

# u3a in Scotland

Charity SCO30370

## Newsletter Spring 2021



Photo by East Renfrewshire u3a Gardening Group

Welcome to this spring 2021 edition of u3a in Scotland newsletter. I am sure everyone is looking forward to the months ahead when, hopefully the weather will be getting warmer and we can get out and about again and that it won't be too long before we can meet up.

U3a in Scotland committee have regularly held meetings on Zoom since September 2020 and the delayed AGM was held on Zoom in November.

If you are still not sure about Zoom, the Trust are still running tutorials for complete beginners and for those wanting a bit more advanced knowledge. Check out the website. I think some u3as will still be using it even after we can meet up.

Other online video conferencing platforms are available.

Editor

## **Cancellation of Summer School 2021**

It is with great regret that the u3a in Scotland Committee, after consultation with Stirling University, announces the cancellation of the Summer School 2021 because of continuing uncertainties about Covid-19 and government restrictions. We are planning to hold a postponed Summer School from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at the Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling University.

For participants who booked for the Summer School 2021, we offer a full refund of any monies paid or a transfer of the booking to the Summer School 2022. You will receive an email to ask for your preference.

Further details will be posted on the U3A in Scotland website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/> as soon as available.

If you have any queries, please email Susan Tester:  
[u3ascotlandsummerschool@gmail.com](mailto:u3ascotlandsummerschool@gmail.com).

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## **Spams and Scams**

Many of you will be aware that a couple of u3as have been scammed in recent months.

I recently received an email, allegedly from someone who belongs to one of our u3as and who had occasion to contact me some while back. It seemed a rather strange email and was asking me to engage in something secretive.

I'm a naturally suspicious person (all those years working in the Civil Service have left their mark) so I did not hit the "reply" button but sent the person a fresh email in response. They did not reply but I have since had someone else confirm that the member had had their email hacked and other people had strange emails too.

Please, always, check before replying to an email out of the blue from someone you vaguely know or have had dealings with in the past.

Of course, it could be someone you know better and wouldn't think twice about replying to, but if anything seems odd about their request or what they seem to be saying, don't hit the reply button. Contact them in a new email or, better still, phone them.

If you hit the reply button, you too could get hacked.

The same applies to phone calls that come out of the blue.

Editor

## Scottish Trustee Report April 2021

2021 has been a busy year so far.

Newly appointed Trust Volunteers have just completed a **telephone survey** of all Scottish u3as. The picture emerging is very mixed. Many u3as are coping remarkably well with lock down; interest groups are taking place online, newsletters and bulletins are going out and phone calls are being made. They are doing everything they can to keep their members busy and informed. Others, mostly small and remote u3as are not doing so well. Their membership is ageing and often not happy to engage with technology, but my feeling is that when Covid restrictions go, they will be very happy to get back to face to face groups.

The volunteers who made these calls said that it was a very enjoyable experience. The committee members they talked to were very pleased to receive the call and have the chance to talk about how their u3as were coping.

Some of the contact phone numbers we have on record are no longer up to date. Please, let the Trust know if there have been changes in the office bearers, especially the chairperson.

The Trust recognises the need for a **Retention and Recruitment** drive to make sure that the u3a movement remains dynamic. Paul Martinez, a Trust Volunteer and chair of that group and his team have developed a Tool Kit full of useful resources to help u3as retain members and recruit new members. One of these tools is on how to recruit committee members. This is a problem that many u3as have. This Tool Kit can be found on the Trust web site under Resources.

**Online Across Scotland** now has well over 20 interest groups running. Language groups seem to be the most popular and some are already full but there are still plenty of spaces available in other groups. Why not give "Coding Cafe" or Archaeology a go? This network is open to all Scottish u3a members at no extra cost.

I expect Online Across Scotland to continue even after Covid restrictions are lifted. Members are enjoying meeting people from all across Scotland and the rich environment of sharing ideas and thoughts and learning together.

**Professor, Sir Tom Devine\*** is going to give a talk on his “Perspective on the Clearances” on the 22 of April at 2:00pm. Put the date in your diary. You will find the direct link to the talk on the Online Across Scotland website - [u3aonlineacrossscotland](http://u3aonlineacrossscotland.com).

**The Action Project** in partnership with the David Hume Institute went very well. One hundred and thirty three u3a members took part in conversations around how to create a fairer Scotland. The David Hume Institute researchers found the u3a members’ insights incredibly valuable. There were 17 u3a hosted conversations and 170 specific actions and calls for change which have become a key part of the project’s findings.

**The Central Belt Network** goes from strength to strength. There are now 27 u3as taking part in regular online meetings. They exchange information and ideas and offer one another support. Ros Holmes and Viv O’Duffy are doing a great job chairing the meetings. My thanks go out to them.

Central Belt network and members of the u3a in Scotland network have taken part in meetings with networks from all over the UK. These meetings have been organised by Hilary Jones, the Vice Chair of the Trust. The objective is to share information.

**I have spoken** online to Bearsden Rotary Club, the Borders Arthritis Awareness Society and Penicuik u3a. I enjoyed these meetings very much and was impressed by the lively question and answer sessions.

The Trust have asked me to form a **Trustee Support Group** to help with the work that needs to be done on raising awareness of the u3a Movement and recruitment and retention. We now have a PR coordinator, a Research and Shared Learning coordinator, Sandra Cairncross from Pitlochry u3a ([smcairnx@hotmail.com](mailto:smcairnx@hotmail.com)), and a team of committed people who want to see the u3a thrive in the years to come.

If you would like to be part of this team please let me know.

**U3a Day** will take place on the 2nd of June 2021. It will probably be more subdued in Scotland because we are slower to come out of lock down and a bit more cautious. There are lots of ideas about what you can do on the

u3a:Keeping in Touch Facebook page. Some u3as are going to have their u3a day later and that is fine. There are u3a Day grants available from the Trust.

Do contact me with any questions you may have on [ann.keating@u3a.org.uk](mailto:ann.keating@u3a.org.uk).

*Ann Keating*  
*Scottish Trustee*

\*Editors note - I first came across the name, Tom Devine, when I spent 10 days in the company of his father on a trip to Oberammergau in 2000. At the time I thought he was just like any other proud boastful parent but the intervening years have shown that he had plenty to be proud and boastful about. I was aware that he wrote for The Herald, formerly the Glasgow Herald, but was not conversant of the full extent of his achievements until I checked out his Wikipedia entry.

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Photo by East Renfrewshire u3a Gardening Group

## Interu3a quiz

Do you have a quiz team or members who enjoy quizzing?

Join us for the Interu3a quiz on the last Wednesday of every month at 7pm on Zoom. Our next quiz is **28<sup>th</sup> April 2021**.

The quiz is organised and run by Linda and Ian Matheson. Ian has extensive experience of running quizzes for local groups and charities. He also constructs a cryptic quiz monthly for his charity.

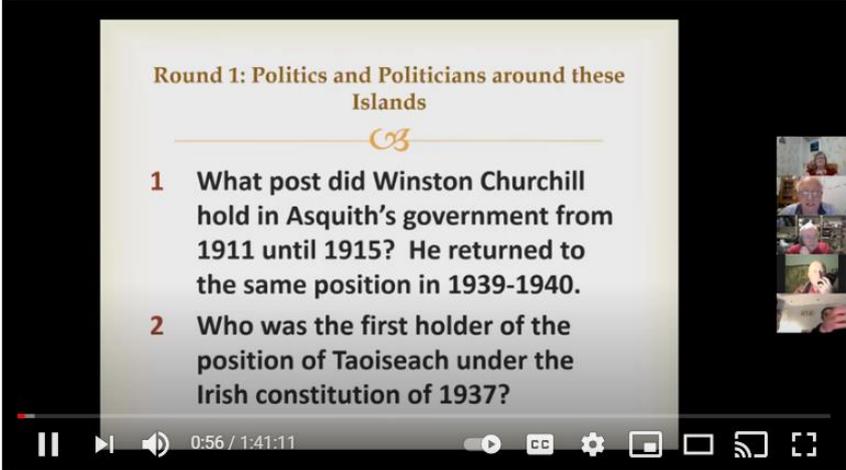
The quiz has six rounds of ten questions with an assortment of themes, including music and picture rounds.

Each team can have up to four members. How they communicate to debate answers depends on their devices; some form a WhatsApp group and video call during the quiz, others use Zoom private chat and some use a Facebook group chat. The team marks their own answer sheets and the team leader sends Linda their score by Zoom private chat and she keeps a running total.

Teams from England, Scotland and NI take part regularly.

To enter please complete the [entry form](#) and send to [virtualayru3a@gmail.com](mailto:virtualayru3a@gmail.com)

Earlier quizzes can be viewed on [YouTube Ayr U3A](#)



Round 1: Politics and Politicians around these Islands

1 What post did Winston Churchill hold in Asquith's government from 1911 until 1915? He returned to the same position in 1939-1940.

2 Who was the first holder of the position of Taoiseach under the Irish constitution of 1937?

January Interu3a quiz

*Linda Matheson, Ayr u3a*

## Online Across Scotland u3a

I don't know about you, but much as I enjoy social interaction, I have also enjoyed less travel to engage in such activity since moving online. I have joined more u3a groups because, to attend a two-hour session, I do not need to travel 30+ minutes to get to that session.

I am also lucky in that I am able bodied and have a car, and I have no caring responsibilities so can fully participate in the u3a. What about those people of retirement age who are not so fortunate? They are unable to join in.

Going online for the last year is something many u3a groups have embraced fully, others just a few groups and some not at all. But it has definitely changed the viewpoint of many of us that, there is a place for online activities even once we can all meet face to face safely again.

As a result of these likeminded people talking together, a new u3a has been formed, Online Across Scotland (OASu3a). The purpose of this group is to offer ongoing groups, time limited courses, social opportunities, and collaboration between members of the u3a across Scotland with a particular regard to those living in remote areas and those with restricted mobility, disability or caring responsibilities who cannot access face to face meetings, through various forms of video conferencing facilities such as Zoom. Membership of OASu3a is open to all members in Scotland of any local u3a or of the Trust u3a. Maybe you have a group struggling to attract sufficient numbers to run effectively – this may be the solution!

We already have over 20 groups. I have joined 'Laughter Exercise' and hope to join classes on the 'Climate Emergency' and 'Coding', and have offered to hold a 'Coffee and Canasta' group. Check out our website.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/onlineacrossscotland/home>



OAS Post-beginner French Group – Screenshot by Anne Walsh

*Linda Matheson, Online Across Scotland u3a*

ABERDEEN u3a 2020  
'LOCKDOWN' PANTOMIME



In 2019, a group of us performed a pantomime in front of a living, breathing audience. In 2020, there was no chance of that, so we produced a 'Zoom' pantomime instead. It was a steep learning curve, adapting the spectacle of a pantomime to the dimensions of a computer screen and the limitations of a 40 minute Zoom session!

There were a couple of hurdles to overcome, the first being, the form a Zoom pantomime might take. This was solved by making the players 'talking heads'.

Next came the choice of a pantomime. We solved that by doing all of them! Each performer assumed the role of a main pantomime character who finds him/herself out on a limb during lockdown. It went like this:

- Cinderella is isolated at home with one glass slipper (size 3½),
- Sleeping Beauty is worried about getting her Covid 19 vaccination as the Good Fairy has told her to avoid needles,
- The two ends of the Pantomime Horse can't get away from each other And squabble all the time (shades of Jean-Paul Sartre),

- Puss-in-Boots is OK as he has a fat-cat pension and cats are naturally solitary,
- The Giant at the top of the beanstalk can't get a supermarket delivery because of his postcode,
- Aladdin has the genii on furlough in his attic,
- Snow White is at the beck and call of seven small men - no change there then!
- Dick Whittington is a bit of a big head and doesn't have a cat,
- The characters are introduced by a Narrator who is at loggerheads with the Director.

After months of rehearsal, we did it! The Zoom recording was made available to Aberdeen u3a members and has been seen by over 150 people. We are just about to go into rehearsal for the 2021 pantomime which will be something of a hybrid. It will be recorded on Zoom but will be in a form that easily translates to a live performance. Watch this space!

*Tina Stockman, Group Leader, Aberdeen u3atricals*

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Photo by East Renfrewshire u3a Gardening Group

## Shared Learning Project: Postal Pensioners



A group of 19 u3a volunteers from across Scotland has been working alongside volunteers from England and Northern Ireland on a shared learning project lead by a team of researchers at King's College London. This is part of a wider project **Addressing Health**, funded by the Wellcome Trust that looks at postal workers' health in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The team from Scotland have been focusing on 40 postal pensioners from 1901 – that is postal workers in Scotland who retired early on health grounds.

The u3a volunteers come from Bearsden & Milngavie, Cupar, Fife, Forfar, Inverness & Black Isle, Lanark, Pitlochry, Stewartry, West Galloway and West Lothian u3as.

The postal workers include postmasters and postmistresses, postmen, sorting clerks and telegraphists and one Inspector of Postmen and Telegraph Messengers who, like the u3a volunteers, worked and lived in areas of Scotland - Highlands, Islands, Lowlands, Central Belt - with some based in towns and cities and others in smaller villages and crofting communities.

Volunteers started last autumn by searching for the death certificates of their pensioners and then went on to build up a life story - when and

where the postal pensioner was born, marriage details (if any) and then tracking their pensioner through the censuses. Findings will be fed into a database for others to draw upon.

The project is now in its final stages with the remaining volunteers (a few left at the end of the last stage due to other commitments) embarking on a four week course, exploring medical history led by a researcher from King's College London, before writing up blogs on their pensioners.

Regular meetings have been held throughout and a range of seminars offered to volunteers. More experienced family historians have led skills sharing sessions for those newer to family history research. In addition, volunteers have developed a range of skills which will help in our family history searches.

Volunteers have become quite attached to "their" pensioners with some exploring other aspects of their lives in more details.



*Sandra Cairncross  
Scotland Co-ordinator Postal Pensioners Shared Learning Project*

## **A year in the Life of East Renfrewshire u3a**

Suddenly in March 2020 we found our monthly meeting cancelled and a week later the country was put into lockdown. So - what to do? Our first response was to keep in touch with all our members by email and, for those not on email, by phone, making sure that no-one felt isolated and ensuring that they all had support, either through family, friends or our u3a.

By the end of March, we had started on our first initiative idea with an online group called Nature Watch. Members of the group were asked to submit, either photos or observations on the topic 'Signs of spring', whilst out on their daily walk and send them to the group leader who collated them into a newsletter to share with the others. This proved very successful and continues today with a view to going out on real nature study walks eventually.

For a few weeks we relaxed and enjoyed the lovely weather, then we discovered Zoom and life changed forever! Our Committee sprang into action encouraging group leaders to meet using this new form of technology and giving assistance to members on how to download and use the medium. By July we were ready to launch our first monthly meeting on Zoom and in August held our AGM virtually.

Meantime, with restrictions somewhat relaxed, our outdoor groups were able to meet socially distanced and our Hands on Gardening Group continued their project in the Peace Garden in Barshaw Park, Paisley.



Through the autumn, monthly meetings continued with some really good speakers and with winter looming many of our members stepped up and started new groups on Zoom. Most of these were mainly social groups and included Cuppa@11, Wine Buddies, a bingo group called Eyes Down, Club 7:30 – an evening discussion group – and the very popular ‘Sing with John’!

We had a very enjoyable Christmas party with a magician as our guest, then New Year heralded the news of vaccines and the talk turned to who had ‘got their date’! Now we are at the stage with most of us having had their first vaccine, and now looking forward to their second, and hopefully to meeting in ‘3D’. It has certainly been a year of hard work and pulling together, of adapting and being innovative and of a determination to keep positive.

We have learned a lot – a new expertise in Zoom! We have laughed a lot – the humour particularly through the sharing on our Facebook page – and we are still alive and kicking, having discovered that you can make friends on Zoom.

*Marbe McNeill, vice-chair East Renfrewshire u3a*

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### **Facebook Page – u3as based in Scotland**

The page has now over 100 members from the Borders to Orkney. There are only 2-3 questions; to which u3a do you belong, do you agree to abide by the rules and if you are a Trust u3a member, where do you live? The third question is really only for those who are members of Trust u3a only and not as well as a Scottish based one. There are about 5 outstanding application from people who have not answered that one very important question – which u3a. Some have been rejected because they are obviously not u3a members and came across the page because of a friend or in a search. I don’t like rejecting people who are possibly u3a members so if you have applied and haven’t been accepted, have another look at your application. You might have forgotten to answer the key question. I’m sure you can go in and amend your answers or try reapplying.

Other u3a Facebook pages: u3a:Keeping in Touch, u3a Day, Craft u3a, u3a Gardening Group. There are possibly others for those with other interests. Your u3a may have its own page – mine does.

I resisted Facebook for a long time but because of something I was trying to do, I gave in and joined in November 2019. It is one of the things that has kept me sane over the past 13 months – and hopefully the next however many, until we can get meeting again in a normal way.

*Anne Walsh, Editor and Admin of u3as based in Scotland*

**Dates for your diary:**

All Scotland Assembly, Online – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 2.00pm. One member per u3a. If your u3a has not yet booked a place contact - [vicechairu3ascotland@gmail.com](mailto:vicechairu3ascotland@gmail.com)

Speakers – Beryl Shepherd, a Trust Volunteer and a member of the Trust’s Finance team and Jane Bailey, Advice and Volunteer Manager, on Data Protection and Amber Reid from Royal Bank of Scotland on current scams. Live Transcript will be available.

U3a in Scotland AGM, Online – Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> June t.b.c.

New committee members are needed. Nomination forms will be going out soon to be received by 20<sup>th</sup> May, 28 days before the AGM. You need not be on your own u3a’s committee to serve on the committee of u3a in Scotland.

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Thank you to all those who sent articles on behalf of their u3a and those individuals who sent items on subjects that will be of interest to all members.

Many thanks to Susan Tester for proof reading.

Please, send items for the next newsletter by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to [newsletter.u3ainscotland@gmail.com](mailto:newsletter.u3ainscotland@gmail.com)



Photo by Irene McCrystal, West Lothian u3a