

Inverness and Black Isle U3A

December Newsletter

Meeting News

Our last general meeting for this calendar year is on **Monday 2nd December** at **2pm in Fortrose Free Church** when **Gary Campbell** will be our speaker.. Gary Campbell is the Chief Executive of the crofting commission and will talk about **'The Value of Crofting to Scotland'**. This talk should be of interest to those like me who know virtually nothing about Crofting as well as those who know far more but want to know what the future has in store for Crofting in the Highlands.

The first general meeting of 2025 will be on **6th January** at **Culloden Baptist Church** when **Jack Kernahan** will talk on **'Lost Railways of the Black Isle'**.

A date for your new diary!

On **Friday January 24th** (note the change of date) **Chris Grant** from Ability Net will talk on **'Are you making the most of your smartphone'**. This is for those who feel sure that they could do more with their phone as well as those yet to be convinced that they need one at all! I hope that this meeting will also launch a new group **IT for the terrified.**

This meeting will be at the Spectrum Centre in Inverness at 11.15 am with refreshments from 10.30 am. The change of day time and venue is the committee's attempt to satisfy all those members who asked for morning meetings, not Mondays, and for a venue in central Inverness close to public transport.

As we cannot supply our own refreshments we will need to make a **charge of £3** payable **by cash at the door** for this event for which advance booking is required.

Contact ibiconvener@gmail.com to reserve your place.

November has been a busy month for our U3A with two new groups getting established.

The **Travel group** has started with many ideas for activities, talks, and possible outings and holidays. Their next meeting is on **Tuesday 14th January** at 10.30am in the North Kessock Community Hub (the old ticket office) Avril Mountford is the group facilitator for this group.

All members are welcome to join.

The **Gardening Group** also had its launch meeting this month at the Botanic garden in Inverness when **Pamela Sutherland** the head gardener talked and answered questions about gardening in this part of the world.

The main messages I took away were the importance of mulching and how much better it is to leave fallen leaves (though cut up by a mower) on your lawn rather than raking them up! This group's next meeting on **Monday 13th January** at North Kessock Community hub (the Old Ticket Office) and all members are welcome to attend.

Inverewe Gardens

The Highland Members Centre of the National Trust Scotland are having a talk on **Tuesday 10th December**, at **7.30 pm** by Zoom, and I have arranged exceptionally for our U3A. members to be able to join this talk.

Inverewe showcases an incredible diversity of plants established over 100 years ago on a challenging west coast site, where the Gulf Stream has created a microclimate, allowing exotic and rare species from across the globe to flourish.

Kevin Ball, the Head Gardener, will talk to us about recent activities at the garden, in particular work on developing the border that surrounds Inverewe House.

The Trust's goal is to recreate a robust and vibrant late summer herbaceous border using both old and new varieties of herbaceous plantings. Find out the challenges the Trust has faced and how the border is shaping up.

I am sure this will be a most interesting talk, updating us on the work being carried out. With luck, Kevin may also be prepared to answer some of your own gardening questions!

This talk will be held **on 10th December at 7.30 pm**. The link and Zoom meeting details are overleaf in the box overleaf. The session will be open for joining from

Rhona Moir is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: **Inverewe Talk**

Time: Dec 10, 2024 07:30 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81715022486?pwd=udAyLJfoGWFPx2HIIoHvbLboxazseL.1>

Meeting ID: [817 1502 2486](#)

Passcode: [71095](#)

7.15 pm.

Cycling group

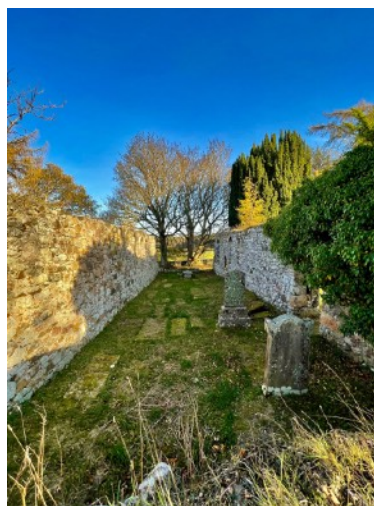
Inverness & Black Isle u3a Cycle Group update

On Tuesday 29th October five members of the Cycle Group started at Kilmorack for a cycle ride down Strathglass to Cannich where a stop was made for coffee and cake. The return along the east side of the river Glass enabled a visit to Eskadale Loch. It was a fine sunny day with 30 miles of cycling.



Eskadale Loch

The last cycle ride for this year took place on Tuesday 12th November when five members cycled from the Littlemill Forestry car park to Cawdor and return a distance of 33 miles. On the return journey we stopped to visit the ruined church of Kirkton of Barevan and the graveyard. The day was sunny but very cold. Some good views to the north were enjoyed.



The ruined church at Kirkton of Barevan

Walking group

Since the last newsletter we have had 3 walks. On 1 November, Pete led a gentle meander through Darnaway estate alongside the River Findhorn with some of the paths giving great views down to the river and passing fishing bothies en route. This turned out to be well timed as the beech and oak trees still had their vibrant Autumn colours.



The River Findhorn at Darnaway

Two weeks later we gathered for a walk led by Lorna and Alan at Abriachan. This was an interesting figure of eight route taking in the old whisky still, the summit of Carn na Leitire and the “bothy”. There were great views down and across the Great Glen and of Loch Ness below.



From the summit of Carn na Leitire

On 27 November Alan Cruden led us on a circuit starting at Farr. This was a very cold, but clear frosty morning as we crossed the bridge over the River Farnack, which we followed upstream until we climbed up to the forest track continuing south until we turn back uphill on a motorway spec forest road used for wind farm construction. We had lunch in the sun before continuing to Wester Lairgs and past Inverarnie. We crossed a recently built barbed-wire fence with the aid of pipe insulation to save ripped trousers and continued on the network of local footpaths back to the cars at Far

All these three walks were blessed with good weather.



Frosty wind farm track

Upcoming walks are Inshes to Drumossie Moor on 11 December and a joint Christmas walk with the Short Walking Group on 18 December. Details of the latter will be issued nearer the date but will include a Christmas lunch probably at Brodie Countryfair.

We are still looking for volunteers to lead walks into the start of 2025, and would be grateful if anyone would contact Pete Collin or Evelyn Cromarty with offers of walks. (Alan Cruden will be away in New Zealand for the start of the new year)

Best wishes for Xmas and the New Year from Alan, Evelyn and Pete

The Drawing and water colour group

Some recent artwork from this very talented group.



Mindfulness

U3a Members Mindfulness Group

In January there will be an online meeting for anybody interested in joining a Mindfulness Meditation group starting early next year. The meeting will last about an hour but you can dip in and out as suits you.

There is no fixed agenda for this meeting. The idea is to start a conversation about what might suit interested members and how a group might run.

Groups are kept small with a maximum of 10 members.

If you are interested in joining a u3a mindfulness group, it could take the format of a well-researched evidence based 8 weeks course such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) which is a very popular course in our somewhat frantic world today.

Alternatively, if you just want to relax more, feel more in control of your life, manage your thoughts and feelings differently perhaps, then that too could be useful. Mindfulness is definitely not a 'therapy' group and the group would be secular and open to everyone.

If you email kml.boyd@hotmail.com and let me have your email address I will send you an invitation to the online meeting at the beginning of next year.

If you would rather have a chat on the phone then please telephone 01462 238972.

Mindfulness is at the heart of the ancient practice of meditation. It could be seen as a life skill which can help us to feel better about ourselves and the world around us. It's about paying attention in a special way. We pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, just accepting what's there without judgement.

26/10/2024

The **Sunday Lunch** group has now eaten out twice. So far it is alternating between Inverness and the Black Isle; but as the numbers in the group are increasing it may well start offering a choice of venues! Barbara Manson is leading this group, and members interested should contact her barbara296@btinternet.com

The Dining In group has also established itself members are taking it in turns to entertain others in their homes. For more details and to join the group contact Iain Slinn slinni850@gmail.com

Science Group

The Science Group meeting on 21st November had to be cancelled, due to bad weather conditions making the venue at North Kessock difficult to get to.

However we were able to set up a Zoom meeting at short notice, and had an interesting meeting nevertheless. One member was unfortunately unable to get the Zoom link to work, but the meeting was still viable, with more attendees than at some of the in person meetings.

The next meeting, weather permitting, will be at the North Kessock Community Hub on **Thursday December 12th** - from 2.15pm for a 2.30pm start. Mince pies might be available!

Outings

Are any members interested in going to any of the events at the Pitlochry Winter Words Festival in February 2025? Details are shown at the link below - look for What's on in February, and subsequent pages on the Pitlochry Theatre web site:

<https://pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com>

If interested do contact me ibiconvener@gmail.com

Music

Currently we have no music groups of any sort. Ideally I would like to see music playing, a choir and a music appreciation group established.

I hope to start a music appreciation group soon, possibly meeting in each other's homes maybe starting with a desert island discs format which would enable us to offer and listen to a range of music as well as get to know each other better.

If you would like to join with this then email me ibiconvener@gmail.com. I hope the first meeting can be in the week beginning the 10th February.

We have a new website!

U3A has created a new platform for local U3A groups' websites and we have just launched ours. Please have a look – you will find it at <https://inverness-and-black-isle.u3asite.uk/> - and we're sure you'll agree that it's a great improvement on the previous site.

An example of the web site layout is shown here.

We are always looking for new content and photos, so if you would like to write an article about your u3a activities, we would publish it on the site and we would very much appreciate any photos of activities or events.

Please remember to check that anyone in your photos is happy to have their photo on the website.

We are now looking for an assistant website editor, so if IT is your thing, please contact Anna at ibiu3awebsite@gmail.com.

Any group leader who wishes to manage their own group's page will be invited to a website training session early next year; if this is you, please email Anna.

Thanks go to Anna Barton for all the work she did to get this up and running.

Inverness and Black Isle



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Welcome to Inverness and Black Isle u3a



"Nobody has to stop learning just because they have stopped working."

Inverness and Black Isle u3a is open to retired or semi-retired people to come together to share common interests, develop new ones, keep themselves active and involved and be part of a great social network. [Join us](#) now!

We are part of the [nationwide network](#) of u3a groups and offer a variety of activities and learning opportunities. It's a great way to meet up with like-minded people and to share skills and experiences.

From September to June we hold [general meetings](#) with invited speakers which are open to all members. They cover a wide range of topics and are followed by the opportunity to chat to other members over a cup of tea.

About the newsletter.

This newsletter has been put together in two column format for use on tablets, computers or printing.

It has been produced by the use of Apple Pages running on a computer. This is used to create the final document in PDF format, with embedded links which should work on most devices.

I hope that this will not actually be the last ever Inverness and Black Isle U3A newsletter.....

.....No promises yet but I am hopeful of getting help with this so that further newsletters will appear.

If you have any problems with links to other sites, or to Zoom talks, do let us know. In the case of Zoom it is usually possible to enter a pre-set up talk by running Zoom, and typing in the Zoom Meeting Id and the Meeting passcode. So for the Inverewe Gardens talk these are:

Meeting ID: 817 1502 2486
Passcode: 71095

Knowing this can save a lot of time if there are any difficulties just before a meeting starts.

Some members may prefer full page format [single column], perhaps if they are using a smartphone to read the text.

TIPS for mobile phone users:

Two obvious ways to make the page more readable are:

1. Magnify the image on your phone. Most modern smartphones have a 2-finger swipe gesture to make the images larger, which can help some people a lot.
2. Simply rotate your phone so it is "horizontal" - and in landscape mode.

If that doesn't work for you, then maybe rotations are locked, so come to the session on January 24th mentioned earlier to learn how to fix this.

There are different ways to produce the final document for distribution, but it may be possible to develop both single and double column formats if we know the demand.

Please let us know if you have definite preferences.

As the year ends I want to wish everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Fiona Martland
ibiconvener@gmail.com**