

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2025

10-12

COFFEE MORNING

ST CLEMENTS CHURCH HALL DINGWALL

10-12

THURSDAY 2nd OCTOBER

CONVENOR'S CHAT

Hello everyone! Summer is here, and the rhododendrons are still in full bloom, while the bluebells are starting to fade.

We are as usual grateful for the hard work and dedication of our group leaders and members. We're growing and thriving as a u3a, we now have 111 members and 24 groups! All good wishes to the new groups, especially the latest one, for short story reading.

As always, a special thank you to Fiona for creating this newsletter. It's a fantastic platform where we can showcase our diverse range of interest groups and discover some truly unique things.

During the summer months, some of our groups may take a break. If you're looking for a u3a-related activity, I recommend checking out the u3a National website (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>) and the u3a in Scotland website (<https://scotland.u3asite.uk/>). They both offer online events and occasional face-to-face gatherings, like the Scottish national jamboree on August 29th.

We've got some exciting speakers lined up for the forthcoming year. If you know of a speaker or would like to give a presentation yourself, please don't hesitate to get in touch with any of the committee members.

Enjoy the summer and catch up at our General Meetings in September!

Kim Miller

GENERAL MEETINGS

Our General Meetings are open to all, so please come along and bring a friend. We meet on the third Thursday of the month at 2PM, in the Castle Street Church Hall.

What we've got planned:

September: James Mackay: Ferries on the Firths
 October: Donald Fraser: Bridging the Years
 November: Dr. Andrew Newton: The Romans in Scotland
 December: Fun Christmas Quiz
 January: The Prickly Thistle

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CRAFT GROUP



What do we do in the craft group?

At the moment we knit and crochet. One of us is a spinner and weaver and another one is going to learn these very fascinating crafts soon. We are still learning.

People who are beginners in crafting or want to learn something new are very welcome. All of us are prepared to share our knowledge with them.

While we are crafting we have a nice time with tea and coffee and very interesting conversations about music, poems, literature (and old books) and much more.

We are a small but very active group. If you want to join us, please contact Marion.

GOLF

Every other Tuesday, a cheerful and committed group of twelve golf enthusiasts gathers for practice on The Muir of Ord practice ground. This twice-monthly meet-up has become a fixture of friendship and welcomes players of all golfing abilities to join us.

At the heart of the group is Michael, a retired PGA golf tutor whose calm, encouraging approach brings out the best in everyone. Whether you're just getting to grips with a 7-iron or fine-tuning your short game, Michael is always on hand with practical tips, gentle corrections, and the occasional golfing anecdote that leaves everyone smiling.

Skill levels vary across the group, but that's exactly what makes it work so well. There's no pressure—just support, laughter, and enjoyment.

After a morning on the practice ground the group heads for what some might say is the real highlight: coffee, cake, and conversation.

This group is an example of what makes golf such a special game: it brings people together, keeps them active, and gives them something to look forward to each session.

Mel Brydon

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

SHORT STORY

This is a newly formed group, for those who prefer to read a short story, rather than the long book preferred by a traditional Book Club. Their first meeting was due to take place on 19th June at The Conon Hotel, to discuss *The Lady with the Dog* by Anton Chekov.

The next story to be discussed on September 12th is *Reunion* by John Cheever.

If you are interested in joining the group, contact Alison for more details.

POETRY

At the Poetry group we have a pleasant afternoon reading poetry and choosing different topics. Last meeting the topic was reflection and after considering poems by Louis Macneice, Norman Maccaig, Thomas Traherne and Fred Chappell we decided to compose a line each based on the interactions of the afternoon and our own feelings about the poems. This is what we came up with:

REFLECTIONS

How do we know that angels don't have a navel?

Help yourself to the free beer on the bar.

Neath the froth my navelled self reflected – look, no wings!

And I drown in my image at the bottom of the glass

I must help myself to free beer on the bar

Then I see...

a car appearing out of the butterfly case

Mesmerizing, hypnotic, so much observed in the watery world of a pool.

And answers are free. Like the beer on the bar.

New members are most welcome and we don't usually write anything. (Or indeed drink any beer from the bar)

PLAY READING

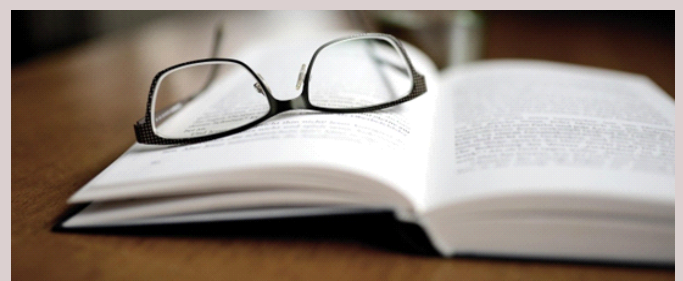
Much laughter accompanied our reading of *King Of Fools*, a satire on politics with its game playing, inflated egos and the craving for power. The sobering thought was that these events can and do happen.

John Galsworthy's *Strife* highlighted the damage done when two sides are unable or unwilling to compromise. The well-being of the many suffers as the result of the personal ambitions of the few.

Friends Of Daphne is a comedy for radio. It was written by Lin, one of our play readers. Set in a retirement home, we followed the surprising consequences when a rebellious resident takes in a stray kitten. It was very much enjoyed by the group. Thank you, Lin.

From the end of June we are taking a break. We will resume our playreading in September.

Contact Susan for more details



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

FAMILY HISTORY

We have met once so far. We agreed to create a WhatsApp group and to meet face to face once a month. This allows us to assist each other promptly when facing difficulties, while also getting some social interaction.

CREATIVE WRITING

We meet on the first Thursday of each month to read and discuss our pieces of writing on various topics. Our venue is now the Men's Shed in Dingwall. Contact Alison for more details

BOARD GAMES

Our meetings continue to take place on Friday afternoons in the library. We have engaged in games such as Project L, Mexican Train Dominoes, Rummikub, Yahtzee, and The Shakespeare Game. Additionally, we have played a card game called Bonhanza, which is a trading game that has amusing illustrations.

New members always welcome, contact Fiona for more details.

GEOLOGY

Terri is starting her **Geology for Beginners** again in September.

If you are interested in joining this group, check out the website or contact Terri for more details

We also have a group, known as **The Rockers**, (or Geology 2) comprising long-time members of Terri's group.

We formed a WhatsApp group to stay in touch and practice what we've learned from Terri, by going on outings to various interesting sites.

This group is open to others, but we suggest you attend Terri's group first.



Jamboree
u3a in Scotland
Friday 29 August 2025

A fun-filled day of music, crafts, poetry, Ceilidh dancing, quizzes, sports and more...

10am-4pm
£12 for the day
Craiglockhart Campus,
Edinburgh Napier University

Connect with fellow u3a members, discover new activities, and dive into the vibrant world of Scotland u3as.

or book on Eventbrite:
<https://bit.ly/3Fc35dZ>



Scan the QR code to book your ticket



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

WALKING GROUP

We have had a full quota of six outings during the last quarter, starting with a walk in beautiful weather from Cromarty (photo 1) around the neighbouring estate.

After an excursion into Strathorrin, a new venue for us, two railway walks took us along different parts of the disused Muir to Fortrose line. The easy routing of this line near Muir of Ord is in contrast to the remarkable engineering required to build the line on a narrow terrace between Avoch and Fortrose. Returning from Fortrose to Avoch by a minor road gave fine views of the Firth (photo 2).

More recently, a hike to the "lily loch", An Dubh Lochan, in the woods above Strathpeffer was followed by a stroll to the River Conon (photo 3) through the Brahan Arboretum, noted for its rhododendrons and huge trees, including giant redwood and sequoia.

Our membership remains substantial at 20+ and we have just signed up 2 new walkers.



1



2



3

LISTENING TO MUSIC

Our music group offers an opportunity to take a break from our usual routines and spend time listening to and exploring various types of music. Members are encouraged to share their preferred music genres, whether it be classical, light music, choral, orchestral, soloists, instrumental, blues, jazz, folk music, or any other type.

We take turns bringing CDs or DVDs to share with the group, and then discuss the music over coffee and biscuits.

If you are interested, we invite you to join us. We meet at my house near Conon Bridge on the last Friday of each month at 2 pm for a couple of hours.

Marion



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

SPANISH

Jerry has recently taken over as the Group Leader of the Spanish Group, when asked if he would write a few words for the newsletter, he suggested he could give us his favourite Easy Paella recipe.... So here it is:

INGREDIENTS

70-80 gms. rice per person - paella rice or risotto.
 1 onion
 As much garlic as you like.
 Smoked paprika, Cayenne pepper (go easy on that), salt, saffron
 Red pepper.
 Fish pie mix from Tesco, cut into smaller chunks.
 About 800mm fish stock
 Olive oil ideally, but vegetable oil can be used.
 Handful of frozen peas

METHOD

Fry onion, garlic, pepper and spices in heaviest pan available.
 When the onions soften add rice and cook together for a couple more minutes.
 Add the fish stock, and a couple of minutes later the fish pieces.
 The dish is cooked, uncovered, until the rice is al dente. It may be necessary to add more stock or boiling water. Traditionally, the dish is not stirred when cooking, but in practice that's sometimes necessary.
 At the last moment add a handful of frozen peas.

¡Buen provecho!

Jerry writes:

The first time I had this dish was 25 years ago on a cycle/camping trip in northern Spain. We'd come a long way that day, and so it was a delight to reach a quieter village on the Costa Brava, and discover a beautiful, wooded campsite beside a glorious beach.

Cyclists are always hungry, so after a good swim we made our way to a very informal local restaurant. It was an interesting menu, most of which we didn't understand, apart from the word paella. It was a mistake to have ordered a starter, as next came two beautiful, colourful, fragrant dishes of wondrous proportions, cooked in special cast iron paelleras. What a feast, I was hooked.

Every good recipe has a story, and paella is no exception. It all started more than a thousand years ago with the invasion into most of Spain by Moorish forces crossing over from North Africa. During several hundred years of occupation, they spread Islamic philosophy and culture, with the extraordinarily beautiful Alhambra palace in Granada being a testament to their architectural and design philosophy. They also brought rice.

Being easy to grow in Spain, rice soon became the basis of a nourishing meal, available even to people of simple means. Originally it was cooked over a wood fire with onions, garlic and tomatoes, and whatever other ingredients that were available were added. It was traditionally eaten straight from the pan, with each person using their own wooden spoon.

The beauty of such a recipe is that it is so adaptable to local conditions: in many coastal areas full use is made of seafood and shellfish, including whatever the fishermen have caught on the day; in more inland areas seafood would be absent and chicken is much used instead.

Being so adaptable, it can be cooked with ingredients all available in Dingwall, and many recipes can be seen online. There are some basic ingredients that give the paella its character: Onions, garlic, smoked paprika, and cayenne. Saffron gives it a great colour and flavour, but being so expensive is used sparingly.

However, the inclusion of chorizo is considered in Spain to be totally inappropriate!



So, Group Leaders... how about a recipe from your group for the next newsletter

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

BOOK CLUB

We've welcomed new members over the past few months and will continue to meet over the summer in the afternoon of the fourth Thursday of the month.

The June book is an American classic: No Country for Old Men by Cormac McCarthy. If you're an English language purist you might be challenged by the unconventional grammar and punctuation.

Future titles will be added to the website.

GERMAN

We have been looking at stories about German food and hobbies.

We have learnt that there are German-speaking communities found in many parts of the world, such as Brazil and South Africa.

Germany is known for its castles, the Black Forest, Berlin, and the mountains and valleys of Bavaria.

A visit to Germany can be worthwhile.
Audrey.

COFFEE & LUNCH

The next coffee/ lunch will be in on Thursday September 25th. We will meet at the Highland Farm Café, (Mountgerald, Dingwall. IV15 9TT) from 11:00 AM

Everyone is welcome for the great craic, cakes, and/or lunch but please let me know if you will be there, so I can book the table

We always have fun

Jenny



CURRENT AFFAIRS

For the June meeting six of us met and had a lively discussion about the pros and cons of wearing the Burqa in the UK. It provided us with the opportunity to consider - or reconsider - our thoughts on what is a controversial subject.

For the July meeting we will focus on immigration - always in the headlines.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

PRACTISING ART

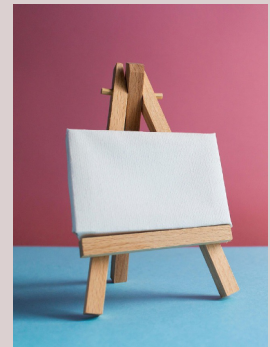
U3A art group meets on the first Monday in the month St Clements Church Hall, Dingwall, run by Terri Cunningham

Here are some of the comments and art work from members of the group

Approximately 10 u3a members currently attend Terri's art group each month. Terri is a great inspiration to the group and dedicates her time especially in helping beginners or those who need a little encouragement. She helps members to express themselves in creating works of art. A lovely social group that welcomes new members.

Audrey

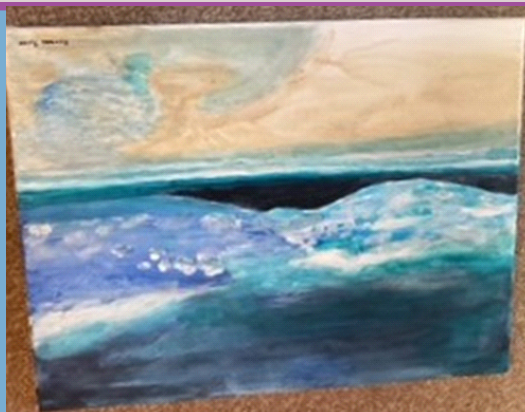
Green Loch Glenmore by Audrey



Little Owl
by
Janet



Luskentyre Beach
By
Howard



I go to the art group because I enjoy the company and the different techniques that are discussed.

Pictures are very personal things and different people do different things.

This is a friendly group and not a competition.

Howard

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

GROUP	WHEN	
Board Games	Friday p.m.	1 st & 3 rd Friday
Book Group	Thursday p.m.	4 th Thursday of month
B. S. L.	Friday a.m.	Weekly
Calligraphy	Monday a.m.	1 st & 3 rd Monday of the month
Crafts	Wednesday a.m.	1 st & 3 rd Wednesday of the month
Creative Writing	Thursday p.m.	1 st Thursday of month
Current Affairs	Monday p.m.	3 rd Monday of month
French Conversation	Tuesday p.m.	Weekly
Family History	WhatsApp	
Golf	Tuesday a.m.	Fortnightly
Geology for Beginners	Monday p.m.	Fortnightly
Geology 2	WhatsApp	
German Conversation	Thursday a.m.	Weekly
Listening to Music	Friday p.m.	Last Friday of the month
Lunch/Coffee Club	Days vary	Monthly
History	Thursday p.m.	2 nd Thursday of month
Play Reading	Wednesday p.m.	2 nd & 4 th Wednesday of the month
Poetry	Wednesday p.m.	1 st Wednesday of month
Practising Art	Monday p.m.	1 st Monday of month
Psychology	Tuesday p.m.	3 rd Tuesday of month
Short Stories	Friday p.m.	2 nd Friday of month
Spanish	Tuesday p.m.	Weekly
Theatre & Cinema Group	WhatsApp group	
Walking Group	Tuesday a.m.	Fortnightly

CONTACTS

SEE CONTACTS
LIST ON WEBSITE

YOUR COMMITTEE

Kim Miller – Convenor/Membership Secretary
 Jeanie Lloyd – Secretary
 Louise James – Treasurer
 Marion Wyatt – Group Co-ordinator
 Fiona Mackenzie – Media Co-ordinator
 Susan Cooper – Committee Member
 Marjory Miller – Committee Member

THANKS

To all the Group Leaders who contributed to this newsletter