



Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter



October 2026

Editor – John Giovanacci



publicity@falkirku3a.uk

FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

A very warm welcome to the October 2026 edition of the Falkirk and District u3a Newsletter. We do hope you enjoy the various items in this month's Newsletter.

I would like to thank Jacqueline Balfour for her very interesting talk at the recent Open Meeting on the Blooming Bairns in Falkirk. What a tremendous job the Blooming Bairns are doing in and around Falkirk improving the appearance of the town. I am sure you will agree with me that they have achieved a lot in the last two years with their small but growing army of volunteers.

At our recent Open Meeting I informed those present that Jim Hanmer will be stepping down as Treasurer at next year's AGM. Toni Smillie has kindly agreed to take on the role of Treasurer, but this does mean that she will no longer be able to undertake the Membership Secretary role. Anyone interested in becoming Membership Secretary should talk to any of the trustees about taking on the role. Please be assured that there will be plenty of support for becoming Membership Secretary.

You will also have received an email from me regarding emergency contact details. The email included a link to a simple form which allowed you to provide contact details. I would like to stress that completion of the form is in no way compulsory. I would also like to emphasise that all details you provide on the form will remain private and confidential. The trustee believe that it is important to have emergency contact details in case someone falls ill at an Open Meeting or a group activity and there is a need to contact a family member or someone else in a hurry.

I was doing my normal search of the main u3a website to see if there were any features that may be of interest to Falkirk and District u3a members, when I came across u3a sources (<https://sources.u3a.org.uk/>). The u3a headlines these as 'the u3a blog dedicated to sharing, inspiring and learning.' There are a fascinating and varied range of blogs on the u3a website, spanning over 43 pages. For example, members may find the following blog interesting which is on page 2: 'Joyspan: A new perspective on living longer and fulfilled lives.' However, the one that really caught my attention and may be of interest to the Science Matters Group is 'Dark Energy and the Hubble Tension' in which 'Arnold u3a member Brian shares a proposed solution to the cosmological mysteries of Dark Energy and the Hubble Tension.' I think you will find exploring the source pages most rewarding.

May I wish you a good, warm and safe October and November and I look forward to seeing you at the Open Meeting on Tuesday, 3rd November 2026.

Peter Kahan

A mindfulness thought

'Now is the only reality. All else is either memory or imagination.'

Osho

Interest Group Section

Update - October 2026

(By Dorothy Ferrie – Groups' Coordinator)

As this is the first Newsletter after the Registration Meeting, I thought it would be a good time to give you an update on Interest Groups, and the information below is generally what I have already said at the October Open Meeting.

Group Numbers

There are currently 21 interest groups, and you can see the details of each of them on our website, including when and where the group is on and how to contact the organiser.

Existing Groups

Many of the well-established groups are still popular, such as the coffee morning, lunch and dinner clubs, film club, theatre group, current affairs, photography, and also the walking group.

Relatively new groups such as the cinema group, craft group, and ten pin bowling group are also going strong.

The Construction and the Built Environment group is now up and running. It has 7 members and a list of topics to investigate.

New Groups

Table Tennis: Jan has now set up a table tennis group which will meet on the first Monday of the month at Grangemouth Sports Complex, and you'll find details of the group on the website.

A Multi-sports Group was advertised at the registration meeting and is still to appear on the website. This group would not meet on a regular basis. If you sign up, Jan will simply send occasional emails inviting you to come along and try out various sports or activities. The idea has been trialled on an informal basis, and some members have tried archery and axe-throwing. An escape room experience is also being planned.

Role of the Committee

It's the role of u3a committees to encourage the formation of as many interest groups as possible, covering as wide a variety of activities as possible, but we can only offer groups that members of our u3a volunteer to organise. Getting organisers is often a problem

Groups needing an organiser:

Family History: This is a long-standing and popular group which was led by Louise Westall, who has now stood down.

Peter Kahan is part of this group and has kindly offered to organise the meetings, but on the understanding that the other members of the group take turns in leading the meetings, which they are happy to do.

Local History: This is another well-established and popular group which was most recently organised by Jennifer Kightley, who has now stepped down. I've contacted the people who signed up at the registration meeting to see if any of them would be prepared to be the organiser and, if not, whether they would be happy simply to work together to reach a consensus on what they want to investigate/visit. Feedback so far indicates that they would be prepared to work together.

Board and Card Games Group: We're trying to get this group up and running as quite a few people have shown an interest in it and 9 people signed up at the registration meeting. At the moment we don't have an organiser but are hopeful that this might be resolved soon. I'll be in touch shortly with those who signed up to let you know what is happening.

There are, of course, many good reasons why members are unable to take on the role of organiser, but this a good example of how difficult it can be to get a group going, even when there is an interest in it.

Litter Picking: We no longer have a litter-picking group, but the website advises those are interested in litter-picking or in creating planting and floral displays in Falkirk town centre to contact the Blooming Bairns. Contact details are given on the website.

Waiting lists

One or two groups have waiting lists. We encourage group organisers to try to include as many people as possible in their groups, and where there are a few people on a waiting list, to help them to set up a second group.

Contact: Remember you can always contact me at: groups@falkirku3a.uk, or you can speak to me at an Open Meeting.

Poetry Group

(By Annette Lester)

The Group were asked to find poems on the topic of "water" for our first meeting of the new session. We were also invited to compose a poem ourselves, if we wanted to, and a few of us did.

We have decided to share the poem below with you because we thought it had a timeless appeal. We would, however, also recommend that you have a look at the other poems listed below, which were read, discussed and enjoyed at our meeting.

Historical and Social Context - John Clare (1793–1864), was born into a poor, working-class family. He was known as the "peasant poet," and wrote during the early 19th century, a period when rural communities in England were experiencing the effects of the agricultural and industrial revolutions. Clare's poetry often reflects the simplicity and beauty of rural life, emphasising a close connection to nature and the rhythms of village life. "*Sunday Dip*" portrays a common leisure activity for working-class children: bathing in local ponds on Sundays, the only day of rest from labour, highlighting both social customs and the innocence of childhood.

Sunday Dip

By John Clare

The morning road is thronged with merry boys
Who seek the water for their Sunday joys;
They run to seek the shallow pit, and wade
And dance about the water in the shade.
The boldest ventures first and dashes in,
And others go and follow to the chin,
And duck about, and try to lose their fears,
And laugh to hear the thunder in their ears.
They bundle up the rushes for a boat
And try across the deepest place to float:
Beneath the willow trees they ride and stoop—
The awkward load will scarcely bear them up.
Without their aid the others float away,
And play about the water half the day.

Other Poems from the meeting, which you can find on-line:

Sea Fever by **John Masefield** (Presented by Doreen, whose father was a sea captain).

You'll definitely have heard this one, which begins "I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and sky"

By The North Sea by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (Presented by Annette)

Inversnaid by **Gerard Manley Hopkins** (Presented by Janice)

Water by **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (Presented by Jennifer)

Water Flows by **Margaret Atwood** (Presented by Jennifer)

Once by the Pacific by **Robert Frost** (Presented by Dorothy)

The Old Men Admiring Themselves in the Water by **W B Yeats** (Presented by Dorothy)

This short poem was so depressing, we all just burst out laughing!

Scrabble Club

How did you get on finding the meanings of the two letter words in the September 2026 edition of the Newsletter? Well, I hope, but in case you did not have time to do it, the answers (according to the Collins English online Dictionary) are shown below.

aa - a volcanic rock consisting of angular blocks of lava with a very rough surface

ef - Enhanced Fujita (scale)

ka - (in ancient Egypt) an attendant spirit supposedly dwelling as a vital force in a person or statue

ow - an exclamation of pain

xu - a monetary unit of Vietnam worth one hundredth of a đồng

Your next word challenge

Here are a couple of questions for you to try.

Which word means the fear of spiders?

1. Hydrophobia
2. Acrophobia
3. Arachnophobia
4. Claustrophobia

What does the word 'ubiquitous' mean?

1. Rare
2. Infrequent
3. Omnipresent
4. Uncommon

Answers in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Maths Teasers

(By Peter Kahan)

How did you find the two maths teasers in the September 2026 Newsletter? Straightforward or somewhat tricky? Don't worry if you were not able to solve them as the questions and their solutions are shown below.

Question 1

Is the next number (?) in the sequence of numbers shown below a) 97, b) 92, c) 102 or d) 99?

$$2, 6, 15, 31, 56, ?$$

Solution

The trick to solving this type of problem is to identify the relationship between the differences between consecutive numbers, so let's look at the difference first.

$$6 - 2 = 4, 15 - 6 = 9, 31 - 15 = 16, \text{ and } 56 - 31 = 25$$

But

$$4 = 2^2, 9 = 3^2, 16 = 4^2 \text{ and } 25 = 5^2$$

Following the logic of this sequence the next number should be $36 = 6^2$

Thus, the next number in the sequence will be $56 + 36 = \mathbf{92}$ or *answer b*

Question 2

Simplify the following expression:

$$\sqrt{\frac{50}{2}} \div \frac{5}{6}$$

Solution

This is quite a challenging simplification and involves the dreaded surds. Let's start with the surd part.

$$\sqrt{\frac{50}{2}} = \sqrt{\frac{25 \times 2}{2}} = \frac{\sqrt{25} \times \sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{2}} = \frac{5 \times \sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{2}} = 5$$

So the fraction simplifies to $5 \div \frac{5}{6} = 5 \times \frac{6}{5} = \mathbf{6}$

October Math Teasers

Here are two maths teasers for you to try over October/November.

Question 1

Solve the following equation

$$\sqrt{16x} + \sqrt{9} - \sqrt{9x} = \sqrt{49}$$

Question 2 (taken from the Qualifications Scotland 2026 National Qualification 5 Mathematics non-calculator paper).

An electric car shows that it has enough charge remaining in its battery to travel 180 miles. The battery has 60% of its charge remaining. Calculate the number of miles the car can travel when the battery is fully charged.

The Older People's Network (OPN)

(By Jennifer Kightley)

The OPN is probably best known to the wider public for its annual Older People's Day which takes place at the beginning of November. Each organisation, for example Age Scotland, Cycling Without Age, u3a, has a stand where the public can meet representatives of the various groups and find out more about available services and activities in the Falkirk area.

This year's Older People's Day will take place on Wednesday 4th November in the Braveheart Room at the Howgate 10.00 am - 2.00 pm

When I first came to live in Scotland I found this event helped me to find my way around the various services and opportunities available in the area. In fact, it's where I first came across the u3a. I would strongly recommend a visit if you are keen to discover more about what's going on for OPs in and around Falkirk.

What The OPN Is

"Established in 2018, Falkirk District OPN brings together older people and representatives from older people's groups to discuss issues that matter, share knowledge and experience, and work collectively for positive change. The Network provides a welcoming, inclusive space for conversation, learning and connection:"

(from the CVS Falkirk [website](#). The OPN works in partnership with CVS Falkirk).

The Network also holds quarterly, in-person meetings where representatives of these various organisations can:

- Listen to talks given by experts in fields such as fire prevention in the home, exercise for seniors, NHS Health and Care Strategy for Forth Valley
- Give mini presentations about their own group's work
- Informally meet and chat with other attendees.

Although the quarterly sessions are especially useful for representatives any interested person is welcome to attend and participate.

Below you will find links which will give you a much fuller picture of the work and the range of activities covered by the network.

<https://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk/voice-of-the-sector/falkirk-district-older-peoples-network/>

<https://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk/the-older-peoples-network-re-joins-cvs-falkirk-districts-networks-forums/>

<https://www.facebook.com/falkirkopn/posts/it-is-on-the-highly-successful-falkirk-older-peoples-day-will-be-back-again-this/1080097937963827/>

<https://www.cvsfalkirk.org.uk/voice-of-the-sector/falkirk-district-older-peoples-network/>