

# The Roundup

July 2026

## MONTHLY MEETING

Annual quiz goes  
down to the wire

## ROAD TRIP SEASON

Members get out and  
about

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF  
DUMFRIES u3a

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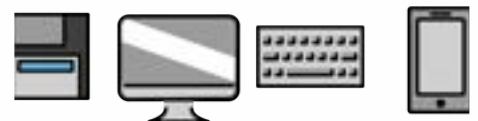


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# Monthly Meetings

## Annual Quiz Goes Down to the Wire!

Our June meeting saw a change to one of our favourite traditions. Instead of Kathleen Simpson setting the questions for the Annual Quiz, quizmaster duties were handed over to Sue and Eric Price. Sue runs our popular Fun Quiz Group and is a highly experienced quiz organiser.

Sue and Eric certainly didn't disappoint! They treated us to a fantastic selection of entertaining and thought-provoking rounds, with something to challenge everyone. Together, they also made full use of the excellent audiovisual facilities at our new meeting venue, the Baptist Church Centre, helping to make the quiz even more engaging.

The competition was incredibly close, with only a handful of points separating the teams from top to bottom. After an anxious recount, *Hot and Bothered* and *The Appaches* were found to be tied for first place. It then took an extraordinary three tie-break questions before *Hot and Bothered* finally claimed victory.



Would you have known the winning tie-break answer? The deciding question was:

"In what year did the Duke of Windsor (formerly King Edward VIII) marry Wallis Simpson?"

If you guessed 1937, give yourself a point!

The victorious team members each received a book voucher—ideal for expanding their already impressive general knowledge—while *Universally Challenged*, finishing in last place, accepted the traditional wooden spoons in good humour. With so few points separating the teams, though, there really were no losers.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, with an excellent turnout, plenty of laughter, and just the right amount of friendly rivalry. Our thanks go to Sue and Eric, for all the time and effort they put into making the afternoon such a great success, and also to everyone who generously donated prizes to the raffle.



*Sue and Eric Price ran a challenging quiz*



*Wooden spoons... but heads held high!*

# Up next



## September Meeting

After our summer break, in a change of speaker, we're delighted to welcome Ron McHugh who will take us on a fascinating journey through the technological revolution that has transformed the world in just a few short decades.

Ron's talk on *Living in the Silicon Age: A short History of the Microchip Revolution* explores the remarkable advances in technology since the 1950s, when the Silicon Age began. From the days of the slide rule to the arrival of smartphones, the internet and today's rapidly evolving world of Artificial Intelligence, his talk traces the key innovations and the pioneering people behind them.

Artificial Intelligence is rarely out of the headlines, but what exactly is AI, how did we get here, and where might it take us in the future? Our speaker promises to answer these questions—and you may be surprised by some of the answers.

Our presenter is a retired professional electrical engineer and former university academic who, like the rest of us, has



### Living in the Silicon Age

A short History of the Microchip Revolution



witnessed and adapted to the extraordinary pace of technological change throughout his career.

Whether you're fascinated by technology or simply curious about the world around you, this promises to be an engaging and thought-provoking start to our new season.

We hope you'll join us.



# Dates for your Diary

|  DATE |  MEETING / SPEAKER / TOPIC |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3rd September                                                                          | Ron McHugh will talk about <i>Living in the Silicon Age: A Short History of the Microchip Revolution</i>    |
| 8th September                                                                          | Dumfries u3a Discovery Day at The Baptist Church                                                            |
| 29th September                                                                         | Group Leader's Meeting                                                                                      |
| 1st October                                                                            | Tom Hughes will talk about the Cruck Cottage at Torthorwald                                                 |
| 5th November                                                                           | Gillian Elliot of Burnfoot Farm, Langholm, will talk about their family wool business                       |
| 3rd December                                                                           | We hope the Ukulele Group will entertain us and get us into the Christmas spirit!                           |
|                                                                                        | <a href="#">An exciting programme of speakers is planned for 2027!</a>                                      |

Join us on the  
**1st Thursday of every month**  
**2.00 pm – 4.00 pm**  
 Dumfries Baptist Church  
 Gillbrae Road, Dumfries DG1 4EJ

# Behind the Scenes

## *Highlights from the latest Committee meeting*

The Committee met in June to review recent activities and continue planning for an exciting autumn programme.

### **Membership**

Membership continues to grow, with 291 members now enjoying the wide range of groups and activities on offer. Work is progressing on a simplified membership application form, and future online renewals through the Members' Portal will make it easier for members to keep their details up to date.

### **Monthly Meetings**

Preparations are complete for our popular Annual Quiz, and an exciting programme of speakers has been arranged for the months ahead, including talks on Devorgilla, Lady of Galloway, Cruck Cottage, and Burnfoot Farm. Plans are also underway for entertainment from our own Ukulele Group in December.

### **Group Leaders**

Work is almost complete on the new Group Leaders' Handbook, which will be launched at a Group Leaders' Meeting on 29 September. The handbook will provide practical guidance and introduce leaders to new Beacon features and resources.

### **Publicity**

The newsletter continues to go from strength to strength, while publicity is being expanded with posters displayed in additional locations across Dumfries. Each monthly poster will now feature one of our interest groups.

### **Looking Ahead**

Planning is underway for a Dumfries u3a Discovery Day in September, giving both existing and prospective members the opportunity to explore our wide range of groups and activities. The Committee is also applying for grant funding to support the event and a festive community craft project for the Christmas Tree Festival.

### **Behind the Scenes**

Committee members continue to attend training provided by u3a Scotland and the Third Age Trust, helping ensure Dumfries u3a remains well managed and continues to offer the best possible experience for all members.

**Full committee minutes are available to any member on the home page of our website**

## New Committee Member

Following our AGM in May, Sue Price kindly volunteered to take on the role of Membership Secretary but was unable at the time to commit to joining the Committee. However, we are delighted to announce that she has now been formally co-opted onto the Committee.

Sue brings valuable experience from her involvement with other u3a organisations, and we know she will make an excellent addition to the team. Welcome, Sue!

## Save The (Discovery) Date

Something exciting is coming this September!

We're planning a Dumfries u3a Discovery Day – a chance to celebrate everything our wonderful organisation has to offer while introducing new people to the many groups, activities and friendships that make our u3a so special.

We're hoping that every interest group will be represented on the day, so over the coming weeks we'll be looking for volunteers to help welcome visitors and share their enthusiasm for their group. It's a fantastic opportunity to showcase what makes Dumfries u3a such a friendly and vibrant community.

More details will be announced soon, but for now please save the date ...

**Tuesday 8th September**

We are pleased to have been awarded a grant from The Third Age Trust to cover the costs, and grateful to Sue Price, Roger Hardy, Carol Moyes and Helen Gage who are organising the event.

We hope you'll come along and help us make it a fun, welcoming and inspiring day for both current and future members.

## Building Connections Beyond Dumfries

One of the strengths of u3a is the opportunity to learn from one another—not just as members, but as organisations too.

Recently, our Chair, Kathleen Simpson, and members of the Committee met online with George Cleland, our representative on u3a Scotland. George is keen to understand how he can support Dumfries u3a, hear about any challenges we face and gather feedback to pass on to the Third Age Trust. He also shared examples of good practice from other Scottish u3as, giving us plenty of ideas to consider.

Kathleen has also met with two Committee members from Stewartry u3a to explore ways of working more closely together. The discussion focused on sharing information about guest speakers, exchanging ideas for attracting new members, encouraging people to take on Committee roles and learning from each other's experiences.

These conversations are helping to strengthen links between neighbouring u3as and ensuring that Dumfries u3a continues to benefit from fresh ideas, shared knowledge and mutual support.

## A Glorious Day at Woodfall Gardens

Members enjoyed a wonderful summer outing to the beautiful Woodfall Gardens near Whithorn. Travelling in comfort thanks to Thornhill Community Transport and Cairn Valley Community Transport, members were warmly welcomed by owners Ross and Liz Muir with tea, coffee and plenty of friendly conversation before setting off to explore this remarkable garden.

Often described as "Galloway's Secret Garden", Woodfall is a lovingly restored three-acre, eighteenth-century walled garden. Sheltered by impressive brick walls and surrounded by woodland, it provides a peaceful haven filled with unusual trees, shrubs and flowering plants, with year-round interest for both gardeners and wildlife.

Ross and Liz led the group on a fascinating guided tour, sharing the history of the garden and explaining the work involved in its ongoing restoration. They pointed out many of the garden's special plants and features, including the pebble pathways, lovingly created by their grandson.

With the sun shining, everyone enjoyed a picnic lunch outdoors, complete with sandwiches, fruit, biscuits and cake. Afterwards there was plenty of time to relax beneath the shade of the mature trees and herbaceous borders, soaking up the peaceful surroundings before the journey home.

Of course, no visit to a garden is complete without a few plants being 'obtained'. Many new treasures found their way onto the minibuses and will soon be growing in gardens across Dumfries and beyond.

It was a truly enjoyable day spent among friends, surrounded by nature—proof, once again, that gardens have a wonderful way of lifting the spirits.



*Members enjoying the  
stunning gardens at Woodfall*



# A Couple of Updates for Group Leaders

There's plenty happening behind the scenes as we continue to support our fantastic Group Leaders.

## Group Leaders Handbook

Roger Hardy and Maggie Holdsworth have been working hard on our new Group Leaders Handbook, which is almost ready for publication. Before it's distributed, we're asking one of our newer members, who is considering becoming a Group Leader, to put it through its paces and let us know if there are any final tweaks that would make it even more useful.

The handbook will be sent to all Group Leaders ahead of the Group Leaders' Meeting on Tuesday, 29th September, where we'll have an opportunity to discuss it together.

## Could You Share Your Group?

Our Monthly Meetings are a wonderful opportunity to inspire members to try something new. If you'd be willing to spend just 5–10 minutes giving a short, informal talk about your group, we'd love to hear from you. Whether you've got an interesting project to share, photos to show or simply want to tell members what your group gets up to, your enthusiasm could encourage someone to give it a go. If you'd like to volunteer, please let Kathleen Simpson know.

# Fancy a Coffee and a Chat?

Starting something new can feel a little daunting, even in a friendly organisation like Dumfries u3a. That's why our Chair, Kathleen Simpson, is exploring the idea of holding occasional coffee mornings where newer members can meet longer-standing members in a relaxed and informal setting.

The idea is simple – enjoy a cup of coffee, have a chat, ask questions, share experiences and get to know some of the friendly faces that make up our u3a community. It would also be a great opportunity for existing members to welcome newcomers and perhaps encourage them to try a new group or activity.

Before making any plans, we'd love to know what you think. Would you enjoy coming along to a coffee morning? Whether you're a new member looking to make connections or an established member happy to help newcomers feel at home, we'd love to hear from you. Contact Kathleen via the Contact Us page on the u3a Dumfries website.

If there's enough interest, we'll put the kettle on!

# Group Spotlight



## Practical Gardening

This lively group of practical gardeners met at my house in May on a rather damp day.

We started this year's visits in March at Hetland Garden Centre to discuss the winter's woes and the coming year's activities. These initial meetings are always planned to include tea, coffee and snacks to get the year going in the right vein.

The following month was a visit to Threave Gardens where we had a good tour of the grounds and saw the preparations for the spring vegetable planting and the clear-up after winter. There's always something to be seen which catches the eye there. Rhododendrons were just coming into full flower and azaleas too. The star of the show was the magnolias which were just magnificent, especially the stellata variety shown on the photo. Its flowers always come out before the foliage so are seen in their full glory.

The staff at Threave are always pleased to stop their work and discuss what they are up to and pass on tips and advice.

My question was how to prevent parsnips multi-furcating, ie forming numerous roots instead of one long single root.

The jury is out on that one!

Threave satisfied our group's ethos in that it is a working garden which is continually being transformed and altered to suit the conditions and aspirations of the students and their tutors. No practical garden is ever finished or complete.

*Magnolia in full bloom at  
Threave Gardens*





The visit in May was the season's first to a member's garden – mine! Try as I might, it did not look at its best. But we are a very forgiving group and we all understand the problems with weather, coming out of a long winter period, lack of free time and most of all the physical problems of ageing!

One of the situations I sought advice on was what to do with an ivy which had lost its traction to the garage wall and flopped on the deck. It seems the only solution is to chop it down to near the ground and start again. Seems drastic but that's what I have done. Time will tell if it recovers.

May, of course is the month of rising sap and aspirations for a new, exciting and fruitful season to come. Hawthorn hedges and bushes are in full bloom as are broom. Azaleas and rhododendrons have been particularly splendid this year. Earlier, camellias were about the best we have seen for years. Members toured my veggie allotment where the early Charlotte tatties

are doing well. Also, broad beans and onions under a protective netting to keep both pigeons and cats off!

So, a good start to our season of garden visits. Most of the gardens have been visited before but likely at a different time of year and usually a couple of years apart. It's always interesting to see what changes have been made and what the owner is planning next. Lots of advice and ideas are discussed, and we look forward to another return visit when we can marvel at what has been achieved.

Group visits take place every 3rd Thursday in the gardening season. We meet at 10.30 am at the arranged venue, generally starting with a cuppa and snack. Visits last about an hour and a half. We have an exchange system of plants, seeds, cuttings and any gardening items which could find a new home.



There are about 20 names on our list of members but not everyone can make it to every meeting. Usual attendance is about 12 and car sharing is practised as far as possible. Contact me for further information. Alistair Brown [aslb@sheiltair.plus.com](mailto:aslb@sheiltair.plus.com) 07853754101

*Contributed by and photographs by Alistair Brown*

*The Practical Gardening Group meets on the 3rd Thursday in the month during the summer months in members gardens. Contact Alistair Brown, Group Leader, for further information.*

## Camera Group

Camera Group members went across the country on an outing recently. We started out at Chesters Roman Cavalry Fort and Museum on Hadrians Wall. Wow, what an amazing place! While most of us enjoyed a guided tour, Roger decided to strike out and found himself sitting in the Roman Baths right beside the river (no water involved though).



Our next visit was at Cragside House. Well worth a visit. The original owner Baron William Armstrong was an industrial magnate, inventor, philanthropist and scientist. He made Cragside the first house in the world to be lit using hydroelectric power! There is a magnificent example of an 'archimedes screw' that transports water uphill.

*Contributed by and photographs by Terry Howat*

*The Camera Group meets on the 2nd & 4th Fridays (Sept - May) in Kirkton Village Hall. Contact Terry Howat, Group Leader, for further information.*

## Sewing Group

The Sewing Group recently swapped their usual meeting place for a day out in Carlisle, where they enjoyed a workshop at Superior Sewing Machines.

The day was filled with plenty of conversation, laughter and the opportunity to learn something new as everyone created their own beautifully quilted pouch. Whether they were experienced sewist or trying out new techniques, there was a real sense of achievement as each project came together.

One of the nicest compliments came from a fellow u3a member who doesn't usually attend the Sewing Group but decided to join the outing.

"I had such a great day. Everyone was so friendly and helpful – which was much appreciated since I haven't really sewn since I was at school. If it wasn't that I have another commitment on the days they meet, I'd definitely be joining them!"

Her comments perfectly capture the welcoming spirit of the group, where members are always happy to share their skills, encourage beginners and enjoy each other's company.

As well as returning home with a handmade pouch, everyone came back with new ideas, new techniques and happy memories of a thoroughly enjoyable day.

*The Sewing Group meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday in the month in the Old School, Thornhill. Contact Kathleen Simpson, Group Leader, for further information.*

*Contributed by and photographs by Carol Moyes*



## Could This Be Your Next Chapter?

Love reading? Enjoy discussing books? Fancy trying something a little different?

A new interest group is being proposed by member, Helen Gage, with a focus on the Booker Prize—one of the world's most prestigious literary awards.

Each summer, members would read and discuss titles from the newly announced Booker Prize longlist, predicting which books will make the shortlist and, ultimately, which one will be crowned the winner. There could even be a little friendly competition to see whose predictions come closest to those of the judges!

Outside the Booker season, the group would explore previous Booker Prize winners and shortlisted novels, sharing favourites and debating whether the judges really got it right.

Meetings would be held in members' homes, with the possibility of getting together to watch the live Booker Prize announcement in November.

Although Dumfries u3a already has both Fiction and Non-Fiction Book Groups, this new group offers a completely different way to enjoy reading by following one of the literary world's biggest annual events.

Interested? If you'd like to find out more or register your interest, please contact Kathleen Simpson, Chair, via the Contact page on the Dumfries u3a website.

## The Enjoying Music Group



This month the Enjoying Music Group have shared a selection of pieces on the theme of **Women Composers**



Click on the image to listen and enjoy these brilliant pieces.

1



*O How Wondrous It Is*  
Hildegard of Bingen  
c1098–1179

A polymathic genius and an abbess, whose music says more than any words can. Best listened to with eyes closed.

2



*Chi Desia*  
Francesca Caccini  
1587–c1641

A light-hearted, Baroque piece, arguing that it is “sweeter to flee love”. Caccini was the first woman to have an opera performed. Best watched with eyes open.



# From Our Ears to Yours

3



*Arabesque*  
**Germaine Tailleferre**  
1892–1983

A member of the French group of composers, *Les Six*; another member, Milhaud, described her music as “of such freshness that one can say it smells good”. A further example perhaps of the inability of words to describe music.

4



*Hands Free*  
**Anna Meredith**  
National Youth Orchestra Proms 2012

Scottish composer, previously in residence with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. She is a performer of electronic and acoustic music. Certainly a different piece, but with a tradition of clapping from “ethnic” music. Worth hanging on for the 12 minutes, even if it is just to see the fun the youngsters are having after all the hard work they put in for the music they usually play.

5



*Symphony in C*  
**Marianna Martines**  
1744–1812

An accomplished singer, pianist and composer in Vienna during the Classical period. Her piano teacher was an impoverished Haydn, who lived in attic above her parents' apartment.

# Monthly Quiz Challenge

*Time to test your knowledge*



## One Letter Less

Each pair of clues leads to two words. The second word is made by removing ONE letter from the first word.

Can you work out both words and the missing letter?

Keep an eye on the missing letters – they spell out something you'll need for this month's recipe!

1. A happy facial expression / A measure of distance
2. A living thing growing in the garden / A scheme or proposal
3. The seeds of cereal crops / A financial profit
4. A baked loaf / Raised or brought up
5. Complete or entire / An opening or gap
6. To carry something / A circular band of metal
7. A rich dairy product / To stuff tightly
8. The organ that pumps blood / Warmth or high temperature
9. Land beside the sea / Footwear
10. To long for something / To receive money through work



From

# Carol's Kitchen

something delicious to try at home

## Summer in a Bottle

...and no, I'm not about to give you a recipe for homemade self-tan! This is something much better – Strawberry Gin. It's so easy to make that I'm not sure I can even call it a recipe.

You'll need a bottle of gin, but it doesn't have to be anything fancy. In fact, an inexpensive supermarket gin works best because all the magic comes from the next ingredient... the strawberry tops!

Yes, those little slices you normally cut off and throw away (let's be honest, who has time to carefully hull strawberries), they're going to add all the flavour.

Simply pop the strawberry tops into a clean jar and cover them with the gin. I find the tops from a large punnet of strawberries are enough for half a bottle of gin. I like to add a couple of tablespoons of sugar, but that's entirely up to you and depends on how sweet you like it.

Leave the mixture to infuse for about a week, giving the jar an occasional gentle shake. Don't be alarmed when you're left with a jar of rather pale, grey-looking strawberry tops. They've simply surrendered all their wonderful colour and flavour to the gin. Strain the gin into a clean bottle and serve over ice with tonic or lemonade.

The result is a beautifully fruity drink that's bursting with the taste of summer.

Cheers!





# Out and About



## what's on locally

### Head Gardener Tours at Drumlanrig Castle

Sun 2 August @ 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

*Drumlanrig Castle & Country Estate Thornhill*

Join Robbie Black, Head Gardener at Drumlanrig Castle, as he takes you on a fascinating tour of the different areas of the Castle Gardens.

For more information and tickets click [here](#)

### Zentangle Drawing

Thu 6 August @ 11:00 am – 3:30 pm

*The Devil's Porridge Museum Annan Road, Eastriggs*

Join us for a session of mindfulness and drawing as you discover the world of Zentangles. These repeating patterns can be viewed from any angle and are very relaxing to create.

For more information and tickets click [here](#)

### Bat Night (talk and walk) at Mersehead

Fri 7 August @ 8:30 pm – 10:30 pm

*RSPB Mersehead Southwick*

BOOKING ESSENTIAL (limited spaces) Bats are often misunderstood and less well known as birds are. Yet, they are pretty awesome and useful creatures. Join us for an evening of discovery.

For more information and tickets click [here](#)

### Kirkcudbright Tattoo

Sat 29 August @ 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

*St Cuthbert Street, Kirkcudbright Saint Cuthbert Street, Kirkcudbright*

The world comes to Kirkcudbright each August when the town puts on its most spectacular of shows. With a stunning explosion of creative performances, the assembled local pipe bands, country dancers, our unbeaten Tug 'o War Team, and much more, you have a performance to stir all the senses and emotions. The night ends with an incredible firework display above Kirkcudbright's skyline!

For more information and tickets click [here](#)

*If you know of a local event that you think might appeal to our members, please contact Carol Moyes, Newsletter Editor, with the details*





# A final nugget of wisdom



With the children on holiday, and the recent spell of glorious weather, June and July can seem to have a sense of urgency about them. A need to fit everything in before the grandkids go back to school, or the weather breaks.

August, in contrast, has been described as the "Sunday of summer." It's the month that quietly reminds us that not everything has to be hurried.

The excitement of early summer has settled into something gentler. Gardens are overflowing with colour, hedgerows are heavy with fruit, and the evenings can still be enjoyed. Nature isn't rushing towards the next season; instead, it seems content to pause where it is.

Author Victoria Erickson captured this feeling perfectly when she wrote that August "yawns and lingers on with the light in its palms." It is a beautiful image of a month that invites us to slow our pace and appreciate life's quieter moments.

The Finnish author Tove Jansson described August as "the border between summer and autumn"—a gentle threshold between one season and the next. It's a time of gathering: gathering harvests, gathering memories, and gathering strength before life becomes busier once again.

Perhaps there's a lesson for all of us in that.

We spend so much of our lives looking ahead to the next appointment, the next project or the next holiday that we sometimes forget to enjoy where we are right now. August gently encourages us to pause. Sit in the sunshine with a good book. Take a walk without checking the time. Share a meal with friends. Listen to the birdsong, admire the flowers, or simply watch the clouds drift by.

And if you occasionally find yourself doing absolutely nothing, don't feel guilty. Sometimes rest is just as productive as activity. It gives us the chance to recharge, reflect and appreciate all that we've experienced over the year so far.

So take a moment to breathe deeply, enjoy the lingering warmth, and let August remind you that life's richest moments are often the ones we take the time to notice.



# Quiz Answers

---

1. SMILE / MILE      S
2. PLANT / PLAN     T
3. GRAIN / GAIN     R
4. BREAD / BRED     A
5. WHOLE / HOLE    W
6. BRING / RING      B
7. CREAM / CRAM    E
8. HEART / HEAT     R
9. SHORE / SHOE     R
10. YEARN / EARN    Y

# Keep in touch

Questions? Suggestions? Comments?  
Please contact ...

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## Group Leaders

visit our website and go to the Group's page.  
Click on the Group Leader's name and  
use the Contact Form to message them.

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our groups, events  
and all the latest news.



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