid owned Scotland's leading cabinet making company and William Barton ran a successful plumbing and sanitary warehouse business. Together they transformed the castle into a modern Edwardian home. After Mrs Reid's death in 1926 the castle and grounds were left in trust to the nation. The rich collection of furniture includes pieces from Scotland, England and from 18thC Italy and France. A 16thC table top in the reception hall was made using a technique by which marble and semi-precious stones were cut and fitted into a slab of marble to form a beautiful pattern. As well as the many valuable items on display, there were personal belongings which gave us an insight into the lives of the people who lived there. The Reids were generous hosts - before dinner guests were invited to sit on a 'weighing chair' and again before leaving Lauriston to confirm their hosts' hospitality. Our tour ended with a brief visit to the servants' corridor with its row of bells linked to each room in the main home above

## Walking Group

After a dull start, the sun shone as ten walkers from the Fife u3a Walking group set out from Cameron Bridge Station for our May walk. We were led by a local walker Alec and our route traced the River Leven, passing Kirkland Dam and the new bridge over the river and railway at Dunniface. The flowering vegetation hid the Maiden Castle as we skirted Kennoway and then the distinctive aroma of the Diageo whisky bonds was appreciated by some.



Cheerful chat accompanied our stroll along Cock-ma-Lane, leading to Letham Glen Park. Here we paused before moving on to Scoonie Golf Club's café for refreshments. The return offered two options: a brisk walk down High Street or a peaceful route along the Promenade with coastal views. Reuniting at Leven Station, the group thanked Alec and hoped to meet again soon.

## Walk in the Park Group

An Unusual Event for a Thursday Morning.

Since the turn of the year the weather has been a bit of a stramash, has it not! Ranging from bitterly cold, very wet, wild and windy and now hotter than average during the day and verging on freezing overnight.



Despite all these unseasonal ups and downs in the weather, the \*Walk in the Park Group has not missed a week this year. Quite an achievement wouldn't you say, given this is Scotland. However, it has been a bit of an adventure over the first 5 months of the year, making sure to wrap up warm enough or wearing sufficient rainproof clothes and remember your sun-glasses.

Yes we have done more than our fair share of walking in the rain. It was so wet on occasion that we considered skipping the walk and heading straight for a bowl of soup and a coffee. But the downpour would ease up allowing us to start the walk. If you're

half way and it pelts down you just have to continue, don't you!!

Then there were the storms. Storm Éowyn brought down many trees in the Glen (Pittencrieff Park). One of the car parks was blocked by a fallen tree. Every path we took had us looking at more felled trees. It was very sad to see.



After a short warm spell in April we are now being treated to a longer spell of blue skies, sunshine and hot weather. On a day such as that, a couple of weeks ago, we were strolling over the lawns (not our usual habit as it can be very soggy) towards our meeting point. We were admiring the wonderfully beautiful cherry trees laden with pink cheerful blossom. We heard a creaking, groaning sound which puzzled us and one or two other park users. Out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a cherry tree moving very slowly. It was as if it was suddenly tired and chose to have a lie down. The tree had looked perfectly healthy but no doubt it had been weakened by the buffeting about it would have tried to withstand at the start of the year. Having given us all a beautiful display over many years it now provided children and some adults, with more pleasure by providing thousands of petals dropped to be picked up and tossed in the air like confetti and a wedding.

*Doreen Somerville*

## Out and About Group Mosque Visit

In a time filled with bad actors in the public arena emphasising difference as a source of division, Gillian Dooley's enjoyable Out and About trip to Edinburgh Central Mosque showed how easily we can step back over any divide and lift the veil on manipulative tropes.

This mosque the largest of 16 in Edinburgh was built to house over 1000 worshippers in 1998 through Sunni community and Saudi support. Basil Al Bayati's design, seeks to incorporate its surroundings; the modern housing the ancient, castle like turrets alongside minaret and dome. A mosque is any building where Muslims worship and needs no opulence to define it. The simple lines on the carpet are for prayer, giving individuals order and space but the design of the library with its ancient 7<sup>th</sup> century hadiths and the overall geometric patterns in the architectural design emphasis space, light and beauty.



Like any church the Mosque gives a home to its local community, tourists and anyone passing through at one of the five calls to prayer each day. I had an engaging encounter about being young and finding your way metaphorically and in real time as Tamara a life sciences' student chatted and showed me the women's door leading to the balcony on her way to meet friends at Scoop before calling in later so as not to miss 1.30 prayers.

We were welcomed by Amin, who describes himself as a community Imam or 'teacher.' He also works in nearby prisons and towns, and with quiet warmth he highlighted the similarities in all religions as well as our shared human and community needs." Under the dome of the library and in the community room he openly answered all questions; marriage and

death rites, Ramadan, one of the Five Pillars Zakat or charitable obligation, religious practice and study for men and women. He talked about how the Quran and hadiths, which are tenets based on the sayings and life of the last prophet Muhammed, support people to interpret their meaning and relevance in leading their day to day lives.

I believe that if I understand freedom and rights are for all not just some I can, without harm, voluntarily hold onto mine and allow room for others. Whether atheist or believer the visit opened up greater understanding of the importance of acceptance of religion and respect in all our lives. Let's leave any sense of entitlement and 'righteousness' at the door with our shoes and gain more harmony and understanding.

And I haven't even mentioned the Mosque Kitchen ...open every day for food and a rest from the busy Potterrow bustle...

*Dee Ramsay*

## **Jazz Appreciation Group**

Jill Tiley and Janice Urquhart are stepping down from the Jazz Appreciation group, and we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to them for their contributions and hard work. If anyone is interested in keeping the group alive, please contact the Group Coordinator via our website.

## **June Members' Meeting**

As you know, the members' monthly meeting on 12th of June will be a showcase of what your groups have been doing throughout the year, opening at 2.00 pm and closing at 3.30. It will be part of the Lang Toun Fest and an opportunity not just for our members but members of the public to see what we all enjoy doing. Bring your friends along. There is no charge and free tea and coffee is provided. It is a good chance to spread the word about Fife u3a and catch up.

*Ruth Cross*

## **Speaker at the May meeting**

The speaker at May's monthly meeting, Stuart Beveridge from the charity Seescape, was funny and extremely informative. He has been blind from birth but he showed us the amazing technology he can now use just with an iPhone an Apple watch. Of course, he uses a special app but just by using a specially created touch screen his phone can describe the scene in front of him or tap into the internet to find out information for his activities. He said it has helped many visually impaired young people feel more integrated into society because, like their friends, they are using phones and not having to gain access to the world through a special language such as Braille. It caused a lot of amazement and hilarity when he took a photograph of the church and had an audio description describing the scene in front of him including the colours, the setting and the group of 55 people in front of him, 'all of them seem elderly'.

Stuart's most amazing revelation though was a pair of glasses which cost him £329. He doesn't have to have his phone out all the time. His glasses connect to the phone in his

pocket and speaks to him. A click of the frame and he can read a document, find the answer to a question and, as he demonstrated on the day, phone his mum.

It is wonderful to know if our sight is failing that there is the technology out there to improve our lives. We just have to learn how to use it!

*Ruth Cross*

## Fuengirola u3a

Every April some u3a members go to Fuengirola, Costa del Sol, and are made very welcome by the u3a there. We have come to have many friends and we join in with all their activities. We join our friends at their Sunday coffee morning, and the dance evening which is on every week. The Fife members are Laura King, Anne Macdonald and Sean & Christine Gillan.

*Laura King*

## Film Review

I cannot recommend David Attenborough's film "Ocean" enough for everyone to see. A mesmerising and highly emotional experience, one is guided by Sir David's calm and informed commentary through the little-known world of the oceans and the wondrous marine life that is now being destroyed by deep-sea dredging. The vital importance of the ocean for the rest of the planet is clearly explained and the miraculous recovery that occurs when protected zones are set up fills one with hope and optimism. Back in the 60s and 70s the world united successfully to save the whale and now a movement is vital to save the oceans and our world. Please see this film and maybe with the u3a we can add our voices to Sir David's message to act now.

*Francine Hampton*

### **The Moment by Margaret Atwood**

The moment when, after many years  
of hard work and a long voyage  
you stand in the centre of your room,  
house, half-acre, square mile, island, country,  
knowing at last how you got there,  
and say, I own this,  
is the moment when the trees unloose  
their soft arms from around you,  
the birds take back their language,  
the cliffs fissure and collapse,

the air moves back from you like a wave,  
and you can't breathe.  
No, they whisper. You own nothing  
You were a visitor, time after time  
climbing the hill, planting the flag,  
proclaiming.  
We never belonged to you.  
You never found this.  
It was always the other way round.

## What the Papers Say

Group Leader with effect from June 2025 is Lynn Somerville.

Firstly, thanks are due to outgoing Group Leader, Steve Petts, who had been doing an excellent job for the last two years or so.

The whole group considers a range of possible topics put forward by those present and selects those it wishes to discuss. The format of these sessions has changed slightly by general consensus. After splitting into manageable groups the previous arrangement was that each group would take away three separate topics to discuss so that when groups merged again after ~75 minutes the number of topics reviewed would be 3 X number of groups. Current system has whole group select two optimum topics from the total put forward. Then the two or three groups of 6-8 people for that day get together to discuss those two topics until noon whereupon groups merge and the sub-leaders summarise their group's findings. This ensures that each topic is thoroughly reviewed. Attendance varies between 15-24 people therefore it is necessary to split up into either two or three groups. Group Leader will take one of those groups and ask for one or two volunteers to be other sub-group leaders as appropriate. Quite often 4-8 members will remain for lunch having confirmed numbers to staff at the outset.

To provide some idea of the range of subjects covered, some previous topics discussed since May 2024 are listed below:

- A US state putting parents on trial for actions of their 15year old son who took their rifle on a killing spree.
- Justice for WASPI women.
- Artificial Intelligence robotic care for old folk.
- If we were a political party in power what would be in our manifesto?
- Pensioners benefit from "The Triple Lock" but there is no such help for younger people.
- Should 16 year olds have the vote?
- 22million people (of 68M) in UK bet at least once per month. Should we be concerned about extent of betting?
- End of year school proms in England exclude pupils with less than 92% attendance. Is this acceptable?
- Censorship and democracy. Freedom of speech. How far should governments go to enforce?
- Is immigration really a problem?
- Removal of Winter Fuel Allowance seems to have stolen Christmas from many pensioners. Discuss.
- Why did young women affected by AI Fayed not just walk away?
- Should donations to politicians be better controlled and transparent?
- Should the UK government be sending 700 troops to Cyprus in case of having to evacuate Lebanon?
- Should there be reparations for slavery?
- With 51 dead in Spain due to flooding how seriously do governments take climate emergencies?
- Use of weight loss drugs to help unemployed people back to work. Is this right and proper? Why only the unemployed being targeted?
- What would we like to see in the budget and how would we pay for it?
- Does having a minimum unit price per unit alcohol work?

- Discuss apparent decline of BBC professionalism and standards.
- Assisted Dying Bill - Would you vote for it?
- Irresistible food for humans and animals due to ultra-processing is becoming a major problem. What should be done by governments?
- What is a woman? Concern re safe places for women.
- In wake of three Southport murders, is society being too soft on those who are a threat to others?
- Does Scotland have a special relationship with Donald Trump?
- Is the UK failing to keep up with it's spend on defence leaving it overly dependent on USA?
- Ukraine signing away lots of mineral wealth to the US. Is this morally right?
- Artificial Intelligence Summit in Paris.
- Single sex spaces.
- Do we owe anything to future generations?
- Cash or card? Where is this going?

## The u3a Exercise

Veterans of our last couple of Members' Days may recall joining in some gentle exercises demonstrated by the Craft Group – remember 'The steam train'? Or 'The triathlon'? Well, we've come up with a new exercise and don't want you to miss out just because of the change in format for Members' Day this year. So, may I present to you an infographic allow you to master 'The u3a' in the comfort of your own home?

Step 1 Point at the person you're speaking to.

Step 2 Raise the three middle fingers of your right hand.

Step 3 Hold hands together above your head (*think of the 'A' in the YMCA dance!*)

And that's all there is to it – **enjoy!**

*Sheena Lawson*



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