

CHIT-CHAT



THE NEWSLETTER OF
[EAST RENFREWSHIRE U3A](#)
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DEVOTION



Find out who/what was the recipient of this adoration in *Groups*.

STUCK IN THE MUD



This creature seems quite relaxed about being up to its neck in mud. Find out what's going on in *Groups*.

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

INTRODUCING AI

u3a Scotland is pleased to invite you to a Zoom talk on AI from 14.00 on 12th October.

AI can be a force for good or for harm, so it is up to us to ensure we get the benefits while minimising the risks.

The talk will also cover some Scottish businesses and institutions that are world class in AI.



Session Outline

This talk is hosted by Alan Freeland, u3a Subject Advisor for AI, and Alan Blue from Forth Valley u3a. It is in two parts, with a break between. Including time for questions and comments, the session should last 90 minutes.

In the first part Freeland will give an introduction to AI, explain what makes it different from previous technologies and why it will be as transformational as the Industrial Revolution. We will learn that AI is already everywhere and that we interact with it every day. We will look at how u3a members up and down the country are already using it.

In the second part Alan Blue will share with us news about Forth Valley u3a's newly formed AI Group in. He will also introduce us to other u3a Groups in Scotland with AI activities.

For more details and to get your zoom link, book your place here <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/introducing-ai-and-ai-in-scotland-tickets-1996626385266>

ONLINE GROUPS

New online groups starting in the Autumn include:

- [FUSION tai qi gong for beginners](#)
- [The Odyssey](#)
- Ancient Greek for beginners
- [German fortgeschrittene Dienstag](#)
- [Spanish fluency intermediate plus](#)
- [German for beginners \(second group\)](#)
- [Irish language for beginners](#)
- [Greek myths](#)

More details can be found at [u3a – News Extra August 2026](#)

FUSION Tai Qi Gong combines two ancient methods for enhancing health and wellbeing – Qi Gong and Tai Chi. Qi Gong involve calming the mind and gently working the body in harmony with the breath. Tai Chi is a moving meditation, involving a sequence of movements and postures to enhance mental and physical wellbeing. Together and practised regularly (at least once a week if possible), they are proven to maintain and enhance health.

Only a basic level of general health is needed to get started, and the weekly Zoom classes cover a short warm-up, some Qi Gong Exercises, and learning the Tai Chi 10 and the Tai Chi Yang Style 24, which is the World's most popular form of Tai Chi, practised by tens of millions of people. The latter has been adapted slightly to make it easier to learn and practice over Zoom, whilst retaining all of the proven health benefits.



This group will run from 10:00 am to 11:00 am Thursdays, starting from 10th September 2026. You can join the group, or the waiting list, via the [Beacon Members Portal](#). To join a group, you must first subscribe to [Interest Groups Online](#). This is separate to a local u3a membership.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

On 16th September guest speaker Aiman Muhammed will deliver a talk on Alzheimer's Research. The doors are open at 1.30pm and the meeting starts at 2.00pm. Refreshments are served after the talk. If you can, bring your own mug please.

THE BUZZ

DOUGLAS YATES

Following the recent sad death of Douglas Yates, memorials posted on Facebook recognised his huge contribution as a councillor and former Deputy Leader of East Renfrewshire Council, who worked tirelessly for his constituents in the Barrhead Ward. One of his most notable achievements was helping to secure dozens of public access defibrillators across the Levern Valley.

He was also a man of profound faith. That faith and family were the absolute priorities that drove his extraordinary efforts in public service. He worked for a great many community causes, including Barrhead Rotary Club.

He was also of course the founder of our u3a, and we'll all miss his cheery presence.



AGM

Mary Fyfe began the meeting with the announcement that in the past year our u3a had gained 130 new members and 12 new groups. She thanked those members who nominated our u3a as their preferred charity to Riviera Travel (which donated £570) and mentioned the New Members Fair in March.

Mary also talked of the benefits of the new arrangement for joining and renewing subscriptions online via the website, which is linked to the Beacon system, and paid tribute to Marbe McNeil and Douglas Yates.

Alison Gordon reviewed the Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2025/2026 and highlighted the deficit of £2,017 mainly due to increased room hire costs. The report, which included a motion to increase the membership fee from £24 to £30 for individuals and £20 to £25 for associates, was approved.

Stuart McColl introduced guest speaker David Vennard, whose talk was about the 19th Century Arctic explorer Dr John Rae.

Rae, the sixth of nine children, was born in 1813 at the Hall of Clestrain in Orkney. His father was a factor, who managed up to 300 tenant farmers for local nobleman [Sir William Honyman, Lord Armadale](#). In 1833 he graduated with a degree in medicine from the [University of Edinburgh](#) and was licensed by the [Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#).

Two months after graduating he accepted a post for a season as ship's surgeon aboard the [Prince of Wales](#), a supply ship for the Hudson Bay Company. The ship was stranded by pack ice and the crew had to spend the winter on the deserted [Charlton Island](#). Rae's skills as a hunter and doctor, as well as his knowledge of fauna and its pharmaceutical merits, managed to keep most of the men alive throughout the winter despite heavy cases of scurvy, which took two lives.

He stayed on with the Hudson Bay Company to work as a surgeon at the [Moose Bay Factory](#), near Churchill in [Ontario](#), where he remained for ten years. There he treated both European and [indigenous](#) employees. He learned Cree and Inuit skills, which enabled him to live off the land like a native and travel great distances with little equipment and few followers, unlike many other explorers of the [Victorian era](#).

From 1836 to 1839, the Scottish explorer and fur trader [Thomas Simpson](#) sailed along much of the northern coast of Canada. His cousin [Sir George Simpson](#) proposed to link the furthest-east point Thomas had reached by sending an overland expedition and chose Rae to lead it, after learning the art of [surveying](#).

Rae explored the [Gulf of Boothia](#), northwest of the [Hudson Bay](#), from 1846 to 1847, and the Arctic coast near [Victoria Island](#) from 1848 to 1851. He learned to build igloos and became the first European to winter the high Arctic. In 1854, back in the Gulf of Boothia, he obtained credible information from local [Inuit](#) peoples about the fate of the [Franklin Expedition](#).

In 1845 Sir John Franklin launched the expedition that bears his name on two ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, with a crew of 129 men to chart the last unexplored sections of the Northwest Passage. It was considered one of the best-equipped Arctic missions of its time, featuring reinforced hulls, steam engines, heating systems, and three years' worth of provisions, including tinned food. However, they relied on faulty maps and miscalculated the supplies needed. The 8,000 food tins they carried were sealed with lead and water leaked from the lead-lined engines. The British Admiralty launched extensive search efforts (39 expeditions in total) beginning in 1848, prompted by Franklin's



wife, Lady Jane Franklin. Early searches uncovered graves on Beechey Island and scattered artifacts, but the fate of most crew members remained unknown for over a century

Rae's report ultimately guided Sir Francis McClintock to the correct area to conduct a search. His report was received more favorably than Rae's. McClintock also stirred controversy with his claim that Franklin, before his death, had essentially discovered the Northwest Passage, while in reality he had not. Rae, with his discovery of [Rae Strait](#), had discovered the real ice-free passage through North America's Arctic archipelago.

In 1881, aged 71, he retired to Orkney. He died in London in 1893 and was buried at [St Magnus Cathedral](#) in [Kirkwall, Orkney](#).



Mary, our Chair, at the AGM thanked Stuart for being such a wonderful compere and Speaker Organiser. The committee members were all very sad to see him step down and will miss his sense of humour.

However, Stuart will return to host the Christmas Party on 16th December.



After the AGM, the new committee met to allocate the following roles.

Hazel Dunnachie	Secretary
Mary Fyfe	Chair
Alison Gordon	Treasurer, Beacon Administrator Deputy
Elaine Greaves	Membership Secretary, Treasurer Assistant
Allison Kershaw	Groups Co-ordinator, Policies and Procedures, Beacon Administrator
Jacquelynne Shore	Accessibility Fire Officer and Health and Safety
Shirley Thorogood	Hospitality, PAT testing and Asset Register
Annie Wills	Vice Chair

Janet Jamieson, who is an experienced photographer, graphic designer and website developer has been co-opted onto the Committee and will take over the role of Webmaster in November.

The new Committee members are all delighted to welcome Janet on board.

GROUPS

APERITIF

This month 24 of our aperitif samplers met at their usual venue, Michael's Bar and Bistro at Parklands Hotel and Country Club and, as ever, had a convivial time. Facilitator Barrie Condon suggests that the title of the group may be something of a misnomer as everyone sticks to wine, beer or soft drinks, and he doesn't think anyone has ever ordered a true aperitif.

The purpose of the group is simply to meet and chat in an informal atmosphere. Anyone in the u3a is welcome to come along to see what the group is like without registering. It meets at 4.00pm on the third Tuesday of every month.



AROUND EAST RENFREWSHIRE DINING

Group 1 visited The Castello at Castle Golf Academy where a wonderful meal was thoroughly enjoyed by all, with a few 'doggy bags' taken home. Lovely view of the practice range and very helpful staff – a winner!



AROUND THE WORLD DINING

19 of Group 1's adventurous diners went oriental earlier this month, choosing to visit Opium in the city centre. The restaurant describes its approach as specialising in Asian fusion cuisine, and most of us would recognise a lot of Chinese dishes. Their Head Chef trained in classical Chinese cooking in Hong Kong and further developed his skills by taking ideas from across the Far East, before coming to the UK.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the food, which was delicious, and the service was excellent. Although slightly more expensive than some of the group's recent lunches, it was considered very good value and is definitely recommended.



GARDEN VISITS

A few of our jardinophiles popped into Greenbank Garden this month.

The garden's focal point (seen here) is the statue of the water nymph *Foam*, created by Charles d'Orville Pilkington Jackson for the Glasgow Empire Exhibition in 1938.



LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

On 12th August our historical archaeologists visited Lochgoin Covenanters Museum, which has been revamped due to a lottery grant. Located within the farmhouse at Lochgoin Farm, it holds old manuscripts, relics, and John Howie's original notebooks, together with an excellent video relating to the history of the covenanting times in Ayrshire.

The nearby Lochgoin Monument, a tall granite obelisk erected in 1896, honours Howie (1735–1793), who wrote *The Scots Worthies* (1775) – a famous book about Scottish Covenanters and religious martyrs who suffered during the 'Killing Time'. His family hid persecuted Covenanters at the farm. The boulders around the base of the obelisk display the names of local Covenanter martyrs.

After visiting the museum and monument the group went for a short walk down to the side of Lochgoin Reservoir, to look at the surrounding area towards Blackwood Hill and Topfaulds Hill. Everyone had a very pleasant day, with great weather.



Who were the Covenanters? They were 17th century Scots Presbyterians – devout folk, including farmers, tradesmen, labourers, lairds – who risked everything to defend their faith and resist King Charles I's interference in their Church. In 1638, they signed a document known as 'The National Covenant' – a bold rejection of Charles' ambition to impose Anglican practices on the Church of Scotland, including a new prayerbook based on the English Book of Common Prayer. This act of defiance ignited decades of religious and political persecution: imprisonments, executions and forced transportation to the American colonies or West Indies, where many were sold into indentured servitude. During these years, Covenanters and their families worshipped in secret at illegal outdoor meetings, called 'conventicles'. These were held in remote locations – glens, woodland, or moorland – and were always under threat of attack by government troops. Eaglesham Moor served as a site for conventicles, particularly during the brutal 'Killing Times' (1680–1688), when Lochgoin Farm became a sanctuary for local Covenanters on the run.

OUT AND ABOUT

This month our outandabouters enjoyed a two-hour canal cruise run by Forth and Clyde Canal Society, a registered charity that played a major role in gaining public support for the restoration and reopening of the canal. The charity is committed to promoting the canal and ensuring its continued success. They travelled by coach to The Stables Restaurant, Kirkintilloch, where their boat *Voyager* was moored nearby. It is the largest of their three boats and can accommodate 45 passengers but, as the outandabouters required tables for their packed lunches, 33 was their limit. The boat had outside areas at each end which some members enjoyed between the rain showers, but many were happy to view the canal from inside. The first hour of their circular tour was from the Stables to Southbank Marina in Kirkintilloch and back to the starting point. The second hour took them beyond the Stables for 30 minutes,



and back. The slow pace of the boat was calming and the views of the many waterlily pads and blooms, plus the varied greenery alongside the canal, were enjoyed by all. The crew, all volunteers, looked after the group very well.







PHOTOGRAPHY

The Photography Group's July challenge was 'Landmarks and Sites of East Renfrewshire' and here are some of some of the photos posted by Facilitator Janice MacKenzie. She hopes most of us will recognise the subjects, but there may be a few surprises. To see all the photos please go to the Group's page on the [East Renfrewshire](#) website.



This is The Carswell Centre in Eaglesham. The historic Gothic style building, formerly the Carswell United Presbyterian Church, was built on 1867. It now serves a community hub and is home to the Gemmell Statutes collection, which features carved statues of local characters by the Victorian artist William Gemmell.

This is one of two statues honouring Thomas Donohoe, the textile worker from Busby who introduced football to Brazil in 1894. Working at the Bangu textile mill in Rio de Janeiro, he organized the country's first recorded match and co-founded Bangu Athletic Club. The other statue is in Bangu.





This was taken at Cowan Park in Barrhead.



This is Crofthead Mill, Neilston, opened in 1792. The original buildings were burned down in 1883 and rebuilt with the current buildings, which are listed. In 1900 it employed more than 1,500 workers, most of whom were female. It finally closed in 1992 and is currently used by Murdoch Waste Management Services.



The 'Craigie' or Craig of Carnock, situated above the Glanderston dam, is the site of an Iron Age hill fort named Duncarnock, dated between 1200 and 700 BCE. There is a Trig point on top of the outcrop, 669 feet above sea level. Local myth would have you believe Mary Queen of Scots watched the battle of Langside from her vantage point on top of the Craigie.



Have you spotted any of the Scottie sculptures in Glasgow and East Renfrewshire? This is a project to support the Maggie's charity. Here is 'Blossom' at the Boathouse in Rouken Glen Park. The timing of the photo was great, with her wee cousin stopping by to say hello!

QUIZ

Congratulations go to the Lucky Heathers Team (Frances, Susan, Mary and Jean) who were the winners of the August quiz. Catriona, the guest Quizmaster this month, compiled a challenging but fun quiz.

STROLLERS

On a lovely warm evening our strollers group set out on a new walk that took them from Whitecraigs through Cathcart Castle Golf Course and back to Rouken Glen Park.







TASTE THE WORLD

Our globetrotting diners had a most enjoyable meal at Seoul Korean BBQ in Cambridge Street. A fine election of authentic Korean food was on offer to the smaller than usual group of eight. The service was efficient and friendly.



WALKING

This month our walkers enjoyed a scenic five-mile circuit, starting in Darvel. Arriving in the town, one of the first things they saw was the mural honouring Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of penicillin, who was born in Darvel. The mural was unveiled in April 2025.

Shortly after leaving the car park on Ranaldcoup Road, our walkers soon reached the entrance to the Lanfine Estate. Lanfine was inherited by Thomas Brown, a medical doctor and professor of botany at Glasgow University in the 1820s, and he planted many exotic trees and shrubs as well as vast tracts of mixed woodland.

On the estate there is a family of cross-bred pigs which are closely related to wild boar. These have been introduced to the woodland to promote natural regeneration and supplement the estate farm business. The pigs were very curious to see these strange people looking in on them.



After passing the 18th century Lanfine mansion house, the route continued onto open farm tracks, giving views across the Irvine Valley towards Loudon Hill and the Whitelee wind turbines, before turning onto the walkway alongside the River Irvine and back to the car park in Darvel.





Both groups enjoyed fine weather and many of them headed to the Railway Inn in Darvel for refreshments/snacks before leaving for home.

DID YOU KNOW ...?

MOON DAY

Professor Wikipedia has quite a lot to say about Monday.

The names of the day of the week were coined in the [Roman era](#), in [Greek](#) and Latin, in the case of Monday as ἡμέρᾱ [Σελήνης](#), *diēs Lūnae* 'day of the Moon'. Many languages use either terms directly derived from these names or loan translations based on them. The English noun *Monday* derived sometime before 1200 from *monedæi*, which developed from the [Old English](#) term (around 1000) *mōnandæg* and *mōndæg*, literally meaning "[moon](#)'s day". This has cognates in other [Germanic languages](#) and is an interpretation of [Latin](#) *lunae dies* (day of the moon). [Japanese](#) and [Korean](#) share the same ancient [Chinese words](#) '月曜日' ([Hiragana](#):げつようび, [translit.](#) *getsuyōbi*, [Hangeul](#):월요일) for Monday, which means 'day of the moon'.

Historically, the Greco-Roman week began with Sunday (*dies solis*), and Monday (*dies lunae*) was the second day of the week. It is still the custom to refer to Monday as *feria secunda* in the [liturgical calendar](#) of the [Catholic Church](#). [Quakers](#) also traditionally referred to Monday as 'Second Day'. The [Portuguese](#) and the [Greek](#) Eastern Orthodox Church also retain the ecclesiastical tradition (Portuguese *segunda-feira*, Greek *Δευτέρα* 'deutéra' (second). [Vietnamese](#), whose [Latin-based alphabet](#) was originally [romanized](#) by Portuguese [Jesuit missionaries](#), adopted this convention and thus also refers to Monday as Second Day (*thứ Hai*). Likewise, the [Modern Hebrew](#) name for Monday is *yom-sheni* (יום שני).

The Geneva-based [International Organization for Standardization](#) places Monday as the first day of the week in its [ISO 8601](#) standard. Monday is *xīngqīyī* (星期一) in [Chinese](#), meaning 'day one of the week'.

The [early Christian Didache](#) warned believers not to fast on Mondays to avoid [Judaizing](#), and suggested fasting on Wednesdays instead. In the [Eastern Orthodox Church](#), Mondays are days on which the [Angels](#) are commemorated. In [Hinduism](#), Mondays are associated with the [Hindu god](#) of the moon, [Chandra](#) or Soma. In both [Judaism](#) and [Islam](#), Mondays are days for fasting.

Cultural references

Monday, Monday, *Rainy Days and Mondays*, *Manic Monday* and *I Don't Like Mondays* are a few examples of popular songs in Western culture that portray Mondays often as days of depression, anxiety, melancholy, boredom and bad luck. In [England](#) and [Wales](#) more people commit suicide on Mondays than other days of the week, and more people in the UK, in general, call in sick on Mondays.

WHIMSY

CHECKING OUT

Sandra Rigg posted this little *cri de coeur*.



PICTURE GALLERY

Myra and Willie Dyer volunteered to assist the Glasgow University investigation of the medieval site within the grounds of Govan Parish Church. Having been baptised there, Willie feels an affinity with the now deconsecrated church.

After being accepted, they volunteered at the site on three occasions. They've now done a bit of everything, such as probing, using a tee-bar, flagging possible hits below the turf, carefully removing the sod and scraping the earth to explore what they've hit. In the main trench they assisted in mopping water from the flooded site following a heavy downpour, removing earth from a test



pit and sieving the spoil, as well as washing, bagging and cataloguing finds. They found the experience thoroughly enjoyable and were impressed by the very knowledgeable archaeologists, who explained each process and the theories about what they are discovering. Govan was an important site and there's a lot of historical evidence with the 'Hogback Stones' and the sarcophagus of King Constantine.





They likened the work to genteel gardening, not like their usual voluntary work in the walled garden and community space at Barshaw Park.

EVENTS

DAY	DATE	EVENT
Wednesday	16 th September	Monthly Meeting Aiman Muhammed – Alzheimer's Research
Wednesday	21 st October	Monthly Meeting Stuart Nisbet - Giffnock Sandstone- The Forgotten Story
Wednesday	18 th November	Monthly Meeting David Garbutt - Escape from Stalag C
Wednesday	16 th December	Christmas Party

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.