

U3a in Scotland Newsletter

Spring 2025

From the Chair

Everyone should know by now that the governing structure of the u3a is changing. The changes will take place from 1st April 2025 when a smaller board of Trustees will take up office; it is likely that there will be a by-election for the office of vice-chairperson as the person who was elected ahead of the AGM stepped down for family reasons.

The council will have two members from Scotland, Liz Ervine, formerly Trustee, and George Cleland, currently chair of Edinburgh u3a, rooting for us at National level. Both have articles elsewhere within this newsletter. Both will be speaking for a short time at the up-coming Spring Members' Meeting. We are holding an SGM, as part of the Spring Members' Meeting on Tuesday 18th March, to alter the constitution to allow both councillors to be fully part of u3a in Scotland committee as opposed to ex-officio guests. There are a couple of other small changes to be voted on and your u3a has hopefully circulated the proposed constitution to you, or made it accessible in some other way.



This will be my last newsletter article as chair of u3a in Scotland as I will be stepping down at the AGM. Whether I stay on the committee, in some other capacity, will be up to the membership, though I still hope to be involved in the 2026 Summer School. Our current treasurer, Margaret Moffat, also has to step down and that is a position that needs to be filled. If you have financial experience from your working life, please, consider this post. We'd like to co-opt someone onto the committee now, to shadow Margaret until the AGM. There will be a number of other committee vacancies, especially if the revised constitution is agreed at the SGM. If you've done your time on your own committee but are not yet ready to take a back seat, why not volunteer with u3a in Scotland? However, you don't have to have been on your own committee, you may have the necessary skills from your working life.

Information will be sent out in May along with the paperwork for the AGM on 10th June in Glasgow. As is the normal practice now, this will be a hybrid (in-person and Zoom) meeting. I think there is an exciting time ahead for u3a in Scotland and I am pleased to be part of that in any way that I can be.

Anne Walsh

Trustee's Report

Thanks to you all for your participation in the Fit For The Future elections for the new Third Age Trust Board and for the newly formed Council.

As a former Trustee I go seamlessly into the role of Council member. Scotland will be also represented by George Cleland (currently Chair of Edinburgh u3a). I am delighted and look forward to working with him.



What does this mean for you?

Firstly, we need to listen to you the members and support u3as in whatever way is appropriate. I do believe we need to publicise u3a more widely in Scotland. Secondly, as Trustee I have organised four workshops this year so far: one on being a committee member, one on being Treasurer, one on the pros and cons of being a charity and one for membership secretaries.

Future workshops will include something on Groups, the lifeblood of u3as. In addition, treasurers would like another opportunity to chat and share good practice; I will organise a Zoom meeting.

George Cleland and I have proposed that we have a Jamboree for all u3a members on 29th August. A fun day for u3a members at Napier University, Craiglochart Campus. See George Clelland's report below for more information... Save the date!

George and I will be able to do twice as much...
Thanks as ever for your support

Liz Ervine
Trustee for Scotland (until April 1st...)

A Message from George Cleland

Newly Elected Council Member for Scotland

Hello everyone, as some of you may know, I've just been elected as a new Scottish Representative on the UK u3a Council - joining our existing Trustee, Liz Ervine, who will move across from the Board to the Council. There will be more from me as I find my feet. (I'm one day in as I write this!)



However, I wanted to tell you about an important and exciting event we are planning for later in the summer.

On Friday August 29th we are running an event for u3a members across Scotland to get together; to get involved in a whole range of activities, and socialise, eat and drink with old and new friends.

We're calling it the *Scottish u3a Jamboree!*

This is in early planning, but we would like to raise awareness now, and to seek comments and input. The event is planned as a full day of indoor and outdoor activities at Edinburgh Napier University's Craiglockhart Campus. This has a range of spaces, and is adjacent to Craiglockhart Sports Centre, the Craiglockhart Hills, and the Craiglockhart Nature reserve. We now ask two things of you: First to express an interest - we hope that 300 or more of you will come; Secondly, for those of you who lead Activity Groups, to volunteer to bring your expertise to the event and offer sessions. Some suggestions are listed below, but we hope for many more interesting ideas we haven't yet thought of.

There will be more formal communication of this over the next couple of months, but please take the time to think and make initial responses with any thoughts to u3ajamboree@gmail.com.

Possible activities include –

Poetry Reading in the War Poets Library; Art or Photography Exhibitions; Pop-up Choir in the beautiful acoustics of the Chapel; Performances by one of our Ukulele, Guitar, or other musical Groups

Taster Sessions for Pickle Ball; Laughter Yoga, Qi Gong, Croquet; Pétanque/Boules, Map Reading and Navigation,...;

Guided Tours of the Craiglockhart Hills and Nature Reserve, Flower Arranging, Craft sessions...;

Maybe inter u3a competitions for Pickleball, Table Tennis, Chess, Mah Jong, Go,...; Quizzes!

The only limit is the wealth of talent in our u3as! Please think of what you might bring to our event. How about an evening Ceilidh?

On behalf of the Jamboree steering group, I look forward to hearing from you and getting to know you and your u3as as I step into my new role. I don't have my u3a Council email yet, but the Jamboree email address will get to me in the meantime.

George
u3ajamboree@gmail.com

Happiness is an Inside Job

Carolyn Hornblow a retired nurse and member of Stewarty u3a tells us about some of the tools to help you be happier in your life.

We usually look outside of ourselves for gratification and happiness.

Buying a new car, a holiday, new clothes
Yes it does give us a sense of happiness to get the car, job, holiday we are craving. However, the sense of happiness starts to fade over a few months and we start looking for the next 'hit of happiness'. Developing an internal sense of peace, happiness and contentment is much more permanent and satisfying.

Tools to help achieve peace and contentment include being grateful each day for something.

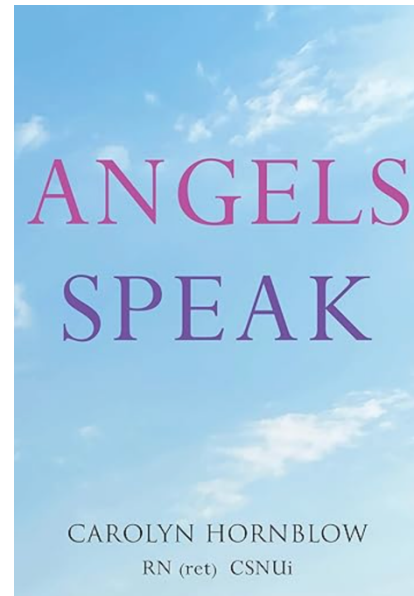
Making amends and saying you are sorry if you have upset or hurt someone. This can be done in person, by phone, by letter or even writing an apology and then burning it or tearing the letter up. Getting the hurt, anger out of you helps release the negative energy and stops 'eating' at you.

Telling people that you love or like that you love and like them. Never assume that they know how you feel. (ASSUME makes an ass out of you and me). Tell those you love frequently that you love them. It will make you and them feel good.

Spend 10 to 15 minutes a day sitting by yourself and tuning into that still small voice within you. You have a wisdom and a knowing but often we are too busy to check in to that inner wisdom. Turn off the phone, take a few deep breaths and just BE for 10 – 15 minutes. You may well have inspiration or ideas that 'spring up' in the quiet. I find when I do this I seem to have more green traffic lights... my days go more smoothly.

These suggestions are just some of the tools to help you be happier in your life. I am living more happily using these guides and tools

Carolyn has written a book comprising 50 talks including these and other inspirational, motivational ideas and guidance **Angels Speak** and also **After a Life-Threatening Diagnosis...What's Next?** both available from Amazon.



Why not start a Smartphone Group in your u3a?

Hugh Munro of Penicuik u3a tells us about the benefits of having a Smartphone Group.

The chances are that, apart from a few die-hards who proudly avoid smartphones, your u3a will have many possessors of smartphones.

The chances are also that many of these owners use them for little more than text messages or phone calls. What a waste! They're not cheap to buy and run!

The reasons why are probably a combination of fear, embarrassment and lack of training/education. Well, it's not as if you get a printed operating manual with this 'tech gadget'. Even if such a manual existed, using and understanding it would probably encourage suicidal thoughts.



I became aware of many such instances in our u3a and rather quickly, managed to collect a group of members who wanted to know more. We meet in members' homes and currently have eleven members, which is probably the maximum number to manage for such a 'techy' group. Some joined the group at the very start and are still with us while some others join in, learn what they want, then leave. That's absolutely fine.

One of the first tasks is to get everybody logged into the house Wi-Fi and what a revelation that can be. An invaluable item is a cable which can connect your smartphone to a TV via an HDMI lead. They're available on Amazon for about £16. This makes coaching so much easier as all present can watch progress on the large TV screen, step by step. Personally, I know my way about Apple's iPhones but defer to the better experience and knowledge of Android devices, such as possessed by Samsung users. If we're stuck, Google knows all!

We usually have an open agenda whereby we start each meeting with members' immediate needs. Then we move to other items. Our next meeting will deal with Voice Activation, taking screenshots and, rather morbidly (but important), 'How to Plan for your Digital Death'.

Regular returns are made to *WhatsApp*, using the diary, photo editing, *Settings*, *FaceTime*, Maps and satnav, Artificial Intelligence, traffic information, *Google Translate* (great for holidays), *Traveline Scotland* (bus timetable/journey planning and even digital banking!

P.S. Some members bring their iPads or tablets.

Hugh Munro

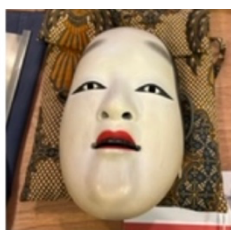
East Renfrewshire Visit to the Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre



East Renfrewshire u3a had an excellent visit to the Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre in Kelvindale. The Centre's director, Malcolm Knight, gave an introductory talk about puppetry, one of the oldest expressive arts and how he got involved quite by chance, how he moved to Glasgow and founded the Centre in 1981.

In 1989 the Centre obtained a 99-Year lease of its current building from Glasgow District Council. After being severely vandalized during the 18 months it took to negotiate the lease, the new base was renovated from its dilapidated state into an 80-seat studio theatre, cafe, exhibition space, production & design workshops, stores and office complex with visitor accommodation. In November 1989, just 8 weeks after moving in, it opened for business in time for Glasgow's year as City of Culture.

Malcolm then delighted our group in theatre with an hour long demonstration of the different puppet forms. We learned all about shadow puppets before moving on to the marionettes and glove puppets, with a demonstration of Punch and Judy and childhood favourite, Harry Corbett's Sooty. It was then back to the café for a leisurely soup/sandwich lunch and a look at the collection of puppets, both ancient and modern, in the museum - and of course a visit to the shop. After lunch our group was taken to the workshops, which are partly hired out to a young man who makes many of the bodies for film and TV shows such as *Trainspotting* and *Taggart*.



The group went on to discover how masks from all over the world were made. The Japanese mask was particularly impressive, with its 14 layers of finely crushed oyster shells giving it a translucent effect.

The final stop was the puppet workshop, where students come from all over to learn this art form.

This is an amazing venue to visit. It was an easy tour to arrange and well worth the £25 cost which included lunch. It is also a great place to take the grandkids to - or just go for a coffee.

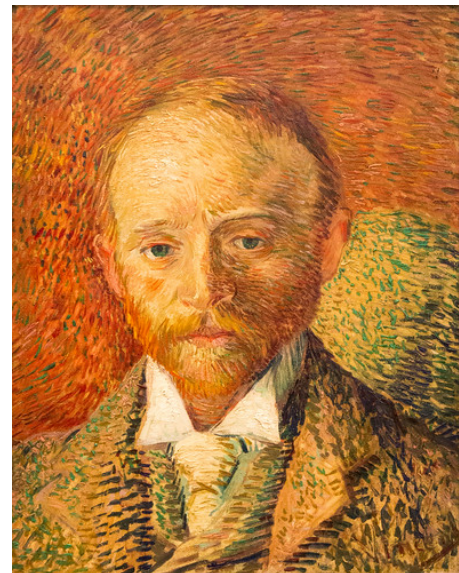
Art Visit to Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum

Joy Sullivan, Groups Coordinator, Oban u3a has recently set up an Art Visit Group.

At the end of February 2025, a group of art enthusiasts from Oban u3a travelled to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, to meet with Margaret Logan from Lanark u3a and Gail Donaldson of Glasgow West u3a.

Margaret is a volunteer guide and had planned a curated tour of some of the Museum's art collection for the visitors. She provided an enthralling commentary on works by the Glasgow Boys and a range of other well- and lesser-known paintings. The group's appreciation of the works was enhanced by Margaret's knowledge of the techniques used, the contexts in which the paintings were made, and, in some cases, the complex routes by which they came to be part of the Kelvingrove collection.

Among other examples, it was fascinating to learn about the portrait of Glaswegian art dealer, Alexander Reid, by Van Gogh. Until 1928 the painting was thought to be a self-portrait, which was explained by Reid's son's comment on their resemblance: 'they might have been twins'. Margaret also invited the group to reflect on the possible subject of Rembrandt's 'A Man in Armour' painted in the mid 1650s. The classical armour, brilliantly realised in the work, has led to conjecture that the figure represented is Achilles, Alexander the Great or even Pallas Athene.



Margaret's insights, the close study of selected works and a convivial lunch in the cafe all contributed to a very enjoyable day.

The value of liaison between u3a groups was also highlighted.

Online Across Scotland (OAS)

OAS was set up during the pandemic to give u3a members from all over Scotland the opportunity to participate in interest group and online talks and workshops. The intention is that OAS will complement your local u3a.

Currently we have some 14 interest groups - details here:

<https://scotland.u3asite.uk/groups/>

We are always happy to welcome new groups and if your u3a offers a group on Zoom and has capacity for new members then please let us know. We plan to start a new monthly Coffee and Chat group soon to let members from all over Scotland chat casually about life in general and u3as in particular! Details of this to follow!

We arrange regular talks usually given by u3a members. In February, we enjoyed the final talk in a short series on Post War British Politics. Organised by Oban u3a, Donald Shell, who was Senior Lecturer at Bristol University before retiring to Oban, eloquently presented his views on the five phases of Politics, starting with Britain's New Deal in the 40s and 50s, and finishing with today's Populism. Thank you Donald and the Oban team for such lively debate.

Details of our forthcoming talks are here:

<https://scotland.u3asite.uk/monthly-online-talks/>

If you or anyone in your u3a would like to give a talk please just let us know.

Please contact Linda Matheson here:

https://scotland.u3asite.uk/u3a-contact-form/?contact_id=2736

And finally...

Jim Mallen who has recently joined Penicuik & District u3a wrote telling us of the warm welcome that he received and the benefits of joining u3a.

"Throughout my life of near 84 years I have advocated that wellbeing is stimulated by Activity and that the giving of time is rewarded by the gain of Connection, Knowledge and the Strengthening of Networks around me....

A completely new and ever-increasing circle of friends has arisen via my chosen Interest Groups and new interests have been stimulated by classes and workshops arising out of subscribing to various regular Workshops and Groups via the National and Regional u3a websites. The facility to learn from experts in their field via Internet Connection is impressive and local Interest Groups provide fun as well as learning. There is also the facility to give by sharing knowledge with fellow members and the informality of that leads to there being fun in the activities.

In conclusion I see the u3a being a route to improving my Personal Wellbeing by providing Connection, Being Active, Taking Notice, Continuing to Learn and by Giving. I recommend membership to all who fit the membership profile."

Sentiments many of us share!

Bob Batty – Newsletter Editor