

Clarion is the magazine of Edinburgh u3a and is published bi-annually on line or in print for those without email and includes contributions and stories from and about Eu3a members and groups.



Photo by Peter Jones of display on steps outside house in Henderson Row.  
Where is it? See quiz on page 16

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## Letter from your Chair



### Welcome to our Spring 2026 Edition of the Clarion.

It is my very real pleasure to write this first letter to you as the new Chair of Edinburgh u3a. Although still very new in the role, I have been given tremendous support and encouragement by my fellow executive committee members and everyone with whom I have come into contact. My grateful thanks to all concerned for the help and advice.

I should also like to thank the outgoing Chair, George Cleland, for his hard work and successes during his term of office. He goes on to have U3A responsibility for Scotland and the UK.

#### Can I encourage everyone to think about possibly joining our committee?

I know that our members are all very experienced and have great skills and abilities. Perhaps you might consider putting that experience to further good use with Edinburgh u3a?

I appreciate how everyone's time is full with various activities – especially family and grandchildren. But being on the committee is very satisfying and dare I say it, even fun!

If you have organising skills and want to contribute more to Edinburgh u3a please do get in touch. We have vacancies on the committee that occur from time to time and we are always looking for new committee members

Please do think about this and contact me on [chair@edinburghu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@edinburghu3a.org.uk) or Gordon Ferrier on [secretary@edinburghu3a.org.uk](mailto:secretary@edinburghu3a.org.uk)

#### Monthly Meetings Venue

Looking back over the Christmas period, which now seems so long ago, we had a great Christmas Concert with excellent contributions from so many groups. The Charteris Centre continues to be a popular venue but suffers from not having a hearing loop. If anyone has any ideas for large central venues with a hearing loop please do get in touch. We have asked Napier and Edinburgh Universities but all their large lecture accommodation is full.

#### Name change to Edinburgh u3a

The Special General Meeting (SGM) in January preceded the Monthly Meeting and the motion to change our official name to Edinburgh u3a was successfully passed. We have now completed all the necessary changes with banks and other organisations including OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator). Thanks to Ian McLellan, our hard working treasurer, for all his hard work on this.

#### New groups

And the final appeal is to everyone who enjoys Edinburgh u3a to think if there is a new group that they would like to develop in the future.

We have about 77 groups at the moment without waiting lists which have vacancies, but with our increasing membership, at nearly 2,000 people, we can do with more offers to lead groups. Perhaps this might be you? I hope you will consider this.

With my very best wishes for the summer.

*Pauline*

**Pauline Cox**  
**Chair Edinburgh u3a**  
[chair@edinburghu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@edinburghu3a.org.uk)

## What's happening in Eu3a?

### Open Coffee Mornings

Our Open Coffee Mornings continue to go from strength to strength, bringing together members, new faces, and Group Leaders in a relaxed and welcoming setting. This year's events at North Edinburgh Arts Centre and Liberton Kirk Hall were a great success, with a real sense of connection, curiosity, and community.

We're looking forward to more events in 2026, as well as a special gathering for Group Leaders in June — a great opportunity to share ideas and build on the enthusiasm that makes our community so vibrant.

If you haven't been to a Coffee Morning yet, do come along. Whether you're new, thinking about joining a group, or simply want to meet others and find out more, you'll be made very welcome. There's no need to book and no charge — just drop in, enjoy a coffee, and stay for as long as you like.

As I approach the end of my term as a committee member, I will be stepping down as New Members secretary at the AGM in November. It has been a genuine pleasure to meet so many members and to work alongside our fantastic Group Leaders, whose warmth and generosity make these events so special.

We will be looking for someone to take on this rewarding role. If you enjoy meeting people and helping others feel part of the organisation, this is a wonderful opportunity to get involved. Please do get in touch if you'd like to find out more — I'd be very happy to have an informal chat.

#### Upcoming dates:

- **Saturday 16 May, 10:00–12:00** — St Anne's Parish Church, Corstorphine
- **Saturday 8 August, 11:00–14:00** — Craiglockhart Parish Church
- **Wednesday 16 September, 14:00–16:00** — Fairmilehead Parish Church

**Thursday 19 November, 10:00–12:00** — London Road Foundry Bowling Club, Craightinny

Please check the Events page on the website before attending for full details, directions, and any updates.

**Deirdre Duffy**

### Digital Communications

#### Boost Your Digital Confidence with ACE IT

Some Edinburgh u3a members have told us that phones, tablets, websites and apps can feel daunting—and you're not alone. Improving digital skills can boost confidence and help you stay connected. We've been working with **ACE IT** to help members access digital training, improve confidence, and stay safe online.

ACE IT is a registered charity that has been offering **FREE one-to-one digital skills coaching** in Edinburgh for anyone over 50 for more than 20 years. Their trained volunteers are available to help with all your online needs.

Whether you want to stay in touch with friends and family, access online services, or manage your online accounts, an expert volunteer is ready to assist.

ACE IT are looking for volunteers to help more people across the city. If you would like to find out more, check out their website.

📞 Call **0131 667 2053**

✉ Email **info@aceit.org.uk**

🌐 Visit: [aceit.org.uk](https://aceit.org.uk)

But don't just take our word for it — read James's story (<https://aceit.org.uk/making-a-difference-james-story/>) to see the difference ACE IT can make.

# Profile

## Pauline's Story

**Pauline Cox** was appointed Chair of Edinburgh u3a in November 2025, succeeding George Cleland. Under George's leadership, the organisation grew into one of the most successful u3a's in the UK. So, what do the next three years have in store with Pauline in charge? Here, Pauline talks about her career, her experience of Edinburgh u3a after moving to the city just over a year ago, and her thoughts for the future.

### **Pauline, tell us about your career, and experience of organisations like Edinburgh u3a.**

For most of my career I worked in schools. I began teaching geography, became Head of Department and then Deputy Head at a community comprehensive. After that, I was appointed Head Teacher at The Tiffin Girls' School – a grammar school in Kingston Upon Thames.

Tiffin was a wonderful school with very bright students. Our strengths were maths and computing. At the time we were one of the few schools in the country offering these subjects to A-Level – and our girls were highly sought after by employers. We had 120 places each year and over 2,000 applicants.

During my sixteen years as Head Teacher, I worked closely with other heads on various committees, and with an excellent Chair of Governors. Together, we focused on expansion, new facilities, and fundraising. The governing body was made up of high-calibre individuals, many of whom stayed on long after their children had left.

One major challenge came when we lost one third of the school to a fire. Fundraising to rebuild was vital, while also managing timetables in limited space. We were fortunate to have staunch support: – I've found that if you can persuade people like Sir David Attenborough, Sir Matthew Pinsent, CBE, or Rory Bremner to do fundraising talks, it really helps!

My committee experience began even earlier, as student chair in the Geography Department at the University of Birmingham, and continued throughout my career. Perhaps my most significant role was at the *Smallpeice and Arkwright Scholarship Trusts*, the UK's leading STEM education charities. I was a trustee for eleven years and Chair for around four.

With a clear strategy and funds of £27m, we reached thousands of young school students each year, getting them to run engineering projects – something I'm enormously proud of.

### **How did you come to live in Edinburgh?**

I've lived all over the world. My husband, Stephen, worked for the British Council, so we went wherever he was posted. We spent three years in Poland under Communism and three years in Ghana during two coups, when there was no water, power, fuel, or food – and I narrowly avoided a bullet that went through my car! We also spent two fascinating years in Washington DC. After my husband died, I decided to relocate. My son lives in Oxford, where I visit often, but I moved to Edinburgh to be near my daughter and her family.

I joined u3a soon after arriving and am now a member of *nine* groups. Some had waiting lists, but I soon found places. I don't think I've ever been busier! When I was asked to consider becoming Chair, I couldn't resist. I've been overwhelmed by the warmth and friendliness I've experienced.

### **What are your thoughts for Edinburgh u3a over the next three years?**

I'm fortunate to inherit a successful organisation with enthusiastic members and a committee of talented volunteers. A key part of my role will be encouraging more people to get involved in helping to run Edinburgh u3a as demand for groups continues to grow.

Our membership includes many fascinating people who have achieved a great deal in their own fields. I'd like to tap into that more and help members feel part of a wider collective, as well as their individual groups. I also want to ensure that anyone, from anywhere in the city, feels welcome.

With our new secretary, Gordon Ferrier, I've already begun discussions about a three year strategy for Edinburgh u3a. For that, we must bring in viewpoints from all around us. From experience, I know that clear focus and shared priorities channel resources, and lead to better outcomes.

I hope to bring my experience of encouraging people to help Edinburgh u3a develop in ways that benefit members even more. Ultimately, we won't be judged by size alone, but by the *quality* of experience we offer. I look forward to hearing from members what we should look like in 2030. They will be the judge of my success.

*Interview with Vikki Kirby, January 2026.*

## Groups

Groups are at the heart of Edinburgh u3a. We have such a diversity of groups it can be difficult to know where to start! Groups encourage people with similar interests to come together to enjoy and share their experiences and to learn something new. Eu3a has around 200 groups all run by and for our members. Some groups are about doing things together (like photography), others about exploring a subject and learning from each other and from guest speakers or about keeping active, such as walking and cycling.

The main source of information is The Groups Page of website. <https://edinburgh.u3asite.uk/groups/>

Anyone keen to join should drop an email via the u3a website to see if there's space. To discover more about joining or leading a group, head over and start exploring.

### Some Group Leaders' Stories



#### Walking Tango: Toby Morris

Tango is a walking dance involving two people that is completely improvised. A vibrant social dance that grew out of the working-class neighbourhoods of Buenos Aires and Montevideo during the late 19th century, it has its own unique music genre. This is easily recognised, allowing dancers to engage with the rhythms to improvise and connect with each other.

*"Tango is about lead and follow", says Toby, teacher for the Edinburgh u3a **Walking Tango group**, which meets every Monday afternoon (2-4pm) at [The Counting House](#). "It's a metaphor for life; a walking dance shared by a 'leader' and a 'follower' that involves carefully listening to and understanding each other. It starts simply and gradually evolves."*

Toby is an experienced teacher and a pioneer of Edinburgh's tango scene. He has been involved in Tango for over thirty years, dancing at least three

times a week – sometimes more. He set up the University of Edinburgh Student Tango Society, and was involved in teaching there for seventeen years.

Toby joined u3a in 2015 after retiring from the University where he had worked for Information Services (Computer Support), and was then invited to start a Tango group. He says it was something he found easy to do. Since then, he's continued sharing his passion through regular events, including hosting the long-running monthly Tango brunches at The Counting House (now twenty years).

Newcomers are warmly welcomed at Toby's weekly u3a drop-in sessions. He prides himself on being able to teach the basics of tango in just twenty minutes! The dance involves two people and a walk, with the roles of leader and follower shared so everyone experiences both sides. The leader listens closely to the music and uses subtle movement to guide their partner – proof, say dancers, of how much can be communicated without words... a physical conversation, as it were.

Toby hopes to grow the Eu3a Walking Tango group to twenty-five members with a view to running a monthly afternoon dance. No booking is necessary or previous experience required. Each session begins with a gentle introduction before dancers pair up with the welcoming, more experienced members of the group.

Curious? Why not give it a try?



## Winter Walks:

### Sally Cheseldine

With its winding lanes, historic hills, and breathtaking coastlines, it's no wonder Edinburgh attracts keen walkers. And for the city's thriving u3a community, that means no fewer than NINE dedicated walking groups – each one exploring the many aspects of the city, its countryside, the nearby Pentlands, and beyond.

One such group is **Walks 8: Winter** led by Sally Cheseldine. This seasonal group heads out every other Thursday between 9.30 and 4.00 pm. from September through to April,

Before retiring, Sally spent her career as a consultant clinical psychologist, latterly working with children and adolescents with learning disabilities and autism. She also played a role in mental health tribunals for the Scottish courts. These days, she and her husband both enjoy uncovering scenic gems. While he prepares for an adventure in Patagonia, however, Sally is often content exploring closer to home.

Initially a co-leader for the group, Sally had a great foundation to work with, taking over from the highly organised Dave Duncan – now a group coordinator. Now she leads the group herself, managing responsibilities such as membership and organising the programme of walks, as well as chasing walk leaders for details of what they have planned. Group members are encouraged to suggest and lead walks – helping plan non-strenuous walks of seven to nine miles that offer exercise and views in equal measure.

Of course, winter walks mean the weather is always on the radar, and Sally shares forecasts ahead of each outing. She says: *"It's a standing joke that, this year at least, alternate Thursdays*

*were sunny!"*

Every outing is reced beforehand to check for obstacles – fallen trees, swollen streams or rickety stiles – especially after the stormy weather this year. Not every walk is rural, though; plenty of urban routes offer just as much interest, without ever leaving the city limits..

The group currently has around twenty members who live all over Edinburgh, and around fourteen turn up each time. Now on a summer break, the group will return in September.

## History of Edinburgh:

### Maggie Wilson

Wandering through Edinburgh, it's easy to feel you are following in the footsteps of those who walked the streets before you. You may ask: *"Who lived behind those stone walls? What trades and professions filled the narrow closes and New Town tenements? How has the city evolved with each generation?"*

These are some of the questions that drive the **History of Edinburgh group**, led by Maggie.

With a background in teaching and a history degree from St. Andrews University, Maggie loves to explore how people lived in different times. She brings a research-driven edge to the group's meetings. Each session, held monthly on Wednesday mornings, dives into a theme – like *"People and Places"* – with members exploring archives, piecing together hidden pieces of the city's history, and sharing their findings. Past themes have included *Health and Welfare*, and *Education*.

Presentations have explored the lives of residents between 60 and 62 Princes Street, and brought to life the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886, which took place on The Meadows. Many of the materials and timelines pieced together have not been published elsewhere.

Maggie has been running history groups with Edinburgh u3a since 2016 and loves seeing new members grow more confident in both research and public speaking. *"If you're enthusiastic about a topic, just give it a go,"* she says.

## Cont'd

Members rotate to research an aspect of the city's past and share it with the group in a PowerPoint presentation, after which follows a lively discussion. Maggie is keen to encourage people to expand their knowledge of the city and the process of historical research – and also to ask questions. *"But it's not mandatory"* she says. *"Sometimes members prefer to research while I put the slides together and present,"* she says. *"Others team up and collaborate."* It's a space where curiosity is what matters.

The group currently has fourteen members and a small waiting list, but it's always worth emailing for vacancies. Meetings are hosted in a room kindly provided by Edinburgh Napier University, with full tech support for presentations.

To get involved – and uncover the city's hidden stories – or for help to set up a group based on your own personal interests – visit the [Edinburgh u3a website](#)

## Poetry 2: Gordon Swann



Based in the first UNESCO City of literature, it's no wonder that groups dedicated to the written word thrive here.

Among the most popular are those delving into the works of authors and poets – both local legends and literary giants from further afield. There are often waiting lists, but support is always available to help members start their own group and bring others along on the journey.

One such success story is **Poetry 2**, led by Gordon Swann. The group meets on the first Wednesday of each month in the beautifully appropriate setting of the [Scottish Poetry Library](#) on Canongate, where a dozen or

more members gather to share and discuss verse in all its forms.

Gordon, a lifelong lover of literature, dipped his toes into a few book groups before stepping into the role about four years ago. He admits he hadn't read much poetry at first – but now he helps guide a group that thrives on shared discovery and a democratic spirit.

In Poetry 2, everyone has a voice. While Gordon organises things and hosts the meetings, group members take turns choosing poems to read aloud and lead discussion.

Gordon, who retired from teaching biology at a further education college in Edinburgh nearly two decades ago, brings a natural flair for facilitation. His experience helping students of all ages find their footing translates into the poetry group. He's thoughtful about pacing discussions, tuning into what engages the group, and even making sessions accessible over Zoom for those who can't attend in person.

The poetry itself spans a wide range – from seasonal themes to spotlights on individual poets. Irish and Scottish writers are popular, especially modern poets in the case of Scotland, where secular literature was discouraged by the Presbyterian church in the 18th Century.

## News of other groups:-

### Tuesday Afternoons at the Filmhouse

When the Filmhouse reopened after its long refurbishment, a small group of members of Edinburgh u3a began meeting there regularly to watch films together. The idea was simple: support the cinema, see something worth seeing, talk about it afterwards over a coffee.

Films are chosen by members in turn, drawn from whatever is showing that isn't on general release. The only standing rule is that nobody chooses anything containing gratuitous violence or scenes of terror. Nobody has yet objected to this.

Recently they watched *Sentimental Value*, a Norwegian film about a media family navigating grief and fractured relationships, and *Nouvelle Vague*, a documentary charting the origins of the French New Wave. Both provoked long conversations of the kind that often drift from the film into memory, into opinion, into something more personal.

**Gordon Ferrier**

## Monthly Meetings



Our Monthly Meetings take place at 2.30 on the third Wednesday of the month at the Charteris Centre, the Church Halls of Greyfriars Kirk, 138-140, the Pleasance. All members are invited to attend and join us for tea, coffee and biscuits (supplied by the venue) afterwards.

**There is no charge for attendance.**

Take the bus to Surgeon's Hall on Nicolson Street and walk south east towards Arthur's Seat or take a No 14 bus to West Richmond St.

Meetings are usually available on Zoom and recordings may be available on *YouTube* for a short time afterwards. This has proved popular with those unable to get to the hall with some 50 members tuning in to watch on line and about 600 views of the recording.

As usual, our Speakers co-ordinator **Joanna Morris** has organised a varied & exciting line-up of speakers.

Details of future talks and speakers are listed below and on the Edinburgh u3a website.

[Edinburgh.u3asite.uk/events/](http://Edinburgh.u3asite.uk/events/)

### Future Talks

**May 20th: Dave Clarke**

*"Britain's Great War in Africa"*

Many people today have no idea that the Great War was fought in Africa – let alone realise that,

for Britain, the first and last shots of the war were fired there. This talk focuses on Britain's overlooked and underappreciated Black soldiers of the King's African Rifles and the West African Frontier Force, as well as considering the enormous impact of war on African society – effects which are still felt today. Dave is a history teacher in Edinburgh. He has given us two fascinating talks in recent years.

**June 17th: Ailsa Clarke**

*"FASD: The Hidden Epidemic"*

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or FASD, is one of the leading neurological impairments in the Western world, with an estimated prevalence of 3-5% of the population in the U.K. Yet it is frequently undiagnosed or misdiagnosed – and the consequences of this oversight are often tragic for individuals, families and our society as a whole. What is FASD? How is it diagnosed, what are the effects on the brain, body, development and life of someone who is affected? And why are there so many societal and professional barriers to accepting its prevalence? Ailsa is an education consultant, currently completing a postgraduate qualification in the diagnosis and management of FASD. She inspired us last year with a talk on Elsie Inglis.

**July 15th: Ian Rodger**

*"Village and Roman Cramond"*

Cramond Village has evidence of human occupation since 8500 BC. This included two short but intensive periods of Roman occupation. Ian will highlight some of the history and the remains of the Roman presence still in the village. The Maltings in Riverside is a permanent exhibition site which is run entirely by volunteers, and includes a large archive containing most things Cramond.

Ian Rodger was a career civil servant for over 30 years, then moved into the charity sector for 10 years before retiring. He now devotes most of his efforts to the Cramond Heritage Trust, and to family life.

**In August we have a break but will be back in September. We look forward to seeing you then.**

## In case you missed .....

Over the winter and spring we were treated to a wide variety of talks: **Bruce Keith on *Scotland beneath the Surface*; Andy Arthur on *The Great Edinburgh Beer Duty Scandal*; Ann Kerrigan on the *Characters of Cammo Estate*; Elizabeth Cumming on *A Woman the size of a fly* and Jim Holmes on *Japan, Bowing to Tradition*.**

As a trial to address the growing numbers of members attending, as well as problems with the acoustics, Jim Holmes's presentation was Zoomed to the adjacent hall where teas would later be served.

## And here's a sample of the talks:

### Feb 18th. Ann Kerrigan: "*Characters of Cammo Estate*".

Ann Kerrigan, who many will know as the former Convenor of the Visits Group, spoke to a packed house on a cold Edinburgh day.

Her talk, with a few touches of humour, set the lives of those who lived at Cammo in the context of the "Great and Good" of Edinburgh Society, and the litany of characters—witches, corruption, scandal and intrigue that were associated with the estate at various times.

John Menzies acquired the estate through marriage to Rachel Wilkie. Following her death and his second marriage, he built Cammo House in 1693. Ann recommended a book by Alison Hanham 'The Sinners of Cramond' which describes some of John's activities. She told us about his role as prosecutor in the trial of the Paisley Witches, which led to the hanging of 7

innocent people, and emigration to Boston where he died.

John Clerk bought the estate in 1710. His memoirs give an interesting commentary on the events at the time. He sold the estate to John Hogg in 1721. Although a burgher of the city of Edinburgh, Hogg was not a rich man, and sold the estate to James Watson, whose family occupied it for over 130 years.

Ann shared stories of the colourful lives of the Watsons, who renamed and refurbished the house, improved the farm buildings, built the lodge house, added new gates and the walled garden complete with glass house. William Hosie, the gardener filled the grounds with snowdrops, which are still there today. Charles Watson was a prominent figure in Edinburgh life, and Ann described in some detail his role in the trial for high treason and execution of Robert Watt in 1794. Archives provide an insight into the Watsons' lifestyle. The final Watson (Helen) inherited the estate, and lived there with her husband, Earl of Aberdour, for several years.

The next owner, Alexander Campbell, who changed the name back to Cammo, did not have an easy life. His wife and 7 of his 13 children died of TB, and one of his daughters eloped with the coachman.

The last occupants were David Bennett-Clerk, his wife Margaret (Tennant) and their 2 sons. Ann shared details of their divorce in 1910, Margaret's travels with her sons and move into Cammo Lodge Farm with her youngest son Percival. Percival inherited the house, filled it with stray dogs and let it fall into total disrepair.

Ann finished her talk showing the sad state of the house when it came into the ownership of National Trust for Scotland. The estate is now leased to Edinburgh City Council and enjoyed by the community—and its dogs!

### March 18th. Elizabeth Cumming: "*A woman the size of a fly*"

Phoebe Anna Traquair may have been small in stature and once described as 'a woman the size of a fly' but she had a big energetic personality, and her achievements were anything but small.

### Monthly meetings (cont'd)

Dr Elizabeth Cumming introduced us to Phoebe's life and work, beginning with her birth in County Dublin, through her training at The Royal Dublin Society Art school and her marriage to Scottish palaeontologist Dr Ramsay Traquair, to her death in Edinburgh in 1936.

Phoebe began to gain her reputation as an artist through her illustrations of her husband's research papers, and as Dr Cumming pointed out, it takes great skill to draw such beautiful stones!

With some beautiful images Dr Cumming demonstrated the strong pre-Raphaelite and Celtic influences on Phoebe's work. She was extremely skilled at embroidery, particularly in working with silk. Her embroideries need to be seen in the silk to fully appreciate her skill.

You can see examples of her work at the National Museum of Scotland and also in the beautiful Catholic Apostolic Chapel in Mansfield Place, where her mural, painted in 1895, covers the entire space of the 60-foot-high chapel. She also decorated the choir practice room at St Mary's Cathedral. Both these places are great examples of her work and well worth a visit.

Phoebe also made decorative jewellery and furniture and remained inquisitive and curious right up until her death in 1936. She even designed her own family gravestone, in Colinton Church, where she is buried alongside her husband, their children and some of their grandchildren.

A truly remarkable woman!

### **April 15th. Jim Holmes:** Japan: Bowing to Tradition.

Jim had less than an hour to share some of his fascination with Japan; a country that several members had or were planning to visit. He gave us an appetite to explore further. "*We went to Japan because of you*" was the comment made after a previous talk of Jim's on his Japanese travels.

In March 2025 Jim presented a talk to us on "Humanitarian Vision". Jim is a professional photographer, a member of the RGS (Royal Geographical Society) and has travelled widely. This time, Jim gave a personal view of Japan, illustrated with images aimed at giving a feel of the place and contrasting the apparently contradictory values of traditional culture with the love of modern hi-tech engineering and how these blend together.

The promised April showers didn't materialise and the hall was packed with an expectant buzz, with a long queue to sign up for upcoming summer coach trips.

What do we know of Japan? Bullet trains, traditional and modern architecture, cherry blossom, earthquakes, volcanoes maybe, but above all respect – for craftsmanship, design, the elderly and for nature. But do we know that 92% of it's people live in the cities round the seaward edge with only 8% (mostly elderly) still living in villages, working the steep hillsides with "Iron Bufalos" (small tractors). As a consequence, you can buy an older rural house with a bit of land for as little as \$5,000-\$10,000. (Lots of American & Canadians are doing it and joining the Japanese counter culture) If you have a sunburnt left arm, this signifies that you have a foreign left hand drive car and can hang your left arm out the window. In fact, did you know that you drive on the left in Japan? Did you know that the area of Japan would stretch the length of the eastern seaboard of the USA from the mountainous island of Hokkaido with its ski resorts in the north to the cedar forests of Yakushima in the south. If you have cash to invest, join the Japanese and invest in traditional craftsmanship such as ceramics individually styled and glazed to the value £1000s.

## Your Short Stories

### Miss Pendleton's Gift.



Jane Clark looked once again at her jewellery box. She was becoming obsessive about it and viewed the contents of the impressive red leather box, especially where there was one empty space on the top layer which seemed to glare at her. The brooch was missing! To Jane it wasn't just any brooch for it brought back memories of a very special lady, Miss Rita Pendleton. Rita had been a special friend to Jane and attended the same Church as her. Rita always wore the brooch to Church which she attended regularly. It comprised rubies and diamonds and was shaped like a bow with diamonds on either side and a ruby in the centre. The ruby was Rita's birthstone. When Jane admired the brooch Rita Pendleton revealed shyly that it had been given to her by her fiancé, Nicholas, who had joined the Royal Air Force and was killed on active service. His body had never been found. The brooch was the last piece of jewellery she had received from him the night before he left.

Jane always called her friend 'Miss P' and had found her death very hard to bear. It was on Jane's last visit to the Hospice to see Miss P when her bony fingers opened the bedside drawer and gave the brooch to Jane, saying "Cherish this always, dear Jane, as it is very special." The next day Rita Pendleton died .

Today Jane felt especially dispirited as it was the anniversary of Miss P's death. The hours of searching for the missing brooch had turned into days, then weeks. Inside the red leather box was a mixture of gold and silver earrings, a gold charm bracelet which Jane had been given as a child, and many rings including her mother's engagement ring with three beautiful diamonds,

pearls, plus a rose-gold locket with a photograph of her grandmother encased inside it.

Whilst many of the items were very precious to Jane, the missing brooch was extra special as it was not only a parting gift but symbolised a life that was tragically cut short by the Second World War and Miss P had said that Nicholas had been the love of her life. Jane fingered her own emerald engagement ring above her wedding ring and knew she was so lucky to have a caring and loving husband in Donald. He had helped her search in the car, in the driveway, under their bed, in the wardrobe especially the lapels of her jackets, and along the pavements. They went together to the Police Station to report the loss and to see if the brooch had been handed in. One day Donald had said to her *"I think we have to face the fact that the brooch may have been picked up by someone else."* The thought had crossed her mind but Jane preferred not to think about that for she knew that Miss P had entrusted her special treasure to be worn often by her younger friend. Jane had done so, wearing it close to her heart.

Sometimes Jane felt angry that Miss P's sister-in-law, her only living relative, had inherited her house and its contents which would have contained Miss P's engagement ring too. However, she realised that Miss P's much loved brother had died and her sister-in-law lived a long way away and rarely visited. Jane knew that she was emotionally richer in herself and was grateful to be happy and have Donald as a husband so the anger would soon dissipate . . . Jane mused often about the times she had visited Miss P at her home and had invited her many times to their home. Then cancer was diagnosed and when it worsened Miss P was admitted to the nearby Hospice for terminal care. Jane's obsession with searching for the brooch had eventually tried Donald's patience and so she had started gardening again as a way of coping. One bright spring day following a long and bitterly cold winter Jane ventured into their garden to see how the bulbs she had planted were doing as it seemed an age since they had been put in the soil. Once outside Jane felt uplifted by the bright sunshine and went to get her trowel and spade as many weeds had sprouted.

## Cont'd

Jane noticed that Jack Fawcett, her next door neighbour, had come out too with a spade in his hand. He was bright and breezy. Jack and his wife were good neighbours and retired. This was a Saturday and Donald was golfing so Jane felt cheered by Jack's presence. *"Morning Jane - lovely day!"* he beamed at her with this greeting. *"I've neglected this garden for far too long and I'm putting that right - those weeds better watch out!"* There was a companionable silence as both worked away at their gardens. Jane loved Spring as it signified a time of renewal. She looked up and caught Jack's eye. He grinned again. *"I just love those purple crocuses Jane - you're so clever with your planting. I bought some ready-grown from the plant nursery earlier today."*

Returning to her weeding Jane felt a sense of peace for the first time in ages. Suddenly Jack gave a shout as he was scrutinising a dirty object he'd found in the soil. *"Jane - Come look at what I've found!"* He held it up for Jane to view and her heart leapt; though covered in soil she realised straight away that it was the missing brooch. *"You're amazing Jack - it's the missing brooch I told you about!"* she managed to utter as the tears began coursing down her cheeks. Jack handed it over exclaiming *"I'd give you a hug but this fence gets in the way!"* He was so happy for her and Jane was ecstatic at his find. On turning it over she realised the safety catch had broken, and the brooch needed a good clean plus a visit to the jeweller's for a new catch. Jane bade farewell to her neighbour leaving her tools behind her in her rush to attend to the brooch. She realised she must have been clipping the bush near the dividing fence when the brooch had fallen off.

Whilst cleaning it Jane spoke softly into the air: *"Miss P - I never gave up trying to find your special and treasured gift."* Then Jane recited a few lines from the John Keats poem; *"A thing of beauty is a joy forever: its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness."* Jane knew that Miss P's treasure would never pass into nothingness for it was lost and found, to be cherished forever.

**Rosalind Newton**

## Going to the Match

James had packed his small case with exaggerated care. How he missed Sandra with her *"Have you packed this?"* And *"Don't forget that...."* Many times in the past he had bristled with indignation - of course he had everything he needed, usually.

His granddaughter Jean's wedding was to be held in Orpington Town Hall, the reception at the nearby Met Police Recreation Centre. It was a daytime ceremony; he did not plan to stay long at the party, so James was wearing the Hunting Fraser kilt and green tweed jacket. To accommodate the skean dhu, he was travelling by train, dressed for the ceremony. Sandra would have approved; the silver-hilted knife had been her father's, so it was appropriate that it should be present at Jean's wedding.

Waverley Station was busier than usual, and it was noticeable that James was far from the only person wearing the kilt. In fact, groups of kilted men surged through the concourse, all heading for Platform 1A and his 0930hrs train to Kings Cross. The common feature was the kilt, the rest of their ensemble being a colourful mixture of dark blue tops, anoraks and jerseys. In contrast to James's brown brogues, feet were in desert boots or trainers, stockings were concertina'd round the ankles. James had forgotten the rugby match at Twickenham; England v Scotland, the one the Scots were desperate to win. *Ah, well, he thought, thank goodness for the train's quiet coach.*

James had only once met Melanie, the woman Jean was marrying. They had come up to Edinburgh for the film festival in July and stayed with him. In fact, after welcoming the two women, James had hardly seen them as they stayed out late and rose late. He did not remember much about Melanie, only her short, black hair, slight figure and the red rose tattoo on the back of each hand. There were no cosy family chats during the brief visit, just social distancing and formal politeness. How would Sandra have coped with their guests? With huge difficulty....

James found his seat. It was as he had ordered, one of two facing forward, at the window. The reservation ticket above the neighbouring seat told him that a passenger would claim it at Peterborough.

## Cont'd

As the train slipped quietly out of the station, James stared out of the window and thought of his granddaughter. At the break-up of her parents' marriage, Jean had spent four months with them up in Edinburgh. Try as they might, James and Sandra had never found her wavelength. She was fourteen years old but lacked the enthusiasm of youth. "Poor wee soul," Sandra would say, "it can't be easy for her." James detected a repressed depth of feeling which needed some kind of outlet. He was delighted when she joined the Newhaven Martial Arts Club and did well. After her twice-weekly sessions she would return flushed and even chatty, until her usual reserve returned.

James stared unseeing out of the grimy window as the train sped through the familiar landscape of East Lothian and Berwickshire, remembering the day when Jean's mother had come to Edinburgh to take her back to Manchester. They had liked their daughter-in-law; Elaine was a buxom lass from Chester, but the marriage break-up had pushed them apart. Elaine had arrived in Trinity in a taxi, told the driver to wait. After picking up the suitcases, mother and daughter left without a word of thanks or a backward glance. James and Sandra had shaken their heads in disbelief. Sandra especially had done everything possible for the girl. Afterwards they tried to keep in contact, but Christmas and birthday gifts were not acknowledged, and this year, Jean had been "too busy at work" to come north for her grandmother's funeral.

Northumberland came and went. White horses danced over the North Sea, marram grass rippled in the wind. There was a lengthy stop at Newcastle, and James heard boisterous voices as the main carriages and the buffet car welcomed yet more exuberant passengers.

At the age of twenty, Jean too had joined the Met, and her partner Melanie was a fellow officer. Melanie's family came from Nuneaton. James had not yet met them.

Durham slid by, and the train barrelled through squalls of sleet as they passed through soggy Yorkshire. Faint laughter came from the next coach but a dignified calm prevailed in the quiet coach.

The invitation to the wedding had come as a surprise. It came in the form of a brief phone call

from Jean.

After a visit to the toilet James sat down again carefully, thrusting a hand behind the pleats of the kilt to keep them in line. He pushed his sporrán to the window side and checked that his ticket and senior railcard were handy. Darlington came and went.

A week before the wedding James had phoned his sister Annette. They had agreed that they would book rooms in the same hotel for the Saturday night. They had never been close, but it seemed a good idea, as she would travel alone from Spain for the wedding and a catch-up would be appropriate. He had brought some of Sandra's jewellery which he would give her – a small peace offering. Jean had always been close to her Aunt Annette. Annette knew that Jean was lesbian before James did, goodness knows what other secrets they may have shared. When talking to Annette on the phone, James detected that she was not altogether in favour of this marriage, although she said nothing to that effect. A wave of foreboding crashed over his mind; he shook his head gently from side to side.

A delay at York because staff were late with a ramp needed for a wheelchair passenger to disembark. There was much shouting. James glanced at his watch, but he had allowed for such delays. He would be in Orpington on time. The train picked up speed after York as if trying to make up time. There were stretches of lying water on the flat countryside – muddy fields with horses and cows, their heads bowed into the wind, and rectangles of dark woodland.

"We are now approaching Peterborough." The announcement barely registered with James as he contemplated the day ahead; the flushed glamour of the wedding, the vast number of unknown people, a crowd of jolly police men and women..... and what chance did this marriage have of lasting? He sighed deeply.

The train stopped. A large red-faced man plumped down into the seat next to James. He wore a sheepskin coat over a white rugby top. He looked over to James, sized him up and nudged him gently on the upper arm. "It should be a great match." He said. "I hope so. I really, really hope so." James replied, then turned his face to the window with a shudder.

**David Syme**

## Summer Visits

For more than twenty years – our records go back to 2004 – the Edinburgh u3a Visits Committee has organised trips to places of interest, reached by coach within about two hours. Visits have included castles, stately homes, museums, gardens, galleries and sites of historic industries. For several years, the committee was led by Ann Kerrigan – many thanks to her for her energy and wide knowledge of great places to go.

For 2026, Jenny Clarke has taken over the reins and the Visits Committee has arranged a great programme of visits for this summer. The first two trips sold out very quickly so please look out for instructions. They'll come about 2 months before each visit so make sure you get into the queue to book as soon as you see the announcement!

**28 May: Ceres and Hill of Tarvit** – Waiting list



We'll spend the morning in the lovely village of Ceres with its many attractions before going to the National Trust for Scotland property.

**18 June: Loch Katrine and the Trossachs** – booking in April



There will be time in Callander where there are many shops and cafes to buy a picnic lunch to enjoy later. It is also home to the Hamilton Toy Museum and Collectors Shop. Then on to Loch Katrine for an hour's cruise on SS Sir Walter Scott and finally Aberfoyle before the homeward journey.

**24 July: Innerpeffray Library and Drummond Castle Gardens** – booking in May  
Founded in 1680, Innerpeffray is Scotland's first free public library. Drummond Castle Gardens is one of Europe's most important and impressive



formal gardens.

**27 August: Abbotsford House** – booking in June



Sir Walter Scott again! A wonderful visit to his house and gardens near Melrose with plenty to see and do. We may go on to Melrose afterwards – let's see what the weather does.

**24 September: Blair Castle** – booking in July



Blair Castle gives you the opportunity to see Scottish history through the lives of the Atholl Family. Their collections of furniture, arms, china, lace and portraits speak for themselves.

We are hoping to introduce booking through Ticket Tailor, a website where you can book and pay for your place on a visit at the same time. The two-step process we have now – pay by BACS and remember to tell the trip organiser – will be a thing of the past. And the organiser will be able to communicate with everyone at the same time, much easier than having to do so one at a time. People will still be able to book and pay in cash at the monthly meeting two months before the event.

The Committee: Jenny Clarke, Alan Grant, Jen Jackson, Pam MacKinnon, Fiona MacLaren, Scott Raeburn, Christine Ure, Hilary Watkinson.

# Where is it? Hidden Delights of Edinburgh

More photos of lesser known spots in Edinburgh from Peter Jones.

How many of these and the stories behind them do you recognise?

Answers will be posted on the Website!

More of Peter's photos are on Facebook.



## Miscellaneous

### U3a in Scotland Summer school

**Mon 24th August – Wed 26th August:  
Stirling Court Hotel, University of  
Stirling.**

If you haven't already booked, you're probably too late! There are only a few places left but you might want to put your name on a waiting list for one of the courses if they are already full:

The Picts  
Positive Psychology  
Introduction to Sign Language  
Enhance your Photography  
Exploring AI  
Creative Crafts

[Scotland.u3asite.uk/summer-school-2026/](https://Scotland.u3asite.uk/summer-school-2026/)

### U3a Festival 26

**1st.—3rd. July University of York**

The u3a Festival 26 is back at the University of York bringing together over 1000 u3a members from all over the country for three days of fun, creativity, learning and sport. There are events happening every day and it is the perfect opportunity to try something new or develop an existing interest while making new friends. Celebrity guest Johnny Ball, known for his passion for making learning fun, is opening the event.

The festival is a powerful reminder that curiosity and creativity do not fade with age.

Tickets can be booked now at  
<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/festival-2026>

**But hurry, tickets are selling fast so don't miss your chance to be part of this event.**

**See article in Spring u3a matters, page 19.**

### Hearing Support Group

Richard Peoples, a former Chair of Eu3a, contributed the following:

There is a hidden disability that affects about 18 million people in the UK, including half of those over 55. According to recent research, if left untreated it can lead to mental decline and a greater risk of dementia. But on average men take ten years to do anything about it while women typically take six years.

The hidden disability is hearing loss. There's a widespread lack of awareness about this common condition and about the help that's available to those who have it.

As well as the risks to mental health, hearing loss can lead to isolation and loneliness as people give up on social activities, so there is also a need for emotional as well as practical support. A number of Edinburgh u3a members have joined Edinburgh and the Lothians Hearing Support Group, which aims to signpost people to reliable information and advice and provide a safe and friendly space for mutual support. As well as talks with expert speakers, the group runs social events including cinema and theatre trips, coffee mornings and lunches.

It's free to join. Email [elhsgroup@outlook.com](mailto:elhsgroup@outlook.com).

# Your Eu3a Team

Hats off to our members who volunteer their time to help run Edinburgh u3a.



Ian McLennan: Treasurer



Paulin Cox: Chair



Gordon Ferrier: Secretary



Graham Golding:  
Internal Communications



Liz Bell:  
Vice Chair and Membership



Don Kennedy:  
Technical support



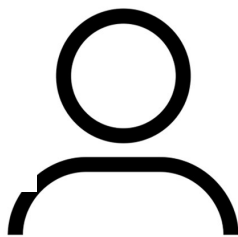
Susan Miles: Groups Q-S



Simon Murray:  
Finance Assistant



Dave Duncan: Groups J-P



And— Dierdre Duffy, Doug Pollock, Bob Cuthbertson, Gio Mazzei, Sally Burgess



Vikki Kirby:  
External Communications



David Baird: Bulletin Editor

Chair: **Pauline Cox**

Vice Chair: **Liz Bell**

Secretary: **Gordon Ferrier**

Treasurer: **Ian McLennan**

Membership: **Liz Bell**

Assistant Treasurer: **Simon Murray**

Internal Communications: **Graham Golding**

External Communications: **Vikki Kirby**

New Members: **Deirdre Duffy**

Technical Support: **Don Kennedy**

Web Administrator: **Doug Pollock**

Group Coordinators:

**Bob Cuthbertson** (Groups A–C)

**Gio Mazzei** (Groups D–I)

**Dave Duncan** (Groups J–P):

**Susan Miles** (Groups Q–S)

**Sally Burgess** (Groups T– Z)

Assistant Membership: **Nora Mogey**

Clarion Editor: **Maggie Gilvray**

Bulletin Editor: **David Baird**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: **Rona Gray**

Speakers Organiser: **Joanna Morris**

Contact details can be found on the website.

## Editor's note

A special thank you for all your contributions, an embarrassment of riches for this edition so, apologies if I had to leave a few things out. Thanks too to the Clarion "team" – **Carol Ettershank, Vikki Kirby and Gordon Ferrier** for their contributions and to **Joanna Morris** for her ever thorough proof reading.

I particularly welcome the wide range of Group Leaders and groups that are included in this edition. The range of topics well illustrate the broad church that members find so enriching in retirement.

This will be my last "Clarion." I am handing over the Editorship to Carol Ettershank. It's been a brilliant way of meeting people and finding out what is going on in Eu3a. So join us and for the next edition check the Bulletin for "Call for Contributions."

### Something to say!

**Maybe you have a story, a poem, or an observation on life, you would like to see in print?**

**Ideally, we would like your articles to be short and punchy (see below for guidance) so get writing. Illustrations also welcome!**

**We would love to hear from you.**

### Where to send your stuff?

**Please send your news, views, memories and stories to [clarion@edinburghu3a.org.uk](mailto:clarion@edinburghu3a.org.uk)**

#### Guidance

Roughly 225 – 300 words would be half a page or 500 – 600 words a full page. This will give an article of about the right length especially if you have accompanied interesting photographs. Shorter notes on group activities are always acceptable.

Articles should be saved as a Word or Word compatible document (Click on "save as" and select appropriate format) or just send in an email.

Don't worry about fonts or text formatting, but if you include photographs, these should be sent as a separate image file (JPEG or TIFF) rather than embedded in articles or emails as these might be compressed so much their resolution is too low for publication.

Except where otherwise credited, all photos are assumed to be taken by the author(s) of the article.

Guidance for articles will also be available in the Bulletin and on the Edinburgh u3a website.

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