

# u3a in Scotland

## Autumn Newsletter 2026

*October 2026 | learn, laugh, live*

### Editorial from the Chair

First of all, let me send my apologies that this is our first newsletter of the year. That doesn't mean we have been quiet though! We have had quite a busy year.

In March we held our annual in-person event in Pitlochry at The Pitlochry Festival Theatre. I think all who attended this event will agree that it was a great success. We had some really interesting speakers (thanks in particular to u3a members David Cunningham and Ray Leahey for their talks on Theatre Lighting and RRS Sir David Attenborough respectively). We were all very surprised at how popular the Pitlochry event was with all the tickets sold out on the second day. We are planning an exciting in-person event for next March - details are currently being finalised - and we will share details of that with you soon.

At our Summer Event back in June we showcased Online Across Scotland and mentioned many of the wonderful online groups we have. Visit our groups page here - <https://scotland.u3asite.uk/groups/> to find out more about these. We would love to add to these groups so if your u3a has any online groups that have space for members from all across Scotland please do let us know. Alternatively, you may have an idea to set up an online group and again we would be happy to talk to you to try and facilitate this.

We would also like to thank our member Mary Sandilands for talking to us about her career in June - her book - *Never Argue With A Matron: Adventures in Twentieth Century Nursing* is available on Amazon.

On the subject of groups, in October our Spanish For Improvers Group celebrated their 200th session!



Also, in October some members of the Laughter Yoga Group met for lunch in Glasgow. We had members from the Central Belt, the Borders and Orkney attending!

August was our biannual Summer School in Stirling - another successful event. As usual the summer school team managed to deliver six diverse topics and a great social experience - our thanks to all involved.

Finally I would like to remind all committees to let us know when they have a change of Chair, Treasurer or Secretary. This information is supplied to the Third Age Trust on their portal but we cannot access this and we would be grateful if you could keep us up to date

**Gail Donaldson**  
**Chair, u3a in Scotland**

## Autumn Zoom meeting • ▲

### Tuesday 3 November 2026

As advised previously our Autumn Event takes place on Zoom on Tuesday 3rd November 2026.

The subject of the Event is “Scotland’s heritage and traditions”

We have a very interesting programme and hope as many people as possible can attend. Everyone is welcome. The Zoom link is below the programme.

The programme is as follows

| Time             | Speaker or activity                                                 | Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.00 am         | Zoom Room Opens                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 10.15 am         | Welcome                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 10.20 am         | Carol Parry - Honorary Archivist - Trades House of Glasgow          | <p>The Trades House of Glasgow – its history and what it does today.</p> <p>The Trades House arose from disputes between the merchants and craftsmen in Glasgow during the late 16th century. This talk will explore the origins of the early guilds, their role both within the city and the Trades House, the founding of the Crafts Hospital and the building of Trades Hall, designed by Robert Adam and opened in 1794.</p> <p>The talk will conclude with the contribution given today by the Trades House and the individual crafts to the well-being and education of people living in the city</p>                |
| 11.10 am         | Carol Brown of Three Brethern u3a and Margaret Logan of Lanark u3a. | Carol volunteers at Abbotsford House and Margaret volunteers at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and they will share their volunteering experiences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 11.30 am         | Comfort Break                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 11.35 am         | Andy Arthur - Threadinburgh                                         | <p>Threadinburgh is the Edinburgh and Leith local history website of Andy Arthur. The aim of Threadinburgh is to find, to record and to tell the stories of our local history that are less well known, that are misunderstood or are just plain forgotten about. In this talk</p> <p>Andy will talk about the history of "Plain Breid", and the case for it being thought of as Scotland's real national food? Andy will also delve into the surprising legal circumstances that cause the loaf to evolve, become enshrined in law and then - for a long time at least - totally dominate the nation's dinner tables.</p> |
| 12.25 pm         | Sophie Hunter of New Lanark World Heritage Site                     | A Taster of the heritage site at New Lanark                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 12.40 - 12.45 pm | Finish                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Topic: Autumn member meeting  
Time: Nov 3, 2026 10:00 London  
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96992094842?pwd=KMGRGH0ogbbstpoDPXaHa2Tg6yz0btu.1>

Meeting ID: 969 9209 4842

Passcode: 652208

## **In this issue**

Council representatives and the u3a podcast • A visit to the House of Lords  
Introducing AI and AI in Scotland • Forthcoming AI events  
Discover Dumfries u3a • Trying something new in Fife • News from Nairn  
Perth celebrates 40 years • Inverness and Black Isle celebrates 25 years  
A September outing for Stewarty

## **Report from our Council representatives • ▲**

*Liz Ervine and George Cleland*

### **Our first year in post**

The big events were the Jamboree and the Workshop for Committee members, held in Stirling.

We hope to repeat both events in 2027 — dates and locations to follow

We have held a series of Zoom sessions covering a wide variety of topics from Copyright to finances and everything in-between.

We receive lots of queries and are very happy to support you wherever we can, sometimes by pointing you towards the appropriate Trust staff member.

Supporting new u3as is always very satisfying, though frustrating at times as the hoops to be jumped through seem to get a little more challenging. We are trying to work on that.

### **The future**

We plan more informative, chatty workshops on Zoom, another Jamboree, another face-to-face session for committee members, and whatever you suggest.

Both of us work closely with u3a in Scotland. We represent the Trust, but we are all working towards the same goal: taking the u3a movement forward. Both of us are on the u3a in Scotland Committee and welcome working together.

Membership of u3a in Scotland is at its highest, but there is plenty of room for more.

Our other challenge is being part of the Council and being a voice for Scotland.

Liz and George

### **Did you know there is a monthly u3a radio podcast**

Written and produced with u3a members, the monthly u3a podcast can be accessed on all podcast platforms. More information about the podcast and how to listen is available on the u3a website.

## A visit to the House of Lords • ▲

*Liz Irvine, Council Representative*

An early blustery start to London and the House of Lords this morning after a stormy weekend. All connections worked seamlessly, the rain stopped, the sun came out and onwards to the River Room in the HOL.

The launch of the u3a research document Retirement Rewired took place in the House of Lords River Room. It was hosted by Lord Norton of Louth and ably supported by Michael Payne, MP.

Pauline Green from the u3a Board chaired the proceedings and the Trust CEO Iain Cassidy added his words of insight into the u3a movement and its importance to the UK.

We had an opportunity to promote u3a to a number of invited guests. Michael was particularly fulsome in his praise for the volunteers (that's all of you) in the u3a movement.

Why is the publication important? It discusses the potential of building fulfilling lives beyond full time work through the u3a.

Many u3a members recoil from the word retirement. Some reject it outright. For them it is not a neutral description but a word loaded with assumptions, withdrawal, slowing down or stepping back

It can sound less like a new chapter and more like a closing statement.

The lives described in this research tell a very different story.

Retirement Rewired tells a story of positivity, life enhancement through learning and socialisation through the u3a. This includes learning, connections, activity and purpose.

It's a simple and positive read and embraces the responses of 10,000 interviewees from the u3a.

A very positive presentation of u3a and worth the journey!

For the full report follow this link: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/our-impact/u3a-impact-reports/retirement-rewired>

# Introducing AI and AI in Scotland



This was a National u3a event on Zoom that concentrated on what was happening in Scotland around AI with a great introduction by Alan Freedman and follow up from 4 speakers from Scottish u3as that were starting up AI groups in their areas. Alan Blue and Jenny Brogden are hoping to take some of this forward in Scotland.

The event was attended by over 400 members. If you would like further information, please contact Jenny Brogden – [u3ascotlandsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:u3ascotlandsecretary@gmail.com)

## AI newsletter

If you just wish to be kept informed about AI in the u3a then sign up to the newsletter. An AI Newsletter comes out about once a month and highlights forthcoming u3a AI events, new and interesting library additions and major industry announcement.

## **Forthcoming AI events**

**2 November 2026 at 2 pm**

### **AI for Everyone - Preparing for an AI World**

Discover what AI can do for you in this practical four-week course, from your first chatbot conversation to images, prompting and AI safety,

[Register Here](#)

**27 November 2026 at 10 am**

AI for Everyone - AI News: External Speaker: Ethical considerations of AI in Public Services – the need for a code of conduct.

[Register here](#)

**8 December 2026 at 10 am**

### **AI for Everyone - What does AI know about me? - An AI News Special**

[Click here to book](#)

## **Social Media Support Facebook Group**

Did you know that there is now a private Facebook group for anyone involved in social media for their u3a. You can join here:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/18vnAabyPn/>

## Discover Dumfries u3a proves a huge hit • ▲

*More than 120 visitors and nearly 40 interest groups*

More than 120 people packed into Dumfries Baptist Church Centre for Discover Dumfries u3a in September. The enthusiasm was so great that organisers ran out of membership forms!

Nearly 40 groups were represented, with many offering visitors the chance to have a go. Existing members discovered activities they had not yet tried, while potential members saw the range of interests, learning opportunities and friendships on offer.

Visitors praised the welcoming atmosphere, the organisation and the amazing variety of activities. All the groups reported interest, both from existing members looking for something new and from people who had just joined.

Kathleen Simpson, chair of Dumfries u3a, said: "We knew there was a lot of interest in what Dumfries u3a has to offer, but the response to Discover Dumfries u3a exceeded our expectations. Running out of membership forms was certainly a problem we were very happy to have!"

More than 40 people took away membership details, including information about the offer of 15 months' membership for the price of 12. The offer was extended: those joining under it will have membership through to the end of December 2027.

The organisers thanked Dumfries Baptist Church Centre and its staff for their support, and the Third Age Trust for the grant that made the event possible. They hope Discover Dumfries u3a will become a regular event.

To find out more, visit [dumfries.u3asite.uk](http://dumfries.u3asite.uk) or attend a monthly meeting, held on the first Thursday of each month from 2 pm at the Baptist Church Centre.



**The organising committee and the Ukulele Group at Discover Dumfries u3a.**

## Fife tries something new for u3a Week • ▲

During u3a Week 2026, Fife u3a posted daily suggestions on its website, each encouraging people to do something different and linking to an interest group page.

Members received a message the previous week, followed by reminders at the beginning and end of u3a Week. The invitation also reached a wider audience through two local newspapers and several Facebook noticeboards.

Early feedback suggests people took up the challenge. Some joined the Tai Chi Group, while members of Walk in the Park used their bus passes to venture beyond their usual territory.

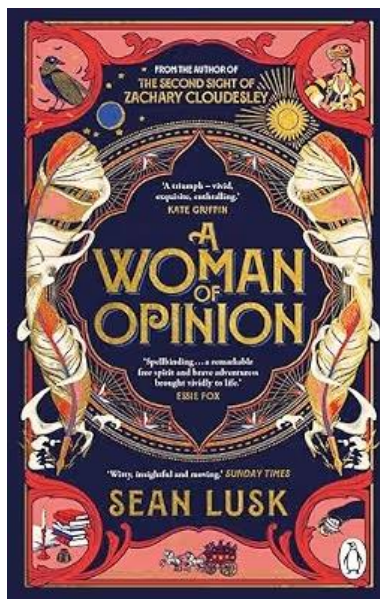
The final post encouraged people to “Learn something new every month”, inviting them to join Fife u3a for the 2026/27 session and come along to the monthly meetings.



**A gathering featured in Fife u3a's contribution.**

## Nairn welcomes writer Sean Lusk • ▲

Nairn u3a members recently enjoyed a fascinating talk by writer Sean Lusk on the amazing 18th century life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Subject of his 2025 Saltire Book of the Year Award-winning novel 'A Woman of Opinion', this semi-biographical story tells the tale of a pioneering aristocrat, poet, traveller, and feminist, most notable for introducing smallpox inoculation to Britain. Despite his busy schedule, Sean had time to take a 'selfie' with members and sign copies of his book.



Sean Lusk and his novel A Woman of Opinion.

## Perth u3a celebrates its 40th birthday • ▲

On Monday 4 May, after our AGM, we celebrated our 40th anniversary. We listened to a historical talk given by a former Chair, Robert Proctor, and a talk with sung musical illustrations given by Nicky Small of PlaidSong. Jon Babb, the newly elected Chair, gave votes of thanks to Robert and Nicky.

Following a break for a sandwich lunch, we enjoyed performances by our Ukulele group and by Semi-Tones (our rock/blues/pop group), a demonstration by our Tai Chi group, a play reading from our Armchair Theatre group, and Ceilidh Dancing with audience participation. Static displays included knitting projects, themed photographs and pieces of creative writing. All told, we celebrated the depth and breadth of Perth u3a group activities.

One of our long-standing members has written a history of Perth u3a. We're currently discussing how best to distribute it to the membership, and we'll also lodge it at Perth Archive and with the Local History department at Perth Library. If you'd like a copy, or would like to distribute it further, just let me know.

**Yvonne Connell, Secretary, Perth u3a**



**Perth's anniversary celebrations included talks, ukulele music, Semi-Tones and ceilidh dancing.**

## Inverness and Black Isle celebrates 25 years • ▲

### *An anniversary gathering at Inverness Town House*

Inverness and Black Isle u3a celebrated its 25th anniversary with a party at Inverness Town House. Since 2001, the organisation has offered classes and activity groups for retired and semi-retired people keen to develop their interests and enjoy company.

The celebration brought together many of those groups, with displays, flower arrangements, music, speeches and poetry. Performances included singing, accordion, piano and cello.

Bridge group leaders Ann and Tim Wickens highlighted opportunities to learn new skills and maintain social connections. During lockdown, online bridge had made a valuable difference to members who were otherwise spending long periods at home.

Daphne Taylor created a flower arrangement celebrating the bridge group. Having originally joined for walking, she now particularly enjoys the garden visits, which range from lunch and a nearby garden to full-day outings.

A working group shared the tasks of arranging displays, flowers, music, catering, the cake, invitations and bookings. The anniversary was a chance to celebrate what members have built together and look ahead to the future.

Inverness and Black Isle u3a welcomes people no longer in full-time employment. Those whose interests are not already represented can speak to the group co-ordinator about starting something new.



**Members and performers celebrate at Inverness Town House.**

## A sunny September Sunday for Stewarty • ▲

*A Palladian mansion and a favourite garden*

Kevin steered a particularly careful path, due to the cycling stage of the Crossmichael triathlon, into Ayrshire on a lovely autumn morning.

Reaching Auchinleck House near Ochiltree, we were welcomed by Landmark Trust staff to the house on its Open Doors Day.



**A visit to Auchinleck House on its Open Doors Day.**

We had a great guided tour with a local historian who described the long, and argumentative, history of the Boswell family on the Estate. The house was built in the 1750s by the 8th Laird, father of the renowned diarist James Boswell. It is a fine Palladian mansion set in lovely parkland containing a ruined castle, icehouse and 'Wallace's cave'. The house passed to a different line of the family around the turn of the 20th century, the furniture was removed and a slow decline into dereliction followed under various ownerships.

In 1986 the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust came to the rescue of this Category A house and emergency repairs were made. In 1999 it was sold to Landmark Trust who undertook a full restoration, incorporating modern utilities to make it suitable for its future purpose as a holiday let. The furnishings are period, but not original to the house, visitors can of course sit on the chairs, as they are not Chippendale!

Time to move to our second location, a return visit to the beautiful Queen Elizabeth Walled Garden at Dumfries House. After a bite to eat we wandered the grounds in warm sunshine and although the garden had an autumnal feel it offered ample opportunities for the amateur photographer.

If your u3a would like to be featured in future newsletters just send the information: to [u3ascotlandsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:u3ascotlandsecretary@gmail.com)