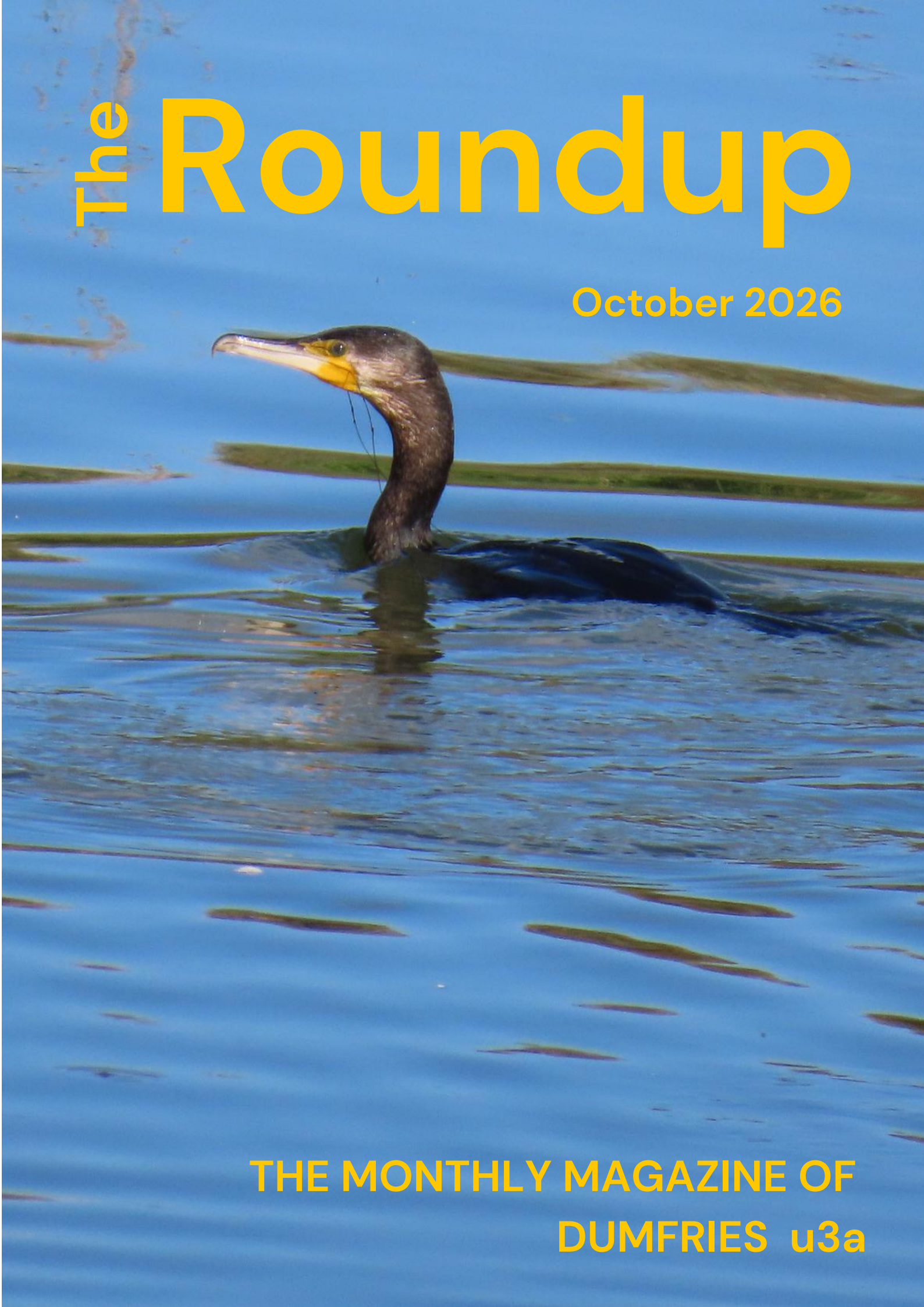
The Roundup

October 2026



THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF
DUMFRIES u3a

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Monthly Meeting

The Fascinating Story of the Cruck Cottage

Our October monthly meeting welcomed Tom Hughes from Cruck Cottage Heritage for a fascinating talk about the history, restoration and remarkable survival of one of Dumfries and Galloway's traditional buildings.

Situated at Torthorwald, Cruck Cottage is a wonderful example of a traditional Scottish cruck-framed cottage. Its distinctive construction uses large, curved timber beams, known as crucks, which rise from the ground to support the roof. Tom explained how the original structure incorporated locally available materials, including birch rafters and heather turf, reflecting the ingenuity of the people who built and lived in these homes centuries ago.

The cottage's story has not always been a comfortable one. Over the years, it fell into disrepair, and its future was uncertain. The photographs Tom shared brought this history vividly to life, showing the building in its deteriorating state and the challenges involved in preserving its traditional construction. Images of the exposed roof timbers gave us a particularly clear insight into the craftsmanship and methods used in its original construction.

Historic photographs also illustrated earlier attempts to record and renovate the cottage, including plans drawn up in 1963 by Alf Truckell, then curator of Dumfries Museum. More recently,



a devastating fire on 9 January 2018 threatened the building once again, making the subsequent efforts to restore and protect it all the more remarkable.

Tom also described the community involvement that helped bring Cruck Cottage back to life, including its official reopening with the Guild of Players. Support from local media, including Border Life, West Sound and BBC Radio Scotland, helped bring its story to a wider audience.

The talk was a wonderful reminder that our local heritage is about far more than old buildings. It preserves the stories, skills and everyday lives of previous generations. Thanks to the dedication of those involved with Cruck Cottage Heritage, this unusual piece of our architectural past continues to tell its story to new generations.

We are grateful to Tom for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with us, and for giving us such an absorbing glimpse into the history of a remarkable local landmark.



The interior of the cottage showing the unique construction



Plans to restore the cottage began in the 1960s

November Meetings - Developments in Emergency Care Call Systems

How confident are we that help would be available if we had a fall or suddenly became unwell at home? For many people, an emergency care call system provides valuable reassurance, offering a way to summon assistance when it is needed most.

At our November monthly meeting, we welcome Ian Callander, Senior Telehealthcare Assessor, who will talk to us about the latest developments in emergency care call systems.

Technology in this area has moved on considerably, with new approaches to telecare offering opportunities to support people to live independently and safely in their own homes. Ian will introduce us to developments in the equipment and services available, explaining how these systems work and how they can help people maintain their independence while providing peace of mind for them and their families.

This is a subject that may be particularly relevant to members who are thinking about their own future needs, supporting an older relative, or simply interested in how technology is changing the way care is delivered. There should be plenty to interest anyone who wants to understand more about the practical options available and the reassurance they can offer.

Do come along to hear Ian's talk, learn something new and take the opportunity to ask questions.

Our meeting takes place on Thursday 5th November at 2pm at Dumfries Baptist Church Centre. We look forward to seeing you there!



Help Make Our u3a Christmas Tree Sparkle!

Following the wonderful success of our Discover Dumfries u3a event, where so many members and visitors enjoyed meeting one another and discovering the wide range of activities on offer, we have another opportunity to get together for some fun!

This December, Dumfries u3a will be taking part in the Christmas Tree Festival at St John's Church, from 3rd to 6th December, and we want our tree to be a real celebration of our u3a community. Decorated in our familiar blue and gold colours, it will feature the u3a logo and decorations representing our many interest groups.

But we need your help to make it happen!

Please join us for a Christmas crafting session on Tuesday, 3rd November, from 2pm to 4pm, at Dumfries Baptist Church Centre.

We need at least 60-70 decorations to fill our tree, and we'd love as many members as possible to contribute. And don't worry if you've never considered yourself crafty! You don't need any special skills or experience. All materials will be provided, and there will be support to help everyone get involved.

The more members who contribute, the more our tree will represent the people and activities that make Dumfries u3a such a special community. Whether you come along to make one decoration or several, every contribution will help make our tree unique.

We also need a catchy name for our festive creation, so do bring along your suggestions!

So, put the date in your diary, bring your enthusiasm and Christmas spirit, and come and be part of something special. Let's make our u3a Christmas tree sparkle — together!



Dates for Your Diary

DATE	MEETING / SPEAKER / TOPIC
3rd November	Make a u3a Christmas decoration for the Christmas Tree Festival
5th November	Ian Callander, Senior Telehealthcare Assessor, will talk about the developments in emergency care call systems
3rd December	The Ukulele Group will entertain us and get us into the Christmas spirit!
7th January	Alison Burgess, Clerk to the Lord Lieutenant, will be talking about the role of the Lord Lieutenant
4th February	Hidden Paris by speaker Chris Anderson
4th March	Gardening with speaker Colin Crosbie, horticultural consultant

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

There's always plenty happening behind the scenes to keep Dumfries u3a running smoothly. Here are some of the highlights from our committee meeting on the 23rd October.

Membership continues to grow

We now have 314 members, with three more potential members in the pipeline. Since January, 48 people have joined. The committee is working to make joining and renewing membership easier through a new members' portal on Beacon, which should allow members to pay subscriptions and check their contact details online. The annual subscription will remain at £40 for 2027, although joint membership is being discontinued. Further information will be sent to members, and everyone is asked not to renew until further notice.

An uncertain future for the North West Resource Centre

The future of the North West Resource Centre remains a concern, with 11 of our groups currently meeting there. The council is due to consider the building's future at its meeting on 30 October. Meanwhile, the committee is exploring alternative venues, including the Bridge Education Centre, Lochside, New Abbey and Terregles Memorial Hall. We will keep members informed as the situation develops.

Vacant Post

The search for a Treasurer continues, and an advertisement explaining the role will appear in the next newsletter. In the meantime, payments are being handled by Douglas Simpson.

Online Newsletter

The committee agreed to continue using Heyzine for the online flipbook version of The Roundup, at an annual cost of £48. Having exhausted the free options offered by a number of flipbook platforms, we found Heyzine to be the best value for our needs.

Group Leaders

Following the recent Group Leaders' meeting, work continues to encourage greater use of Beacon and ensure that groups follow appropriate procedures. Group Coordinators will also be arranging visits to groups.

New opportunities and future plans

A new Qi Gong group, led by Ken Humphreys, has been approved to meet weekly on Thursdays at Lochvale House, from 1pm to 2pm. The arrangement will be reviewed after six months.

The committee also discussed and agreed to expanding our social media presence to include Instagram and YouTube, helping us reach potential members and their families.

A new timetable of possible speakers is being developed for future monthly meetings.

Finally, the committee considered copyright guidance for music and photographs, as well as privacy and data protection. The Privacy Policy will be discussed further at the next meeting.

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

Meet the Committee

Introducing Dave Roberts



As our Asset Manager, Dave Roberts keeps track of Dumfries u3a's equipment and promotional materials, helping everything run smoothly. He also brings considerable experience to the committee, having spent most of his career in tertiary education.

Originally from the Shropshire/Welsh border, Dave discovered u3a when a friend invited him to contribute to an online meeting. He was impressed by the opportunities available through online interest groups and joined Dumfries u3a to take part.

"I was totally taken aback by the number of groups and wide range of interests," he recalls.

Dave's belief in the value of community was reinforced by a recent First Aid for Mental Health course organised by South of Scotland Rotary Clubs. One message particularly resonated with him: "It is difficult to help others if you aren't in a good place yourself."

He sees u3a as a wonderful way to support mental wellbeing through friendship, learning, activity and helping others.

So why join the committee? Dave has seen thriving organisations fold because nobody was willing to help keep them going.

"Being a committee member is not too onerous," he points out.

A useful reminder that a little of our time can make a big difference to the future of Dumfries u3a!

Treasurer? Finance Officer? Chief Bean Counter? We Need You!

Don't let the job title put you off! Whatever we call the role, Dumfries u3a needs someone to help look after our finances, and we'd really love a volunteer to come forward.

You don't need to be a financial expert, a maths wizard or someone who gets excited about spreadsheets. All our financial administration is carried out through the u3a Beacon app, which makes the process much more straightforward than you might imagine.

The role involves paying invoices, recording transactions, checking the bank account, providing a monthly update to the Committee and responding to members' finance-related emails.

And you're not going to be thrown in at the deep end! Our Chair, Kathleen Simpson, is a former Treasurer and will provide plenty of support and guidance. There is also really useful training available to help you get up to speed with the Beacon software.

We know that volunteering for a committee role can feel like a big commitment, but this is a vital role. And we do need to be honest: if nobody volunteers, we may have to pay an accountancy firm to take on at least some of the financial administration, including paying invoices. That would mean additional costs for our u3a which could otherwise be put towards the activities we offer our members and could mean increases in membership fees.

Please don't assume someone else will step forward. If you think you might be able to help, or would simply like to find out more before deciding, please contact Kathleen Simpson, our Chair, for an informal chat. You don't have to say yes straight away — just be willing to find out more!

North West Resource Centre: An Uncertain Future

The future of Dumfries' North West Resource Centre remains uncertain following notice that its current lease arrangements will end. The centre is home to several community organisations and businesses, including Ami-Zone Café, run by Kelly Jamieson, and is an important meeting place for many Dumfries u3a groups.

Both our Chair, Kathleen Simpson, and Newsletter Editor, Carol Moyes, have spoken to the media in support of Kelly's bid to lease the café and the main meeting room directly from the Council, helping to preserve this valuable community hub.

No decision has yet been announced by Dumfries and Galloway Council. In the meantime, all u3a groups should continue to meet at the North West Resource Centre as usual.

We will keep members informed as the situation develops.

Group Leaders' Get Together

There was a very encouraging turnout for our Group Leaders' meeting on 29 September, when 23 Group Leaders and committee members came together, representing 30 of our 43 groups.

The meeting provided an opportunity to share information, discuss practical issues and look at ways to support our volunteers. Our new Group Coordinators, Alistair Brown and Roger Hardy, were introduced, and Group Leaders received their new handbook, bringing together useful guidance and signposting further information on our website.

Kathleen also demonstrated the facilities available on the Dumfries u3a website and the Beacon app. There was a reminder of the importance of keeping group information up to date, recording room bookings on Beacon and completing appropriate risk assessments. With several new groups being established following our successful Discover Dumfries u3a event, there is plenty happening among our groups!

Venue arrangements and future changes affecting the North West Resource Centre were also discussed, with further enquiries ongoing.

A huge thank you to all the Group Leaders who attended, and to everyone who gives their time and enthusiasm to running our groups. Your commitment is what makes Dumfries u3a such a vibrant and welcoming community, offering members so many opportunities to learn, share interests and make new friends.

Membership Subscriptions for 2027

We are pleased to announce that Dumfries u3a's annual subscription will remain at £40 per member for 2027.

However, following advice from the Third Age Trust and HMRC Gift Aid guidance, the Committee has decided to discontinue joint membership, with all members now treated as individuals. The Associate Member rate, for members of other u3as, will remain at £36.

Kathleen Simpson, our Chair, says: "We would like to again thank members for accepting the increased subscription in 2026 which has helped return us to a secure financial position. The Committee hopes to keep fees as affordable as possible in future, while working through challenges including the uncertain future of the North West Resource Centre and the need to recruit a Treasurer/Finance Officer."

To make it easier for members to renew their subscriptions online, a new Members' Portal is being developed. It will also enable new members to join through the website. The aim is to have the system ready for the 2027 renewals and information will be shared soon, so please do not renew your membership until further notice.

Members who pay by standing order are also asked to cancel or amend existing arrangements, where applicable, to avoid duplicate payments. Online banking will continue to be accepted as will payment by cheque, although we would prefer to minimise cheque payments because of the bank charges involved.

Memories of the NHS: A u3a Research Project

Stewartry u3a is leading a research project exploring memories of the NHS, and have invited Dumfries u3a and Wigtownshire u3a to be involved.

Dave Roberts represented Dumfries u3a at a recent meeting to discuss the project. Although there was not yet a consensus on the overall aim of this wide-ranging research, it was agreed that the first step would be to gather personal recollections from members.

Twenty members from each of the three local u3a groups are being invited to share their memories of the NHS, with contributions to be submitted by the end of December 2026.

Could you help? We would love to hear from Dumfries u3a members willing to share their memories and experiences of the NHS. Whether your recollections relate to its early days, changes in services over the years, or your own experiences as a patient, family member or healthcare worker, your story could help build a picture of the NHS through the eyes of the people who have lived alongside it.

Please send your memories to Dave Roberts by the end of December 2026, so that they can be included in this initial stage of the project.

Group Spotlight

Scrabble for Fun Group

The Scrabble Group continues to grow, with 12 potential new members expressing an interest in joining! Thanks to generous donations from members and some lucky charity-shop finds, we now have extra boards to accommodate more players.

We want to welcome everyone and are exploring how best to do this, including the possibility of a larger room or a separate group (would anyone be interested in leading a second group?). We are also keeping an eye on future venue arrangements given that there may be changes at North West Resource Centre.

The next meeting is on Monday 9 November, 2pm–4.30pm, at the North West Resource Centre. Volunteers will be on hand to get the boards ready while the group leader enjoys a well-earned cruise!

Contributed by Shona Brown

The Scrabble for Fun Group meets on the 2nd Monday of the month in the Northwest Resource Centre. Contact Shona Brown, Group Leader, for further information.

Writing Together Group

We had a very good meeting of the Writing Together group this month where we welcomed three new members, Linda, Helen and Graham, who all gave us fascinating, enjoyable and very diverse pieces on the subject of 'Dreams' which was the topic I'd chosen.

We had a discussion about who should read the audio versions of the stories for the Roundup Companion, and it was decided that the person who'd chosen the topic should be the person who reads the selected piece, so unfortunately you have my awful voice this month! The story I've chosen is Bill Walker's story 'A dream come true'. It was interesting that Bill chose to write in the first person as a female narrator, getting in touch with his feminine side!

Contributed by Bob Mundell

The Writing Together Group meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month in the Northwest Resource Centre. Contact Bill Walker, Group Leader, for further information.

Franchement Francais Groupe

Le Groupe "Franchement Francais" a besoin d' un peu plus de membres. Nous sommes seulement 4 a ce moment et une autre un ou deux serait meilleur. Nous avons une reunion chaque deux semaines Lundi 2pm-4pm, dans la maison d'un membre en Dumfries ville. Nous parlons entre nous - memes pendent 5 minutes, malgre les erreurs! Si vous avez compris ici, vous serez bienvenue, et SVP telephonez Wesley Paxton 01461 758458.

Contributed by Wesley Paxton

The Franchement Francais Groupe meets fortnightly on Mondays in members' homesl. Contact Wesley Paxton, Group Leader, for further information.

Craft & Chat Group

This month, our Craft & Chat get-together introduced us to something new — and wonderfully colourful! One of our newer members shared her love of Brusho painting, a technique that was unfamiliar to almost everyone in the group. Few of us had even heard of it, let alone tried it!

Brusho is a vibrant, water-based colour medium supplied as highly concentrated crystals in powder form. When the crystals meet water, they burst into vivid colours, spreading and blending to create beautiful, often unpredictable effects. The powder can be sprinkled onto wet paper or sprayed with water to bring the colours to life. Part of the magic is that you never quite know what patterns and shades will emerge!

Morag had clearly put a great deal of thought into the session. She arrived wonderfully organised and gave us an excellent demonstration, patiently supporting everyone as we experimented with this exciting medium. It was a lovely opportunity to try something completely different, share ideas and enjoy learning from one another. A huge thank you to her for such an inspiring session!

For our November get-together, we're taking our creativity somewhere a little different. We've been invited to visit Lindsey Mendick's Growing Pains exhibition at the Loreburn Centre in Dumfries, where we'll take part in a special craft workshop responding to the exhibition.

We're looking forward to seeing where this artistic adventure takes us. Who knows what we'll be inspired to make next?

Contributed by Carol Moyes



The Craft & Chat Group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of the month in Lochvale House. Contact Carol Moyes, Group Leader, for further information.

Birding Group

The Birding Group is back in full swing! On a recent visit to Caerlaverock, the group enjoyed glorious weather and spotted an impressive 22 species of birds. Three new members joined the outing and had a thoroughly enjoyable day. The barnacle geese are beginning to return, although numbers are still low. More are expected as autumn progresses, so there's plenty to look forward to!

Contributed by Shona Brown











The Birding Group meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month in various locations.. Contact Monica Callander, Group Leader, for further information.

Camera Group

This month, the Camera Group turned its lenses towards portraiture, with Jenny Hughes, a member of our Table Tennis Group, kindly agreeing to be our model. Many thanks to Jenny for her time and patience. We're delighted to share the winning photographs, which capture her in a variety of ways.

Contributed by Terry Howat



First - 'Jenny Deep In Thought' by Earl Gemmell



Second - "Jenny with a smile" by Joyce Gemmell



Third - "Movie Star" by Terry Howat

The Camera Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month in Kirkton Village Hall. Contact Terry Howat, Group Leader, for further information.

History Group

The History Group is now back in full swing with its programme for the next few months fully arranged. This week we are looking forward to two very different talks, the first on the history of Mogerleys Butchers, familiar I'm sure to all residents of our area with its presence on Friars Vennell; the second deals with the life of Jeremy Thorpe, former leader of the Liberal Party and the only MP, so far at least, to be tried for 'conspiracy to murder'.

In November we will mark the 70th anniversary of the Suez Crisis, which many regard as the most shameful episode in British foreign policy since the Second World War.

In December we turn to the Middle Ages with a talk on the Normans in South-West Scotland as an appetiser for our annual Christmas Quiz which offers prizes (books) for the winning team.

If you'd like to join, or find out more about, the Group, please contact David Dutton (ddutton@liverpool.ac.uk; 01387 711 893)

Contributed by David Dutton

The History Group meets on the 3rd Thursday of the month in the North West Resource Centre. Contact David Dutton, Group Leader, for further information.

Remember remember the 5th of November – especially if you're a book lover!

To those who have expressed a definite interest in joining our new group for book lovers I can finally announce that the first meeting will be …

Thursday 5th November from 10.30 am -12.30 pm in the Dumfries Baptist Centre and subsequently on the first Thursday morning of each month.

For the initial meeting I'd like to devote some time to discussion of the novels shortlisted for the 2026 Booker prize because I know that several of us have at least attempted to read them, and because the winning book will be announced at a ceremony on 9th November.

Although this group was provisionally called 'Literary Prizewinners', the title and scope of the group will be up for consideration. Partly due to the challenging and divisive nature of this year's Booker, (I have one particularly controversial title in mind) this group will not be restricted solely to books that have actually won major literature awards. We will suggest, share and debate the merits or otherwise of novels that have been highly acclaimed and are considered by us to be enjoyable, well-written, fascinating and worthy of our time.

I look forward to seeing you on 5th November just before 10.30 am. I shall meet you in the entrance to the café area before we go in the lift to the small meeting room on the first floor known as 'The Loft'.

Contributed by Helen Gage

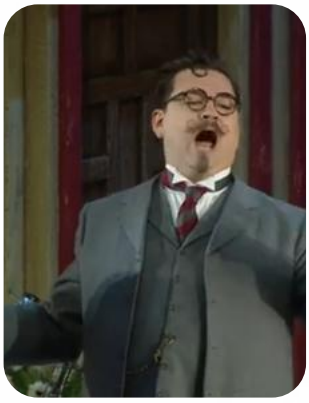
The Literary Prizewinners Group meets on the 1st Thursday of the month in the Dumfries Baptist Church Centre. Contact Helen Gage Group Leader, for further information.

From Our Ears To Yours

This month's selection from the Enjoying Music Group

This month the Enjoying Music Group have shared a selection of pieces in memory of Margaret Dobie.

Margaret, whose funeral was on the 6th of October, led a very full life, one part of which was her love for music of many genres. She had been a member of u3a music groups for over 30 years, and enjoyed both opera and chamber music. This is reflected below in a selection of pieces from our recent Enjoying Music meeting, held in memory of Margaret.



Rossini - *'The Barber of Seville' - Garsington Opera*

The opening to a comic opera, with an almost "bedroom farce" plot. Rossini retired from composing opera at 37 years old, having made more wealth from it than any other composer, then or since. If you google OperaVision, you will find many current, and free, productions of operas from across Europe.



Verdi - *'Macbeth The Witches Chorus' - Royal Opera House*

Another opening, with a more sombre and stylised approach to opera, and Verdi's skill with choruses on display.

Click on the pictures to listen to the pieces



Liszt - *'Hungarian Rhapsody - Noriko Ogawa (p) and Huw Wiggin (sax)*

A popular piece, but not as usually heard. If you are short of time, skip to the last 5 minutes. These two will be performing at a concert by Absolute Classics, our local organisers of chamber music. The concert is at the Easterbrook Hall at 2.30 pm on Sunday, the 15th of November. For details, search Absolute Classics Dumfries. Highly recommended!



Mozart - *'Cosi fan Tutte' - Soave sia il vento*

The ladies sing a sad and gentle farewell to their lovers as they sail off, supposedly to war, whilst the trickster man stands by, having bet that he can show that women are fickle. A fine example of Mozart's ensemble singing.



Verdi - *'La Traviata' - Brindisi - Glyndebourne*

This was Margaret's favourite opera. Despite its tragic ending, I'm sure Margaret would have preferred this cheerful drinking song.

Click on the pictures to listen to the pieces

A Dream Come True

After I left school, I got a job on the production line at Marilyn's Cosmetics, a local beauty products factory. It was not what my dad wanted for me, he thought I could have done a lot better than that with my Higher-Level results, but I was fed up with exams and school life. After a few years at the factory, I began to regret my employment decision as day after day of repetitive drudgery in the factory was beginning to bore me and several of my old school friends had got interesting jobs after qualifying at Uni.

One day at work the boss came down from the office and said, "'Jenny, I've heard on Facebook that you're an artistic girl and you do a bit of flower arranging at your mother's shop. We've got a bit of a crisis today with a publicity launch for our new facial range. We have £2,000 worth of flowers for the photos, but the florists are all off sick with food poisoning and we need someone to do the flowers. Can you help, please?"

A bit taken aback, I said, "Yes I'll have a go but can I have Carole to help me, we both work occasionally in the flower shop with my mum."

He answered, "Yes, of course, there's two publicity people up there waiting to get started, they'll tell you what they want."

We both went up to the boardroom where the event was to be held and there was this dishy guy, Rodney, and a woman called Elsie who was in charge.

"Hello girls, thanks for helping out. Can you get these flowers into place for me and here's a sketch of what I want," said Elsie.

It was an exhausting but most enjoyable day. We had to move all the tables around first and then prepare and arrange the flowers around the area where two models would sit for the photo shoot that afternoon.

Rodney got us to sit where the models would be, and he took ages to get the lights right. It was wonderful being chatted up by a professional photographer and he made us feel like princesses in our overalls. At one o'clock we were finished for the morning and the others left to get some lunch.

Before we left the room Carole said, "Will you take a picture of me and Roger with all those flowers? We're getting married this weekend."

I knew I shouldn't, but I said, "Yes".



Carole went to fetch Roger from the canteen and when they got back, I turned on the lights and took their photo on my phone. It was a lovely photo and it turned out to be better than the eventual publicity shot. It pictured two people in overalls, surrounded by beautiful flowers, lovingly gazing at each other three days before their wedding.

I said, "I'll send you the photo on WhatsApp Carole, but whatever you do, don't share it until after the publicity launch and don't put it on social media or we'll all be in real trouble."

That afternoon we were the centre of attention, especially Carole. All the other girls wanted to know what we had been doing, and Carole was in her element, especially as it was her wedding that weekend.

That night, although I was really tired, I didn't sleep that well because of the day's excitement and the worry that somehow the photo may get onto social media. Eventually I fell asleep.

Next morning at work, the boss sent for the three of us and showed us my picture from the previous day on his phone. Carole had shared it with a friend, and she had put it on Instagram. The boss was furious and shouted, "This publicity campaign has cost us thousands and you three have ruined the whole thing by releasing this unauthorised photo."

We were all sacked on the spot and security escorted us to the factory gates with our things from the cloakroom.

"What a wedding present," whimpered Carole. "We're both out of work. How are we going to pay for the wedding?" There were tears all round as we sat commiserating in the local cafe having a cuppa.



Then I woke up. It had all been a terrible nightmare. The photo was real but it was still on Carole's phone until after her wedding when she intended to put it in their wedding album. There was no row with the boss, and everyone was happy. There were other consequences however.

A few weeks later I had a phone call from Rodney asking me out for dinner on the following Saturday. At first, I had ideas he may be interested in me romantically, but it turned out to be business he wanted to discuss. After some initial small talk in the restaurant, he said, "That photo you took at Marilyn's factory the other day was the best one of the bunch, and the publicity people want to use it for the launch. You caught the expression of two young lovers exquisitely. It was a shot in a million. "I'll give you £1,000 for the copyright."

I was absolutely gobsmacked and jokingly said, "Make it £5,000."

“£3,000,” he said.

"£4,000," I said.

"All right, you drive a hard bargain," was the reply and we shook hands over the table.

A bit later we discussed photography and he looked at some of the other photos on my phone.

He said, "Some of these photos are really good. If you can do this well on a phone, think what you could do on a proper camera. What are you going to do with the money?"

"I haven't even thought about it yet."

"Why not buy a proper camera. There's a lot of used gear out there and I could help you get equipment. You could also have a go at training to be a photographer. In September there's an HND course starting at the local Tech two days a week. You've said you're fed up with the factory, and you could earn much better money as a freelance on the free days you'd have on the course."

Here I am now two years later with an HND in photography in my pocket, with a full-time job as a freelance photographer. And, guess what? Rodney and I are now an item. After the nightmare, it's all like a dream come true.

Bill Walker, October 2026



Find the Missing Words

This month we've given you some well-known phrases or facts featuring numbers. We've kept the numbers in but only given you the first letter of the words.

Can you find the missing words?

1. 90 DIARA
2. 2 HOABC
3. 29 MSIC
4. 5 ROTOF
5. 40 DIL
6. 3476 DOTMIK
7. 7BF7B
8. 64YOQVR
9. 360 DIAC
10. 22 BOAST
11. 5 SOAP

You'll find the answers to these, and also to last month's prize quiz, at the back of the magazine.

Good luck!

Congratulations to ...

Well done to new member, Karen Little, who was the winner of our Discover Dumfries u3a event prize quiz. She has won a beautiful bouquet of flowers, which will be winging its way to her shortly.

It was a tricky quiz, and nobody got full marks - not even our winner Karen - so well done to everyone who took part.

Carol's Kitchen

something delicious to try at home

Scotch Pancakes

I don't make pancakes very often, but when I do, I always turn to my mother's recipe. It's written in a rather tatty recipe book I've had since my student days and, while it's probably a perfectly standard recipe for Scotch pancakes (or drop scones, depending on what you call them), it's special to me.

It takes me straight back to childhood, when I would wait impatiently for the first pancake to come off the griddle. That one was mine. Nobody else was getting their hands on it if I had anything to do with it! I thought my mum was giving me an extra special treat, but what I didn't realise then was that the first pancake is rarely the best. Once the griddle has settled into its stride, the later batches are always better.

My mother's recipe doesn't use grams, or even ounces. Instead, everything is measured in cups and spoons. I've always associated this with American recipes, but we're not talking about those standardised measuring cups and spoons with the quantities stamped on them. Oh no! My mother simply used whichever teacup came out of the cupboard first. Precision, apparently, was a matter of judgement rather than measurement!

Recently, I spotted a recipe for Scotch pancakes shared on social media by food writer Ali Stoner (you'll find her on Instagram as @rovinghaggis). They look (*almost*) as good as my mum's. The comments, however, were full of heated debate about whether they should be called Scotch pancakes or Scot's pancakes.

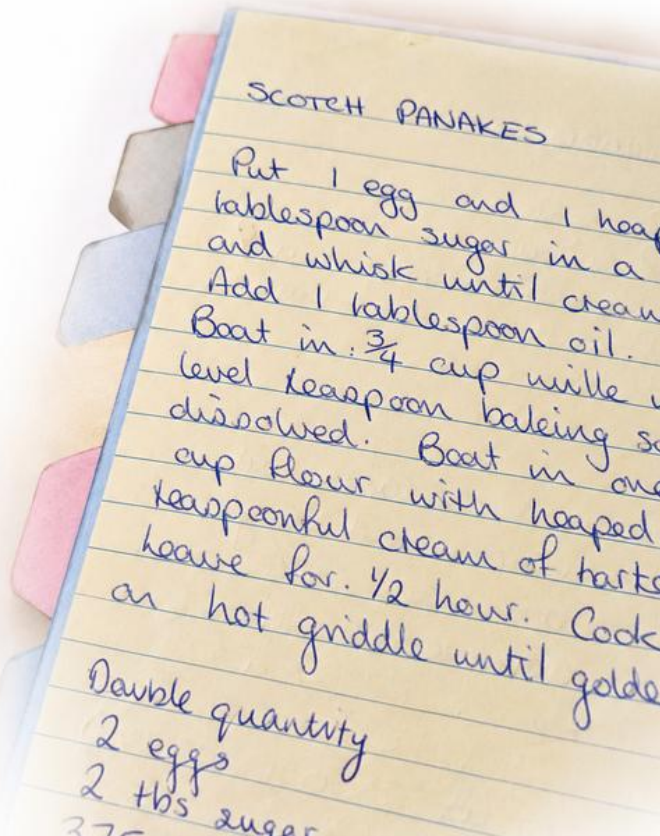
As far as I'm concerned, they are Scotch pancakes - always were, always will be. But perhaps our Discussion Group would like to get its teeth into that one? Just try not to let things get too heated. We're talking pancakes, after all, not constitutional reform!

Enjoy!

Method

Put one egg and one heaped tablespoon of sugar in a bowl and whisk until creamy. Add one tablespoon oil. Beat in ¾ cup milk with a level teaspoon baking soda dissolved in it. Beat in one cup of plain flour with a heaped teaspoonful of cream of tartar. Leave for half an hour. Cook on a hot griddle until golden.

If using self-raising flour, swap the baking soda and cream of tartare for a level teaspoon of baking powder.



Out and About

Things to do locally

Lindsey Mendick: Growing Pains

Loreburn Centre, Dumfries High Street

Jupiter+ is an ambitious off-site programme from award-winning Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh, that brings world-class art to high streets across Scotland. This year, artist Lindsey Mendick presents Growing Pains, a new site-specific installation comprising ceramic sculptures, stained glass, office furniture and a film, set in an abandoned estate agent's office. For more information click here

u3a Scotland's Autumn Event - Scotland's Heritage and Traditions

Tuesday, 3rd November by Zoom - 10.00 am -12.45 pm

Not so much 'out and about' but something to enjoy in the comfort of your own home. The subject is Scotland's heritage and traditions and there are some very interesting speakers lined up. You should have received an email from our Secretary, Maggie Holdsworth, with full details of the speakers and schedule. The details required to join the meeting are:

Meeting link: https://zoom.us/j/96992094842?pwd=KMRGHOogbbstpoDPXaHa2Tg6yz0btu.1

Meeting ID: 969 9209 4842

Passcode: 652208

Seasons - Welcoming Winter

Coach & Horses Inn, 66 White Sands, Dumfries DG1 2RS

Thursday, 5th November - 6.30-8.30 pm

Organised by Ferlie Studio, Seasons is about stepping out of the usual rush for a couple of hours, a chance to gather, to make something, enjoy good food and conversation, and spend a little time noticing the season around us. For more information and to book tickets click here.

Upland Made - Art and Craft Fair

Easterbrook Hall, The Crichton, Dumfries

Saturday, 7th November - 12.00 noon-5.00 pm

Sunday, 8th November - 10.00 am-4.00 pm

Discover unique art, craft and design from Dumfries and Galloway's talented artists and makers. This year, Upland Made will also feature a programme of creative workshops, giving visitors the chance to get hands-on and try something new. For more information and to book workshops 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

Lest We Forget : Honouring and Remembering

St George's Church, Dumfries

Sunday, 8th November - 7.00 pm

Lest We Forget is a reflection in words, music and images inspired by the personal lived experiences of those who served. For more information click here.

TASDAG Lecture: Raphael, a god amongst painters

Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries

Tuesday, 10th November - 10.30 am

Dr Chantal Brotherton Ratcliff Raphael will pose the question "what is the magic of Raphael?" She takes a fresh look at Raphael, exploring what he achieved, and looking, as if for the first time, at the beauty and grace of his work.

Ceilidh for Maggie's Dumfries

Loreburn Hall, Dumfries DG1 1LN

Friday, 27th November - 7–11pm - Piper Sandy Dunlop welcoming guests from 6.30pm

Hosted by Dumfries Lions Club, this special evening features live music from the fantastic Shore Road Band. Your ticket includes a delicious buffet prepared and served by the talented young people from The Usual Place, along with a special performance from our wonderful local Highland dancers.100% of ticket and raffle takings will go directly towards helping create Maggie's Dumfries — a place of comfort, support and hope for people affected by cancer. For more information and to book tickets click here.

Christmas Tree Festival

St John's Episcopal Church, Newall Terrace, Dumfries

2nd December 7-9pm; 3rd-5th December 10am-9pm; 6th December 2-4pm - £5 entry including refreshments

Visit the beautiful display of trees (including our own u3a one!) and get into the Christmas spirit. If you can, visit between 7pm and 9pm for the magical sight of the church lit only by tree lights. "A beautiful, thought-provoking, community prelude to Christmas"

A Final Nugget of Wisdom

A little information that could make a big difference

Our recent Group Leaders' meeting produced a rather useful nugget of wisdom. While we were discussing the importance of having emergency contact information available, someone mentioned a feature on our mobile phones that I suspect many of us have never explored.

Did you know that you can store important medical information and emergency contact details on your phone so that they can be viewed without unlocking it?

Imagine being involved in an accident or becoming suddenly unwell and being unable to speak for yourself. Someone comes to your assistance, but your phone is locked. The Good Samaritan might be able to call the emergency services, but how would the medics know who to contact on your behalf, whether you have a serious allergy, or what medication you take?

This is where your phone's emergency information feature comes in. It allows you to make selected information available to someone helping you, even if they can't get past your lock screen. It isn't a magic key to the contents of your phone, thankfully, but it could provide some very useful clues when you need them most.

What information should you include?

Your phone may offer quite a long list of options, but you don't have to fill in every box. Think about what someone might need to know if you were unable to tell them yourself.

Perhaps start with:

- Emergency contacts: one or two people who could be contacted if something happened to you. Make sure they know they've been nominated.
- Allergies: particularly any serious allergies that could affect emergency treatment.
- Medical conditions: anything important for someone treating you to know.
- Medication: especially medicines that could be relevant to emergency care.
- Other essential information: for example, if you have a medical device or another specific medical need.

You may also be able to add your blood group, address and other personal details. Include these only if you feel they are useful. You don't need to turn your phone into your autobiography!

There is a privacy consideration, of course. If you enable access from the lock screen, anyone who has your phone in their hands may be able to view the information you have entered. Think carefully before including your full address, detailed personal history or anything you wouldn't want a stranger to see. You are in control of what to share, and you can change it later.

How to set it up

The good news is that many smartphones have this facility built in. The slightly less good news is that phone manufacturers don't always agree on what to call it or where to hide it!

On Google Pixel 9a (Android): Open 'Settings' and scroll down to, and open, 'Safety and Emergency'. This gives access to a range of safety features including car crash detection and whether an unknown tracker is following you (who even knew that was a thing!), but what you are looking for is 'Medical Information' and 'Emergency Contacts'. Click on each and enter the information you want to share - remember you don't need to complete everything.

The wording may vary slightly with software updates, but these are the general steps for a Pixel phone.

What if you have a different phone?

On many Samsung Galaxy phones, look under Settings → Safety and emergency, where you can add medical information and emergency contacts and enable access from the lock screen.

On an iPhone, open the Health app, tap your profile picture and select Medical ID. Add the information you want to share and enable Show When Locked.

If your phone is different, try searching its Settings for "Emergency information", "Medical ID" or "Safety and emergency". Your phone's help pages should also point you in the right direction.

One final, important step

Once you've set everything up, check that it works. Lock your phone and see whether you can find the emergency information from the lock screen. You should be able to view it without entering your PIN or using your fingerprint. If you're unsure, ask someone you trust to check it with you.

And remember to update it if your medication changes or you nominate a different emergency contact. Information that was correct three years ago may not be much help today!

It's a small job that could make a big difference. So, the next time you have five minutes to spare, why not give your phone a little health check? It might be one of the most useful things you do with it this week.

Quiz Answers

This month's quiz

1. 90 Degrees In A Right Angle
2. 2 Humps On A Bactrian Camel
3. 29 Maximum Score In Cribbage
4. 5 Rings On The Olympic Flag
5. 40 Days In Lent
6. 3476 Diameter Of The Moon In Kilometres
7. 7 Brides For 7 Brothers
8. 64 Years Of Queen Victoria's Reign
9. 360 Degrees In A Circle (or Compass)
10. 22 Balls On A Snooker Table
11. 5 Sides On A Pentagon

Prize quiz

1. motion
2. trip
3. love
4. phone
5. board
6. stone
7. bow
8. black
9. marriage
10. tongue
11. pink
12. art
13. music
14. reality
15. design

Keep In Touch

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We're here to help!

For all committee and other contact details, visit our website and select **Contacts** from the menu.

Visit Our Website

Find out more about u3a Dumfries, our groups, events and all the latest news.

www.dumfries.u3asite.uk

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