

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2026

COFFEE MORNING

Thursday 9th April, St Clements Church Hall

10 - 12



CONVENOR'S CHAT

This has been a successful year with new members and new groups, while interesting speakers have encouraged record attendance at General Meetings.

I would like to express my grateful thanks to all committee members and especially to outgoing members. Marion Wyatt who as one of the founding members has worked tirelessly with the groups and Jeanie Lloyd who as secretary has effectively kept us organised. With our AGM on Thursday 16th April, we hope to welcome some new faces to the committee.

As well as the AGM, please remember the Coffee morning on 9th where we not only meet up with old friends, but hopefully new ones too.

So now we are all looking forward to spring and summer and lots of activities.

Kim

AGM THURSDAY 16th APRIL

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:

April: Pauline Butler from the Gairloch Museum
 May: Marcia O'Hara, the Easter Ross Countryside Ranger
 June: Duncan Chisholm. Head of Commercial Ross County FC
 September: Alison Brown on Scottish History
 October: Diana Jones. Edinburgh Fire Service

Have you ever considered attending a u3a event?

Many events are held in the Central Belt or farther south, which may be inconvenient for some members. Recently, Marion participated in a u3a event closer to home, in Pitlochry, and would like to share her experience with everyone.

u3a in Scotland Spring Event. Pitlochry Festival Theatre.

For those of us who attended this event, it was all so enjoyable, in the beauty of the theatre, with the river running by.

The proceedings were opened by Gail Donaldson, the Chair of u3a Scotland, in the recently completed Studio area of the theatre.

Gail introduced David Cunningham from Helensburgh u3a, who gave us a fascinating illustrated talk about his career in stage lighting, which led him to work in and be responsible for the stage lighting in so many of the most prestigious opera houses in the world. As an opera lover, I listened in awe, and not without more than a little "dollop" of envy...

Our next speaker, interviewed by Gail, was the actor Colin McCredie of "Taggart" fame. Fans of the STV drama "Taggart" will remember him in his role as DC Stuart Fraser. Colin chatted happily with Gail on a Question and Answer basis about his theatrical life and experiences, and Gail's gentle, but amusing probing questions put Colin "on his mettle" at times, his answers raising some ripples of laughter from his audience!

After lunch we returned to the Studio for a most interesting illustrated talk given by Ray Leakey of Oban u3a, his subject being the RRS Sir David Attenborough. This ship is the UK's new state-of-the-art polar research ship, and one of the world's most advanced scientific research vessels, which will keep Britain at the forefront of research into the Arctic and Antarctic, increasing our knowledge under understanding of global climate change.

This was followed by an illuminating talk given by a member of the theatre's wardrobe department. It was impressive to learn how such a small department can produce the beautiful costumes required by the theatre for its many productions, and interesting to hear how they liaise with the actors to produce the costumes they are required to wear.

An added delight was the fact that the theatre was running an exhibition entitled "Sewn: 75 years of Iconic Costumes" which had on show many of the costumes produced by this small wardrobe department, for use in so many of the theatre's productions.

An excellent day was completed by an optional visit backstage to see what the audience never normally sees..how the productions are staged and how sets are created.

I think everyone who attended would have enjoyed the presentations, and would have left with a better understanding of how our "Theatre in the Hills", which is Pitlochry Festival Theatre, works.

With many thanks to all at u3a Scotland who must have worked so hard to make the day possible.

Marion



Some of the costumes hidden away in the wardrobe department

AGM THURSDAY 16TH APRIL

With the AGM coming up, now is the time to think about volunteering for the committee.

We need a strong committee if we want Dingwall & District u3a to survive. With this in mind our outgoing secretary Jeanie has written a few words about her experience:

I've been secretary of Dingwall & District u3a (D&D u3a) for almost 3 years now and it's been an enjoyable experience. We meet once a month throughout the year usually in Louise's home, who provides good coffee, and there's even biscuits and in December we had mince pies as well!

What some of you will not know is that this is my second stint as secretary of a u3a - Easter Ross & Sutherland u3a (ERAS). ERAS was, I thought, like D&D u3a, a vibrant group destined to go on forever. Sadly it is now defunct. A combination of people moving out of the area, committee members retiring and not being replaced, meant that without a full committee, ERAS could no longer function.

Being on committee has been a rewarding experience. The other committee members are smart and interesting. Their different life experiences influence how we take D&D u3a forward.

So, if you are considering getting involved in committee, just do it! You don't have to be super smart, just willing to do your best. It's rewarding and you will be making a difference to people's lives.

Convenor

Treasurer

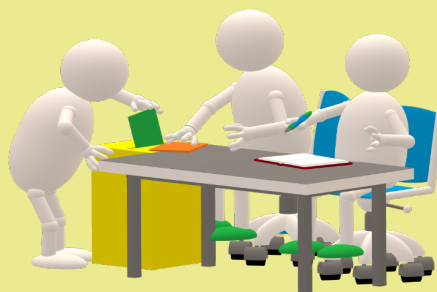
Group co-ordinator

Membership
Secretary

Website Manager

Secretary

Newsletter publishing



Coffee mornings

Advertising

News gathering

The boards

Tea making

Speakers

Table & chair arranging

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

SHORT STORY

The Short Story group meets on the second Friday each month at 2pm in the Conon Hotel. We are a friendly group. Each month we discuss a short story and lots of other things over a coffee. All our stories are available online. The story for April is Cat in the Rain by Ernest Hemingway.

New members welcome.

Alison



From Celia, a member of the Practising Art Group



BOARD GAMES

We meet in the library on a Friday afternoon, although we are called 'Board Games' group, we have lately played a few card games, Tidy the Library, SkipBo and recently Dutch Blitz. We are also enjoying the board game Catan

Fiona



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

GOLF

Just a brief few words of what the golf group has been doing over the winter months.

We end our season at the end of October and resume in April the following year (weather conditions and the practice ground being unavailable). We ended the season with lunch at The Priory Hotel which was a great success and enjoyed by all.

During this winter period a few members of the group managed to meet up and play a few rounds of golf at Aigas Golf Club and were rewarded by the members there putting on a lunch to meet us all. A very pleasant event enjoyed by all.

During the year the group number has grown to 14 plus and the ability of members has improved, many members have been out practising at various driving ranges independently. We are having our first group meet on 7th April to discuss plans and the way forward over the coming year.
Mel



BRIDGE

This is a new group created for beginners. Having already started, anyone who now wished to join would need to know the basics of the game as they have missed the introductory lessons. At the moment we meet in my house but the sessions could easily be hosted by any member of the group. Due to other commitments, the members arrange the time of the meetings on a week by week basis.



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

WALKING

The walking group's autumn outings began with a fairly energetic climb up to View Rock, above Contin, followed by a gentler stroll around the eastern shores of Loch Ness from Dores. We followed this with a walk up to and across the Loch Luichart hydro dam (photo 1), returning via the entrance to Glen Marksie (photo 2). Storms and rain did affect some of our plans, but we managed a climb up Cnoc Croite na Moile behind Muir of Ord, from where at least a partial view emerged as the mists cleared. After a circuit of the other Ord Hill above North Kessock in better weather (photo 3), we recently had a different outing - a visit to the Tarvie salmon fisheries station on the Blackwater, where they enhance the breeding of the wild salmon by capturing live fish of both sexes and collecting their eggs and sperm under anaesthetic. This enables the fertilisation of many more eggs than would happen in the wild. The young hatchlings are later released back into the river and follow a normal wild life cycle. Winter walks this year have been seriously affected by bad weather, though we have managed several outings including a new route along the ridge of Craig Dunain, between Inverness and the Beauly Firth. Our numbers have been down a little in recent months, and new walkers are welcome.

Andrew



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

FAMILY HISTORY

We try to meet up face to face monthly, but we have a WhatsApp group too, where we can discuss/help each other. We use a combination of various genealogy websites to extend our Family Tree. Through DNA we have discovered various cousins and even a half brother!

HISTORY

History group meets monthly on a Thursday afternoon, at the Men's shed in Dingwall. At present we are looking at aspects of Scottish history including the Lordship of the Isles

Kim

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group continues to meet monthly at Louise's house in Dingwall where we manage to discuss our current book as well as digress into other topics vaguely related - such as television, plays, not to mention politics from time to time! Here's a summary of recent books. We read the first book in **Mike Herron's Slow Horses** series: several members have seen the TV adaptation but for others it was an enjoyable introduction to some zany characters and a fast-moving narrative. **Tim Winton's The Shepherd's Hut**, set in the Australian out back, gave a lot of food for thought about faith and salvation as well as being a thriller. **Daniel Mason's North Woods** got a mixed reception as it traced a house in New England through stories of its inhabitants over four centuries with a focus on changes in the woods as diseases came and went, leaving their mark. **Shafak's Island of Missing Trees** was a foray into magical realism as we adjusted to an olive tree as narrator but learned a lot about the divided Cyprus along the way. **Julian Barnes' The Only Story** was like the curate's egg: good in parts...As for the Pulitzer winner **Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout** - liked by some, who found her insights into human behaviour well observed; others found it boring! For March, we will tackle a collection of essays on **Democracy**, each written by a well-known woman from Mary Beard to Margaret Atwood; and lastly we will discuss **The SafeKeep**, a first novel by Dutch author **Yael van der Wouden**. An intriguing story set in 1960s Netherlands with some 'adult content' which you can always skip!

A full list of books is on the website. Get in touch if you'd like to join us.

Louise

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

GERMAN

The German conversation group continues to meet at Conon Bridge Hotel on Thursdays at 10.30am. There may be 8 members present on a good day. The range of abilities in the Group ranges from fluent speakers to beginners and that can sometimes present difficulties although we are all well-disposed to one another's idiosyncrasies. We normally submit a piece of German text weekly for reading, discussion and questions.

Steve

BSL

We are a very small group and would welcome new members. We meet weekly on Friday mornings at my house, the hour is spent with much laughter. We are now able to 'chat' with our hands, but still a long way from understanding the signer on TV!

Fiona

SPANISH

El Grupo Español

I'm writing this as a gale is blowing and snow is drifting past the window, and I'm trying not to think too much about how enjoyable it is to enjoy a café cortado, or perhaps something a bit more fortifying, in a little Spanish bar...aaah, if only! And maybe rehearsing for that day is one of the reasons why every Tuesday afternoon we try to bring a little bit of Spain to Dingwall when we meet to practice its beautiful language and talk about the Spanish speaking world.

For the last few years this has been made easy for the group by Deas café which has tolerated a group which must have been continually confusing other customers by uttering strange words and convoluted sentences, often accompanied by a reasonable amount of hilarity.

But then a few weeks ago with the size of the group nearly doubling, it became clear that we needed a bigger, quieter space in which to meet. So here we are now, at 2.00 on Tuesday afternoons, in a super comfortable room in the Community Centre. We even have access to all the necessary to make coffee or tea, and so are already feeling quite at home.

I could write for ages about all the reasons why Spanish is such an interesting language to study, but that had better wait for another time. ¡Salud!

Jerry

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

PRACTISING ART

The Practising Art group is for people who want space and time to practice their art, or to get some help starting with a creative interest. Tuition and advice is available when requested. A range of media is used by members. The group can also give people a chance to try something new. Some trial materials can be provided to get started but members are expected to provide their own. Advice is available to help with how to choose.

Terri



COFFEE & CHAT

Our Coffee and Chat group meet at Conon Bridge Hotel, enjoying coffee, cake, and good company. Conversation flows easily with plenty of laughs. New members are welcome to join us next time on Thursday, 2nd April at 10:30 am. Feel free to let us know or just come along. We normally meet on the last Thursday of each month and may consider other venues.

Marion



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

This group has recently been reformed; we meet monthly on a Wednesday afternoon in the library.

The group aims to promote lifelong learning by encouraging participants to think critically, challenge assumptions, and pursue personal growth.

Our meetings begin with two speakers introducing opposing views on the agreed topic, each speaking for seven minutes without interruption. The facilitator then asks questions to direct further discussion.

At our next meeting we will discuss the right of any given state to attack another sovereign state.

We had eight members at our last meeting and there is room around the table for more people to join us next time; you would be most welcome!

Stephen

CRAFTS

We meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month, at 10.30am, at Susanne's home in Maryburgh.

We bring whatever craft we enjoy doing, and there is the opportunity to learn a new craft.

There is a weaver, a spinner, a knitter, a crocheter and a patchwork maker. All different skills which we are happy to share

We are a friendly bunch and would welcome new members.

Marion

LISTENING TO MUSIC

We meet on the last Friday of each month at 2pm in my home above Conon Bridge.

We each choose some music we would like to share with the others, have a discussion about the pieces chosen.. and about lots more.

Marion



NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

PLAY READING

For the first part of *Henry IV's* adventure, he dropped in to *Marlene's* for Christmas.

But *When Trumpets Sounded* in the New Year, *The Prospect* of seeing *Mr Pim Passing By* nearly caused a *Cosmic Horror*. And instead of *Black Hoodies* he was confronted by an army of *Rossum's Universal Robots*. And they were not innocently heading off to *Big School*. It was more like a game of *The Cat And The Canary* and the humans were not the cats...

...to be continued on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month!

From Shakespeare to social commentary to contemporary farce to just plain fun – that's our u3a Play Reading Group. And again, thank you Stella for giving us the quiet, comfortable venue in which to enjoy our play reading sessions.

Susan Cooper



The playreaders taking a short rest

FREE ENTRY

Opening Night
28 May • 5.30 – 7pm

'Revelling in Existence'
by Carolyn Eva

Alchemist
GALLERY

48 High Street • Dingwall IV15 9HL

Please note that one of our members will be holding an exhibition at the Alchemist Gallery in Dingwall.

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
Bridge	Days vary	
B S L	Friday a.m.	Weekly
Calligraphy	Monday a.m.	1 st & 3 rd Monday of the month
Coffee & Chat	Thursday a.m.	Monthly
Crafts	Wednesday a.m.	1 st & 3 rd Wednesday of the month
Creative Writing	Thursday p.m.	1 st Thursday of month
Current Affairs	Wednesday p.m.	3 rd Wednesday of month
Family History	Wednesday pm	4 th Wednesday of month
French Conversation	Tuesday p.m.	Weekly
Golf	Tuesday a.m.	Fortnightly
German Conversation	Thursday a.m.	Weekly
Listening to Music	Friday p.m.	Last Friday of the month
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 Story	Friday pm	2 nd friday of month
Spanish	Tuesday p.m.	Weekly
Theatre & Cinema Group	WhatsApp group	
Walking Group	Tuesday a.m.	Fortnightly

CONTACTS

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Marion: marion.wyatt@gmail.com

Fiona: feemac47@btinternet.com

For more information about the groups, go to the website, <https://dingwall.u3asite.uk> (or use the QR Code on the right) click on the group and send a message via the Group's Email

