

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023/4

WISHING YOU ALL



A



HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM THE COMMITTEE

Louise James - Treasurer

Marion Wyatt - Group Co-Ordinator

Kim Miller - Membership Secretary

Jenny Brogden - Convenor

Jeanie Lloyd - Secretary

Fiona Mackenzie - Newsletter Editor

CONVENOR'S CHAT

Happy New everyone and I hope you all had a fun festive season. I hope you are all well and coping with the very changeable weather. As we start on another fun year for u3a, I want to express our gratitude for your continued enthusiasm and participation in Dingwall & District u3a both at the General meetings and interest groups

Our u3a is growing and I would like to welcome all the new members that have joined in the last few months.

As we dive into the new year, I just want to remind everyone that there are lots of connections with the broader u3a community at both Scottish and National level. There are a number of events that can be joined via Zoom (see more in this newsletter) and u3a in Scotland are running a Summer School this year in Stirling

We are also hoping to start some new groups locally including a lunch group, current affairs, games group. If you have any ideas, or suggestions don't hesitate to contact me or anyone else on the committee

Here's to another year of learning, friendship, and fun

Jenny Brogden (Convenor)



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

NEW GROUP

THEATRE AND CINEMA GROUP

This is a WhatsApp group, where liked minded people can suggest some 'Whats On' events.

It's a chance to visit the theatre or cinema with others, with a meet up before or after the show for a coffee etc.

If you fancy joining us, please contact Jenny



Family History

We would also like to start a Family History Group. If you are already heavily involved with exploring your own family tree, you might like to join others who are just starting out and need help. Your knowledge would be invaluable.

Contact Marion for more details

DO YOU ENJOY PLAYING BOARD GAMES?



WOULD A NEW GROUP BE OF INTEREST TO YOU?

Contact Fiona for more details

LUNCH CLUB

We would like to re-instate the Lunch Club.

We would choose a day, say once a month and a venue.

This would be a great way to meet other members socially, with no walking, crafting, painting or foreign languages involved. Just chatting, while enjoying a delicious meal.

Or it could just be a meet up over coffee.

Contact Jenny for more information

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN CURRENT AFFAIRS?

DO YOU ENJOY A GOOD DISCUSSION?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FORMING A NEW CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP?

Contact Jenny for more information

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

PLAY READING

The play readers had a 'rest between jobs' over the summer. On our return in September, we ventured into the murky depths of murder and mystery with Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*. Then we embarked on an historical journey from Ancient Rome to 11th century Scotland and then to 17th century Salem, Massachusetts.

It has been a journey of humour and farce as we've followed Julius Caesar and Macbeth (not the Shakespearean versions!) in their doomed attempts at power-grabbing, and one of drama and horror as we were confronted by the so-called witch trials in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. The issues dealt with in this play are relevant today unfortunately. This deepened the play's impact.

In December, we ended our year with a reading of a hilarious panto version of *Snow White*. Then as a seasonal treat we enjoyed "Scrooge The Musical" performed by The Florians in Inverness.

We have had an enjoyable play reading adventure in 2023. We look forward to an equally rewarding 2024, starting with a dip into Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

Susan Cooper
Group Leader.

GOLF

The golf group are having a short break at the moment, due to a problem with the course. However they are due to meet up again in March.

For more information contact Mel

GERMAN

The German group are continuing to meet on a Thursday morning at 10.30 in the National Hotel. There are 7 regulars in the group including myself. We enjoy a coffee together and discuss various topics. Could be a holiday or a weekend or some news event. We also have access to lots of German magazines like "Neue Post" "Frau im Trend" and "Bella" which have lots of stories about the Royals all over Europe.

The Germans love stories about Royal families, especially the gossip!

We are a very friendly bunch and would welcome anyone whatever the level of German.

Audrey



The French Group meets in the library every Tuesday at 2pm

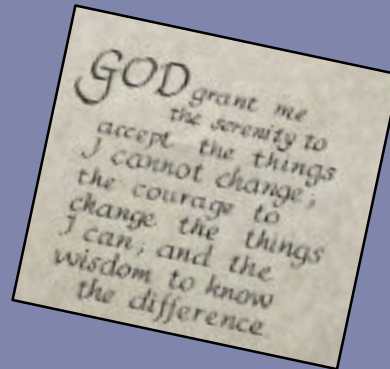
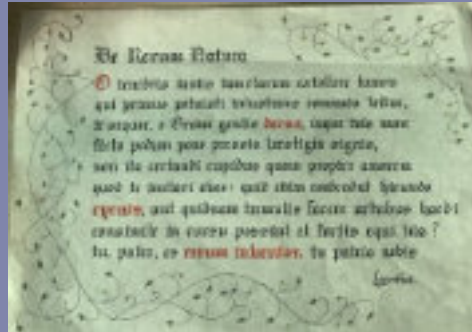
The Spanish Group also meets on a Tuesday afternoon

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

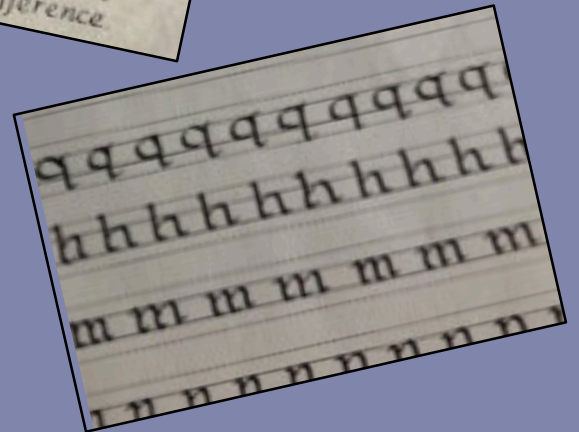
CALLIGRAPHY

We continue to meet fortnightly, Tuesday 10 am in the library, where we work on our own projects, with help from each other.

Next session:
22nd January



Some of us are more advanced than others!



ART APPRECIATION

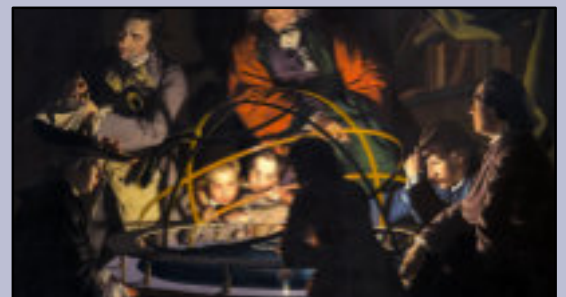
Our Art Appreciation meeting for November..how stimulating, how exciting were the subjects brought for our discussion and appreciation.

Firstly, the sheer exuberance of style and subject matter of the iconic artist Grayson Perry, whose exhibition "Smash Hits" has just closed, having run at the National Gallery in Edinburgh from July to November. The artist gave of his all to this exhibition, leaving those of us who missed it feeling quite "gutted", to coin a phrase. For those unfamiliar with his work (as I was), it is worth a "Google", as there is a good video which shows some of the exhibits, and explains the artist's approach to his work, covering as it does huge tapestries, etchings, sculptures, pottery, and even his beloved teddy bear, "Alan Measles".



And then an introduction to the work of the Belgian Surrealist artist, Rene Magritte, known for his depiction of familiar objects in unfamiliar and unexpected contexts. His work challenges the viewer to think beyond the image represented, to question and perhaps put our own interpretation on the image portrayed. In the art world of Magritte, all is not as it first seems...

And onto Joseph Wright of Derby, the English landscape and portrait painter who has been described as the first artist to express in his art the spirit of the Industrial Revolution. As such, he was also an artist of the Enlightenment period, when so many changes took place in thinking, in industry, in architecture and in the world of art. In "The Orrery", his dramatic use of light emphasizes the contrast between his background and the faces of the characters portrayed, which speaks of their wonderment as the latest scientific developments of the period are revealed to them.



Marion

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

GEOLOGY FOR BEGINNERS

The Geology Group visited the Strathpeffer Maze which is a great place for seeing rocks that would otherwise be a great distance away.

We looked at a number of sedimentary rocks including Caithness flagstone, conglomerates and finally, this lovely example of pipe rock from the Assynt area.

The group saw the burrows made by real animals that lived around 500 million years ago. This was probably the highlight of the visit.



Terri

EXPLORING NATURE

The nature walk group explored Dingwall from Pefferside Park to Ferry Point for one of our sessions. We always find something to talk about.

On this walk, we looked at ivy, and learned why it is one of the most important plants for wildlife we have. We also discussed that it has an undeserved bad reputation for a number of things. Instead, it offers many benefits.

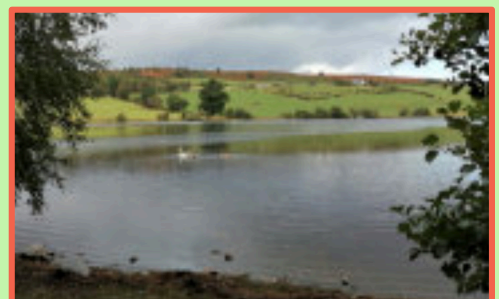
Holly, too, has an important part to play in our winters. Of course, only the female tree produces berries, but they need a male tree fairly close. We talked about why lower Holly leaves are spiny or prickly but higher leaves are smoother. The answer, as you may know, is that holly trees produce prickly leaves to protect them from browsing animals. As we don't have giraffes, the higher leaves are reasonably safe and don't have to expend the extra energy producing prickles.

Terri

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

WALKING GROUP

The walking group's activities have continued through the summer into autumn on a fortnightly basis. In July, a walk along the shore below Evanton, passing Kiltearn church, founded in medieval times, was followed by an exploration of the woods north of the Rogie Falls (photo 1). This area has again become more accessible thanks to the renovation of the Rogie footbridge. Come August, there was the opportunity to climb a couple of modest hills with the heather in bloom; firstly the ridge above Strathpeffer (photo 2), where the Friendship Stone monument commemorates the funds raised by Dingwall Academy in support of the victims of the catastrophic Armenian earthquake of 1988. Next, we used a new forestry track to ascend Ord Hill, to the west of Muir of Ord. This track is an easier climb than the official but rough signposted path, which is a bit too much like hard work for me anyway. This modest hilltop gives a wonderful 360 degree view from the Beaulieu Firth past Strathconon to the Cromarty Firth and Black Isle. Just about the last hot day saw us climb the "other" Ord Hill above North Kessock, with a good turn out (photo 3) basking in the sun before perspiring on the climb up to the vitrified fort. As we moved into autumn, a stroll down from below Knockfarrel fort saw us arrive at the shores of Loch Ussie (photo 4), a loch we hadn't visited before.



Andrew

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

BOOK GROUP

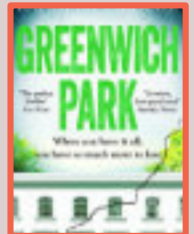
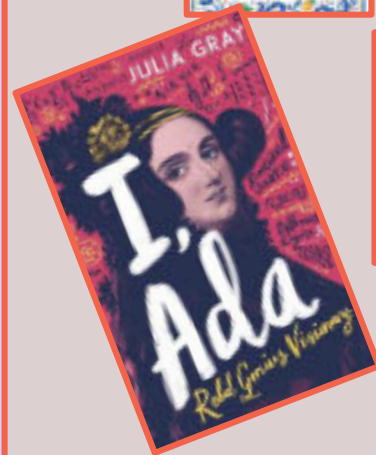
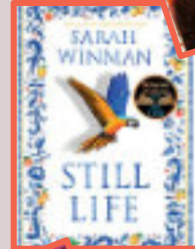
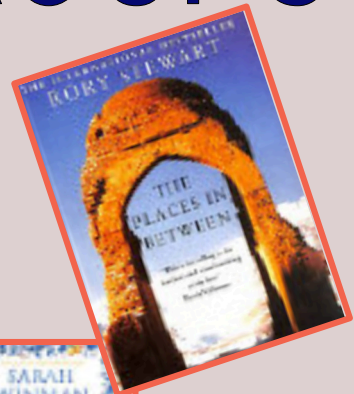
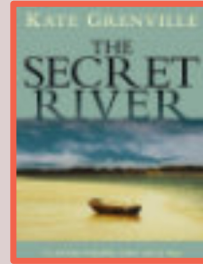
The book group continues to meet monthly at Louise's house. In September they read *The Secret River* by Kate Grenville, a 2005 historical novel about an Englishman transported to Australia for theft in early 19th century.

This was well rated by the group.

October saw ***high praise from the group***, for *Still Life* by Sarah Winman, a 2022 - character driven story set in London and Florence: friendship, art and love all intersect.

Unfortunately the November read: *Greenwich Park* by Katherine Faulkner, was billed as a thriller, but ***didn't manage to impress the group!***

Next meeting is Thursday 25th January, to discuss *The Places In Between* by Rory Stewart (2004) and *I, Ada*, by Julia Gray (2020)



DON'T FORGET THE U3A ONLINE COURSES

- Toulouse Lautrec and the Music Halls of Paris
- David Hockney and the theatre
- Laughter Yoga
- Mindfulness and Meditation
- Bollywood Yoga Dance
- Fun Mathematics
- Mosaic Art
- Secrets of the Human Brain
- An introduction to the air-fryer

ALSO - THE U3A SCOTLAND ZOOM CLASSES

- Philosophy of Science
- Book Group - Non Fiction
- Bridge
- Archaeology
- Astronomy
- Spanish
- Poetry for Pleasure
- Scottish Authors
- Current Affairs
- Qi Gong
- French
- Gaelic
- Ancient History

U3A IN SCOTLAND SUMMER SCHOOL 2024

Stirling Court Hotel
Stirling

Tuesday 20th – Thursday
22nd August 2024

There will be a varied menu of classes to attend, as well as other talks and activities

For more details, go to:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/scotland/page/79029>

GENERAL MEETINGS

Our General meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 2PM in Castle Street Church Hall.

All are welcome, so why don't you encourage a friend to join us? There is always free tea/coffee and biscuits!

Our next meetings are:

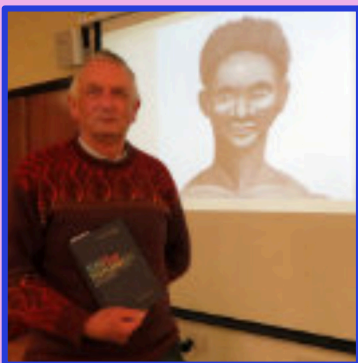
January 18th: when we will hear about the wonderful work they do at Maggie's... Everyone's home of Cancer Care

February 15th: Duncan Macdonald will speak about his job a Cairngorm Ranger

March 21st: Jeannie Sutherland will talk to us about beekeeping

April 18th: Cassandra Wilson will talk to us about Eden Court Theatre

Some of our previous speakers



Dr David Alston spoke to us about how here in the Highlands, the Slave Trade made its mark!



Our very own Sue Varley demonstrated her love of weaving, explaining the stages from the sheep, to the knitters' ball of wool.

Another one of our members, Kim Miller, had us all feeling relaxed and ready for anything, after she explained the term "Mindfulness"



There's always time for a chat and to learn more about the u3a

The table below shows all the different groups and when they meet up. If you would like more details of any of the groups, please contact Marion

GROUP	WHEN
Art Appreciation	2nd Tuesday of the month PM
Book Group	4th Thursday of the month PM
Calligraphy	Fortnightly, Monday AM
Crafts	Fortnightly, Wednesday AM
Creative Writing	1st Thursday of the month PM
Exploring Nature	1st Monday of the month AM
French Conversation	Weekly, Tuesday PM
Golf	Fortnightly, Tuesday AM
Geology for Beginners	4th Monday of the month PM
German Conversation	Weekly, Thursday AM
History	2nd Thursday of the month PM
Lunch/Coffee club	To be decided
Photography	4th Thursday of the month AM
Play Reading	Fortnightly, Wednesday PM
Poetry	1st Wednesday of the month PM
Practising Art	1st Monday of the month PM
Psychology	3rd Tuesday of the month PM
Short Walks	2nd Tuesday of the month AM
Spanish Conversation	Weekly, Tuesday PM
Theatre & Cinema Group	WhatsApp group



Do you know about The Dingwall Community Woodland?

Go to: <https://www.dingwallwoodland.co.uk> for information



Big Garden Birdwatch

26th - 28th January 2024

Take part in the biggest bird survey. Go to the RSPB website for details



At the moment, Brodie Castle is closed until March 2024.

However, the estate remains open daily and the Castle Café is open Wed-Sun throughout the winter.

In a month or so, the daffodils will be a sight not to be missed



BRODIE CASTLE near Forres

THANKS

To Michael & Andrew for the photographs, and all the group leaders who contributed to this newsletter



CONTACTS