

CHIT-CHAT

u3a
East Renfrewshire

THE NEWSLETTER OF
[EAST RENFREWSHIRE U3A](#)
SCOTTISH CHARITY No. SC044004

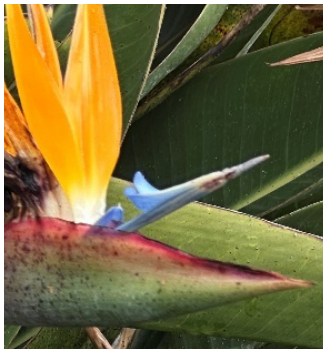
No. 151

January 2026

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ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE?



Does this bite or does it sting? You may find an explanation in *Picture Gallery*, or maybe not.

NOW HOW DO I GET DOWN?

Also in *Picture Gallery*, you can find out where this chap on the very uncomfortable perch can be found.



CHAT LINE

Chit-Chat needs readers to keep sending in pictures, anecdotes, funny stuff etc. You can send it to me at chit-chat@eru3a.org, or post it on the [ERu3a](#) page in Facebook.

MAKE CONTACT

Use the link incorporated in the *Chit-Chat* heading to access our website. By using the links in the [Contacts](#) section of the website you can access any of the post-holders listed there. Safe links to other websites may also appear in *Chit-Chat*.

The interest groups featured in *Groups* are just a few of those now available. They are all listed alphabetically in the [Groups](#) Section of the website. Facilitators can be contacted by clicking on the links incorporated in all the group headings.

If you don't have access to the Internet, phone 0743 712 3921 for information about groups etc.

Jim Hamilton

THE BIZ

FEBRUARY MEETING

The next meeting at Broom Parish Church on 18th February will begin with a Special General Meeting to approve the resolution that the name of the 'East Renfrewshire University of the Third Age' in the Constitution will be changed to: 'East Renfrewshire u3a', thereby bringing it line with how the charity operates. It will validate the vote held on 18th November 2025.

Guest speaker Alison Hepburn's topic will be Glasgow Street Aid, a small Scottish charity through which clinicians and first responders voluntarily provide medical and welfare assistance in Glasgow city centre at nights and over weekends.

THE BUZZ

U3A MATTERS

Thanks to the more than two hundred members who replied saying that they no longer wish to receive a paper copy of the *u3a Matters Magazine*, which is issued five times per year, but were instead happy to read the online version. As the postage has recently been increased to £4.50pp, this equates to a cost saving of nearly £1,000 for East Renfrewshire u3a and it is more environmentally friendly too.

If you have a story for the u3aMatters magazine, this can be submitted online <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/u3a-matters/submit-your-stories/submit-your-stories-form>. The 2026 magazine deadline and publication dates are shown below.

Edition	Copy Deadline	Publication Date
April	1 st December	15 th February
June	1 st February	15 th April
September	1 st July	15 th September
November	1 st September	15 th November

The editors are working on producing more accessible screen-reader versions of the magazine in consultation with some members, and will continue to develop these further as we gain more feedback to improve the user experience for screen-reader users.

JAMBOREE NEWS

Music, games, and crafting sessions bring joyful creativity throughout the day.

Creativity was at the heart of the Jamboree, with sessions in music, crafts and games proving hugely popular.



Val Davis inspired members in her hands-on *Crochet for Beginners* workshops, while **Mary Fyfe's** *Mock Stained Glass* and **Janet Barnes' Art Taster** sessions filled quickly.

Games enthusiasts enjoyed *exploring board games* with **Rod Ferrier**, while **Harvey Harris** introduced many to the joys of *Backgammon*.

Music added energy throughout the day: **Paisley u3a's** *Singing for the Fun of It* reminded everyone that singing is good for the soul, while **Michelle Rudd** invited attendees to *Come and Sing a Pop Group* in the Chapel. Members also enjoyed a *Concert* featuring u3a musical groups, and **Iain Carver's Ukulele taster sessions** brought smiles and strumming to eager beginners.

Three of our members were mentioned in the U3A Scotland Jamboree newsletter. Val was amused to see that her Crochet group was described as Croquet!



U3A SUMMER SCHOOL

Booking for the u3a Scotland Summer School 2026 is now open. It runs from Monday 24th to Wednesday 26th August 2026 at the Stirling Court Hotel, University of Stirling, Airthrey Road, Stirling, FK9. Courses available this year are:-

The Picts

This course will be a series of illustrated talks covering the history and archaeology relating to the Picts, the native people of the Highlands of Scotland in the first millennium CE.

We will look at their origins and the historical sources that are available to Pictish Studies, and what they tell us. Particularly in recent years, archaeology has filled in a lot of the blanks in the historical record and we will look at the most significant excavations and their findings.

Topics covered will include ethnicity, art, religion, language, material culture, genetics, warfare, burial practices and the Picts' ultimate fate as a people.

I studied archaeology at London University's Institute of Archaeology in the early 1970s but had a working career with a leading bank (but not as a banker). Since retirement in 2007, I have been a director, employee, volunteer and trustee of Groam House Museum in Rosemarkie, Black Isle which cares for a unique collection of fine Pictish sculpture as well as the archive of artist and art teacher George Bain (1881-1968), a leading 'influencer' in the Celtic Art Revival of the 19/20th centuries.

Positive Psychology (only 2 places left)

Have you ever become engrossed in something, emerged after half an hour, only to discover that it has actually been two hours – which have been hugely productive, and you have experienced a great sense of enjoyment and satisfaction?

This is FLOW – one of many positive emotions, states or situations we will study on this course; not just to understand them, but how to identify, manage and develop them. Positive Psychology is the study and practice of understanding and improving one's sense of Subjective Well-Being (SWB). Sometime referred to (erroneously I feel) as 'Happiness'. Cue for discussion...

We will study the emergence of Positive Psychology in the 1990s, as a counter to earlier psychoanalytical approaches which addressed troubled or depressed mental states. Frameworks for modelling and measuring SWB will be briefly discussed, but the focus of the course will be to study – and practise – aspects of Positive Psychology to improve our SWB. These include but are not limited to: empathy and compassion – especially self-compassion; gratitude; flow; mindfulness and meditation; and positive relationships. We will also study aspects of resilience – adapting and coping in the face of adversity, tragedy, threats, or stress.

We will touch on how our physiology impacts our emotions – exercise; breathing and relaxation; the vagus nerve; and gut health.

The course includes a mix of short lectures, videos, group discussion and exercises. Some of the discussion might become a little personal, so come prepared to leave your ego behind!

Course Leader, George Cleland is a former Chair of Edinburgh u3a and is currently a u3a Council Representative for Scotland. As well as Positive Psychology, he leads Qi Gong and Philosophy of Sciences Groups. With a PhD in Nuclear Physics, he was originally sceptical about the scientific basis of psychology. Eight years of study, however, have turned him into an enthusiastic advocate, both for the intellectual challenge, and the life-changing practices.

Introduction to Sign Language with Stephen Balmer

This course introduces British Sign Language to members who have done either no Sign Language or a little Sign Language.

Topics covered will include the following:

- The letters of the alphabet (known as 'fingerspelling'), numbers and colours.
- How the signs relate to their meanings which makes them easier to remember.
- How the language is holistic: although we'll focus on our hands, we'll learn and practise the role of lips, facial expressions, gestures and body language.
- How to ask and answer each other's questions.
- How to sign a little about ourselves.
- The order of signs in a sentence.

The pace will be slow and methodical with lots of repetition. We'll be sitting down throughout.

Participants should end the course knowing if Sign Language is interesting, if it can be fun and, importantly, if it is for them. Of all the things we can learn as u3a members, Sign Language might be useful. Even simply knowing the twenty six letters of the alphabet allows us to communicate with our hands and eyes without paper and pen; we would be slow but we would communicate.

The tutor is an enthusiastic advancing learner of British Sign Language. Active since 2021 in u3a Interest Groups Online, now he leads two online Learn Sign Language groups, a French conversation group, the Penpals group and the Group Leaders Informal group. In Edinburgh u3a, from 2017 to date he has led the Explore the Museum group for which he prepares and gives series of one-hour guided tours of the National Museum of Scotland. With the exception of the Group Leaders Informal group, he formed all of those groups.

Enhancing Your Photography: Workshop | Facilitated by Neil Shaw

This interactive workshop takes a fresh look at the art of producing outstanding pictures. We will analyse a range of images – the good, the bad and the great – and explore not just how you can take more impactful photos, but also how you can start thinking more like a photographer. Covering the ‘what’ and ‘why’; as well the ‘how’ of photography, the workshop will provide multiple practical tips designed to help you take better pictures and undertake more satisfying photographic projects.

Neil Shaw is a seven-times-exhibited photographer and an experienced workshop facilitator. He specialises in documentary and landscape photography and has published two photo books.

Exploring Artificial Intelligence: Understanding and Experiencing the Future

Curious about Artificial Intelligence but not sure where to start?

This course will introduce the world of AI in simple, accessible terms – no technical background needed. We will explore what AI is, how it’s already part of everyday life, and what it might mean for the future. Participants will have the chance to try out AI tools themselves, see how machines “learn,” how it can help you with work in the u3a and discuss the social and ethical questions AI raises by considering the opportunities and challenges it brings for the future.

The sessions are led by Jenny Brogden who has a background in IT and European innovation projects, including work on the RACE programme and on bringing early internet technologies to rural areas. With years of experience helping local and national governments across the UK and Ireland make the most of digital tools, she brings a practical, people-focused perspective on how new technologies – like AI today – can serve communities including u3as.

Creative Crafts

This course is intended for anyone interested in hand sewing whether they are a beginner or experienced sewer.

We will explore the Japanese quilting technique of Sashiko (pronounced Sashiko). This ancient method of stitching was used to decorate kimonos and with Boro stitching to create decorative repairs to clothing and textile items.

We will look at traditional patterns and how using geometric shapes you can create your own interesting designs.

By the end of the workshop it is hoped that everyone will have completed a Japanese rice bag (originally used to carry offerings to the gods) but now makes beautiful bags for gifts or keeping jewellery or small items in.

We will be using denim for the quilting and thin quilting cotton. I will be supplying all fabrics and threads needed to complete the bag at no cost and providing stencils and geometric shapes for designing. All members need to bring is a basic sewing kit.

The Booking form and more info can be found <https://scotland.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/summer-school-26-booking-form-DRAFT-6.docx>

GROUPS

OUT AND ABOUT

The outandabouters' planning team have an interesting programme of outings in the pipeline for 2026.

4th March: another opportunity to tour the Newmilns Lace Factory. This is being arranged particularly for those who missed out on the tour last year and for new members. This tour was greatly enjoyed, but numbers had to be limited.

1st April : the first coach outing of the season will take members to Perth Museum, which houses The Stone of Destiny. This outing had to be cancelled last year following the vandalism of the Stone's display case. Also on show will be Mary Queen of Scots' last letter hours before her execution.

6th May: an outing to Linlithgow Palace, birthplace of Mary Queen of Scots, has been arranged. Entrance to the castle is free to members of Historic Scotland or £8 concession if not. On the banks of Linlithgow Loch, the castle has a rich history and, if weather permits, it may be possible to bring a picnic and enjoy the scenery.

3rd June: a visit to Stirling's Old Town Jail to join an immersive live performance. There is also the chance to explore the cells and visit the 'Scene of the Crime' Exhibition and the observation tower for panoramic views over Stirling.

1st July: a visit to Rozelle House Museum and Gallery in Ayr is planned. Located in picturesque Rozelle Park, Rozelle House Museum and Galleries displays objects, artefacts and works of art from the South Ayrshire Council collections, as well as offering a changing programme of exhibitions. It is also home to Paisley artist Alexander Goudie's magnificent series of paintings inspired by Robert Burns' famous poem *Tam o' Shanter*.

5th August: a two-hour Canal trip on the Forth & Clyde canal from Kirkintilloch to Lambhill on a chartered boat.

2nd September: a visit to the Sma' Shotts Cottages in Paisley is planned. The cottages offer a unique insight into the history of textiles in the area. Local guides will provide a fascinating insight into how a typical weaving family lived and worked during the 18th century in Paisley.

If you wish to come along to any of these outings, please join the Out & About Group via the website: https://eastrenfrewshire.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/out-and-about/.

Places are offered on a first to reply to the invitation email basis

QUIZ

Janie was the Quizmaster for the January quiz. The winning team – The Super Six, (Mhairi, Catriona, Yvonne, Linda, Susan and Mary) – won by half a point.

Many Congratulations!

Catriona has already set the next Quiz, which will be held on Tuesday 10th February, when she will take a turn as Quizmaster.

READING

Facilitator Wanted:

Following the success of the Sleuth and Sip, Book Group, we are hoping to start a second Crime Fiction book group.

If you would be interested in facilitating this new group, please contact Allison on groups@eru3a.org

SPANISH CHAT

Planning Spanish holidays this year?

Want to practice Speaking Spanish?

Join the Group's twice-a-month Monday afternoon meetings at Eastwood Health Centre.

This is your opportunity to Speak Spanish at your own pace. This self-help group caters for various levels.

Contact [James McDonach](#)

STAGE CRAFT AND THEATRE

23 members of our Theatre Group are looking forward to Giffnock Theatre Players' production of Oscar Wilde's renowned play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on Saturday 21st February. Meanwhile our Stage Craft Group are working on the set and props.



TALKING MUSIC

Our talkers had a very interesting meet-up on the theme 'songs that sound like other songs'. However, when compared, it might just be the feel.

The Beach Boys got into trouble when they did a direct lift of *Sweet Little Sixteen* for *Surfin' USA* and Johnny Cash got caught out over *Folsom Prison Blues*. Things can owe a debt to another song, such as The Jam's *Start* to The Beatles' *Taxman* and the riff from *Alright Now*, slightly amended and used by Steve Miller. Sometimes it is whole verses, initially unacknowledged, as was the case with Howlin Wolf's *Killing Floor*, retitled *Lemon Song* by Led Zeppelin.



Red Wing Special by Jimmy Herring was played to illustrate the idea that something can be either an homage or copy of another artist's work, in this instance, Reinhardt/Grappelli. The Cherry Poppin Daddies' *Ding-Dong and the D-Car Line* continued the point, a copy/homage to Cab Calloway.

They discussed the case of the owners of the Credence Clearwater back catalogue verses John Fogerty, the man who had written the material. His solo work unsurprisingly sounded like the stuff he had done with the band, and in a landmark judgement it was decided that a writer cannot plagiarise himself. Robin Thicke blurred the lines in relation to a Marvin Gaye number and Phil Collins fell foul of his enthusiasm for Prince's *1999*.

Can you think of any other examples?

WALKIE TALKIES

Last month our talkative walkers were part of a group on the Glasgow Live Tour of Govan. The fog made some of the shots quite atmospheric, before the sun burned through.







At the turn of the year six members of the Walkie Talkies Group got together to brave the cold but very sunny weather for a bracing walk in Rouken Glen followed by a welcome cup of coffee and chat to round off a very pleasant day's walk.



On 20th January The Walkie Talkies enjoyed a very pleasant walk in what turned out to be surprisingly mild weather around Bellahouston Park. This was followed by an excellent lunch in the Art Lover's Cafe, which everyone agreed was exceptional for food and service.



WALKING

Starting at the car park at Clarkston Halls our January walkers began their 5.5 miles linear walk to Pollok Park along a section of the White Cart Walkway. The route took the group along residential streets into Stamperland, where there was access to the riverside walkway behind the houses. Before long one of the main paths inside Linn Park was reached and the route continued along the river on its west bank, ignoring the White Bridge going across the river into the park. The bridge, officially known as the Ha'penny Bridge, was built between 1811 and 1835 and is the oldest surviving iron bridge in Glasgow. After all the heavy rainfall recently, the weir (linn) was in full flow, and this section of the walk was very muddy. There were also lots of steps, but thankfully there was no sign of the recent icy weather.



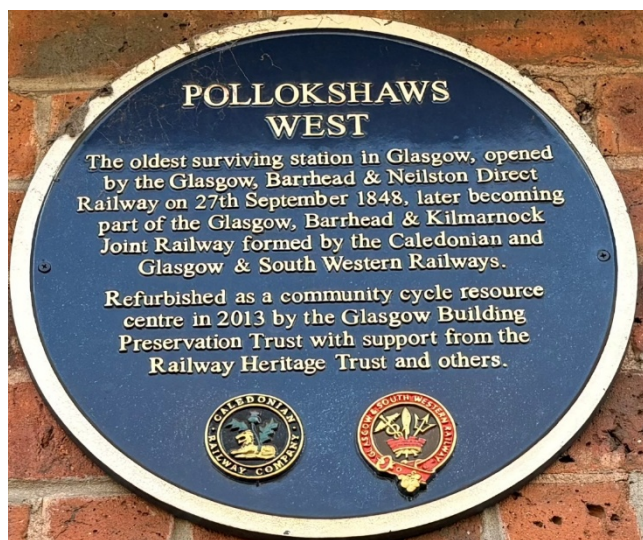
Linn Park Weir

On the first week's walk, our walkers were lucky to hear a woodpecker up in the trees, as well as lots of other birdsong. After a short snack break at Snuff Mill Bridge, the next section of the walk soon went through the residential streets of Cathcart, Langside and Mount Florida, eventually coming out at Newlands in Shawlands, before continuing on to the entrance to Pollok Park.



Week 1 Walkers at Snuff Mill Bridge

The return journey to Clarkston was by train from Pollokshaws West Station, which is the oldest surviving operation railway station building in the city since its opening on 27th September 1848. In 2013, the Glasgow Building Preservation Trust led a major refurbishment of the station's disused B-listed buildings, transforming them into a multifunctional cycling resource centre in partnership with South West Community Cycles (SWCC). This project addressed the



structure's vacancy since 1998, restoring the historic fabric while adapting it for modern community use. Sadly, however, SWCC is no longer in existence.



A number of Week 1 walkers enjoyed lunch in The Overlee back at Clarkston, while Week 2 walkers sampled the fare at Govies Coffee Club at the W Academy just inside Pollok Park at the former cricket ground.

WINE BUDDIES

Our oenophiles usually meet on Zoom, but in January they held their annual face-to-face meeting for a wine tasting lunch at The Cartvale in Busby.



They tasted three wines and had a quiz about them, which was won by the Chardonnay Champions (top left in photo). The food and organisation were wonderful and everybody had a great time. They are now looking forward to another year of exploring and tasting wines from all over the world.

DID YOU KNOW ...?

WHY AM I HERE?

The American *Whypepledo* site has an explanation for why it is that we can walk into a room for something and immediately forget why we're there. This is due to a common cognitive phenomenon known as the doorway effect - a glitch that triggers a temporary memory blank whenever you cross a threshold. You lose track of the task or thought you were focusing on right before the transition.

This is a normal function of how our brains process information. The term was first coined by Dr. Gary Small, a prominent American psychologist and director of the UCLA Longevity Center, who conducted a landmark experiment in which participants were given a simple task (e.g., memorizing a list of words, recalling a short sequence of numbers) in one room, then asked to walk through a door into a second room and repeat the task. The results were striking: 60% made memory errors after crossing the threshold—forgetting words, mixing up number sequences, or losing track of the original task.

The three key psychological reasons behind the doorway effect phenomenon are:

1. Environmental Changes Shift Your Attention

Your brain acts like a high-speed filter, constantly prioritizing new sensory information. When you walk through a door into a new space, your eyes, ears, and even sense of smell pick up fresh cues, which pull your attention away from the task or thought you were holding. The American Psychological Association (APA) notes that this attention shift is an evolutionary trait—our brains evolved to prioritize new environments to keep us safe. But in modern life, it just makes us forget where we put our keys.

2. Context Switching Breaks Memory Cues

Memory is tied to the *context* where you formed it and a door is like a 'context divider'. When you cross it, you leave behind the cues that were helping you remember your task. For example, if you're in your bedroom folding laundry, the bed, dresser, and laundry basket are your memory cues. When you remember to take a book to the living room and move into that room the bedroom cues are gone and in the new surroundings your brain can't easily retrieve the 'take the book' memory. You might suddenly remember the book *only* when you walk back into the bedroom and your original context is restored.

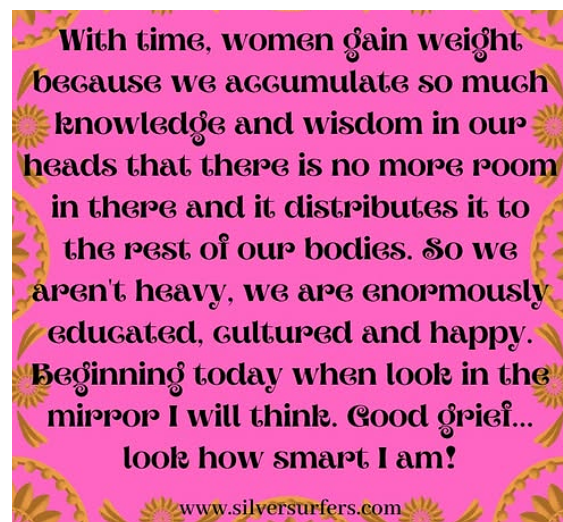
3. Working Memory Has Limited Capacity

Your 'working memory' – the part of your brain that holds temporary information while you act on it – has a small capacity and, when you walk through a door, your brain has to process a flood of new information, pushing out the task on which you were focusing. The APA estimates that working memory can hold only 4-5 pieces of information at once—so new cues easily push out old ones.

WHIMSY

SMART THINKING

Ruth Faulkner posted this.



PICTURE GALLERY

MADEIRAN MEANDERING

Willie Dyer sent in these pictures taken on a recent trip to Madeira.

Monte Palace Tropical Gardens. Funchal







Madeira, ancient Fanal forest

This forest is in the North of the island on a plateau which is often shrouded in mist. A camera trick shows Willie on either side of the tree.



NUTS

Allison Kershaw sent in this photo of a free coconut stall at Sorobon Beach, Bonaire in the Leeward Antilles Caribbean island group.



SNAPPED

Here are a some of the Photography Group's best of 2025. Click on [Best of 2025- My favourites from the year. - East Renfrewshire](#) to see the full selection.



William Dyer- Flashing light display



Vivienne Christison: 'Skye aurora - one of the best auroras I've seen in this country.'



Derek Hamilton- Statues at Place Massena Nice France. Very unusual art installation



Chisholm Macrae - The sunset on Paddies Milestones was taken at Troon. I have cropped and adjusted the lighting a bit.



Fiona Campbell - Glacier Bay Alaska

EVENTS

DAY	DATE	EVENT
Wednesday	18 th February	Monthly Meeting in Broom Church, Newton Mearns Alison Hepburn - Glasgow Street Aid
Wednesday	15 th April	Monthly Meeting in Broom Church, Newton Mearns Rosalind Holmes – China: a hundred years of history through the lives of the women of one Beijing family.
Wednesday	20 th May	Monthly Meeting in Broom Church, Newton Mearns Brian Young – The Secrets of Hadrian’s Wall

SUPPORTING u3a

The [Riviera Travel Affinity](#) scheme donates 10% of the cost of holidays booked by members.

East Renfrewshire u3a doesn't endorse any commercial organisations.

