

Inverness and Black Isle u3a Newsletter

March 2025

Welcome to our March newsletter. Thank you for all your contributions

A word from our Convener

Smart-phones



We had a very successful General meeting on the subject of Smartphones in the Spectrum Centre on February 7th. Nearly 50 of us enjoyed hearing hints and tips from Chris Grant from Ability Net.

Those who attended were asked afterwards about their opinion of the venue and the timing. There was almost unanimous support for holding meetings in such a central Inverness location with easy public transport. Members said that although the venue had some limitations the location and easy transport links more than made up for them. As one member said 'I don't drive and although I can usually get a lift to meetings it was lovely to be independent.' There was also support for morning meetings particularly in winter and support for experimenting with different days of the week. There will be an initial meeting of a new IT group on Thursday 13th March at 11am at North Kessock Community Hub. It is intended that this group will be able to share experiences and useful tips for dealing with modern technology as well as calling on the expertise of tutors from Ability Net.

March General Meetings

Monday 3rd March at 2pm in Culloden Baptist Church. A talk on the work of the MCR pathways mentoring programme in local schools.

July General Meeting and Outing

Our July offering to members is an experiment! This year we are planning to continue our activities for far more of the year and will just take August off!

Our July General Meeting will be given by Alastair Morton from Groam House Museum on the Picts in this part of the Highlands. It will be followed by a self drive; but guided outing to important local Pictish Sites with a stop for lunch at Ballintore. (either in the cafe or bring a picnic)
July General Meeting 2pm July 14th
Fortrose Old Town Hall (note change of venue)
July Outing All day July 28th

Those taking part will be given full directions and times to reach each point on the tour where Alastair will talk about what we are seeing. A visit to the Tarbert Heritage Centre will be included. Car sharing is encouraged and we will help match those offering and those wanting transport.

Members can obviously attend either or both of these events.

There will be NO General Meeting in August but we will start our next series of General Meetings on 1st September when Jamie Stone MP for Caithness, Sunderland and Easter Ross will talk to us.

It will be at 10.30 am in North Kessock Village Hall. Note different venue This is an early start and a morning meeting to enable Jamie to get away in time to get to London that day.

Mah jong

Some members have recently enjoyed having lessons and I think we are now in a position to launch a group. If you are interested and have not previously told me do let me know so that I can add you to the list.

Dine with me



The DINING-IN group was invited to dine with one of our Members on 1st February.

As per the rules of the group, the Members were looking forward to a Moroccan themed evening having been so informed when the host issued the invitation to 'come dine with me'.

Members who were fortunate to have placed their acceptances to participate before the late-comers lodged theirs (and so could not be accommodated in the host's dining area) followed the Welcome Drinks with

Starter - a choice of: humus flavoured with Moroccan spices and / or a delicious tomato and aubergine melange all accompanied by a panier of superb home-made tiny breads

Mains - lamb tagine with couscous (vegetarian option kindly offered)

Dessert - this turned out to be a true labour of love! Filo pastries (cigar shaped) filled with the host's rose water, orange and lime, almond paste and accompanied with dates and tangerines.

We then repaired to the fireside to enjoy mint tea and coffee.

Dress attire had one Member displaying a fabulous 'kaftan-style' dress and two others enveloped in the Arab desert Keffiyeh (rapidly removed on entering the warm comfort of the host's house).

Next event? - Members are already intimating an invitation to a vegetarian experience and another to a 'Cajun' theme.

If this tickles your taste buds and you wish to join the group, please contact Iain at u3adinnerwithme@gmail.com and details will be issued of how the group operates.

Online Learning Events

U3A offer a huge range of interesting and varied learning events with something to appeal to everyone. Among the many topics are 'Lifecycle of a Laser' to 'The Sculpture of Augusta Rodin'. Members can access them on <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>

Interest Groups online

This group may be of interest to any of our members who find it difficult to attend any of our local groups or meetings. These groups cover a very wide range of interests with some being so popular they have a waiting list. It's really interesting to see what is on offer. They can be easily found on <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/interest-groups-online>

Coffee and Craic



The February meeting of the Coffee and Craic Group took place at the Palace Hotel in Inverness. Having our morning coffee by the river was quite a relaxing experience, enhanced by lively conversation and, most importantly, good company.

The next meeting of the Coffee and Craic Group will be in the Piano Bar at the Glenmoriston Townhouse Hotel, 20 Ness Bank, Inverness on Wednesday 19th March at 11:00 am. If you would like to attend, please contact Sheena Taylor Email: sheenataylor@protonmail.com

Travel group

The Travel Group had their second meeting on Monday 3rd February. The group shared numerous travel tips, including: a trip checklist (Ruth): Air miles savings (Neil): Discounted rail travel and group trip options (Derek); Monzo card for international spending; "Too good to go" app for budget food, and affordable accommodation options in Scottish cities it was felt that the meeting fostered active participation, and a focus on learning and sharing travel knowledge.

At their next meeting on Tuesday 11th March, all attendees are going to bring along suggestions for either a group day away or overnight stay.

Pickleball

Eleven members of the Pickleball Group met on Friday 21st February for our first meeting of 2025. This month we were trying out a new venue - Black Isle Leisure Centre. This venue worked well for us as it offered two courts instead of just the one we had been playing on (with potential room to expand). This means we can have more players and greater opportunities for mixing up pairs and games. This is just as well as the list of interested u3a members has now grown to 20.

The court has been booked for our next session on Friday 21st March starting at 3pm. The Leisure Centre provides the courts and nets. I can provide paddles (bats) and balls. All players need are shoes that are suitable for use in an indoor sports hall, clothes that allow freedom of movement and a water bottle to keep hydrated. We hope to see some new members coming along next month.

Gardening Group



The Gardening Group held a meeting on 10th February to plan our future visits. This will start with Old Town of Leys Garden on 24th March at 11am where we will be accompanied by one of the gardeners. We will then adjourn for coffee somewhere close by.

In April we will meet at the Botanic Gardens at 10.30 for a members' plant swap and a look round the gardens which should be lovely with spring flowers by then. Further visits are already planned to Logie Steading, Aldourie Castle and Seeds for Scotland

Further plant swaps are also planned for the future.

New members are very welcome.

Books Books Books Books



The u3a book swap stall will be making an appearance at the General Meeting on Monday 3rd March. Don't forget to bring along any books that you wish to donate, and have a browse of any that you might wish to take away. Free to all.

Short Walks Group



The Short Walks Group continues to meet on alternate Wednesdays. We enjoy walks of between 3.5 miles and 5 miles with plenty of chat. Since last September the attendance on walks has varied widely betc walks we have visited Dunglass Island in the River Conon, Rosehaugh Estate, Slocht area, Monadh Mor, the lime kilns near Kirkhill, Aultnaskiach in Inverness, Ord Hill near Muir of Ord and Drumossie Moor. Our next outing on 26th February will be in Beaufort Estate. Despite the cold weather we have been blessed with reasonable conditions on most of our walks. Only one walk has had to be cancelled due to bad weather and we were snowed upon as we ascended Cnoc Croit na Maoile (Ord Hill). We often retire to a nearby cafe after a walk. New members are most welcome to join us.

Sunday Lunch Group

This is a fairly new group, having only met four times. We meet on the last Sunday of the month and try to alternate between restaurants/pubs in Inverness and on the Black Isle. So far we have been to The Snowgoose, Fairways, The North Kessock Hotel and The Three Witches. Numbers have varied from four to seven. There are 14 members of the group but we welcome new members. We are also very interested to hear of places that people recommend for a Sunday Lunch. Tables are booked about a week in advance and some places limit the size of group they will cater for. Barbara Manson organises the group and if you are interested in joining please either phone her on 07831736694 or email barbara296@btinternet.com It is important that once Barbara sends out details of the month's venue you respond quickly to get a place at the table.

There's a group of women looking for men on the second Thursday of each month!

For a current affairs group to work well you need a mix of views and perspectives. This is proved by the, currently full, first Black Isle Current Affairs Group. It has a good balance of men and women and a really good mix of political views and members from different work/career back grounds. At its three weekly meetings there is lively discussion on a wide range of topics.

The much more recently formed second Black Isle Current Affairs group has a membership of seven women. We meet in each other's houses on the second Thursday of the month and have interesting discussions on a variety of topics. However we would welcome more members and particularly of the opposite sex so that we get a more balanced perspective on some subjects. If anyone is interested in joining us please contact Barbara Manson either phone her on 07831736694 or email barbara296@btinternet.com

.....and finally

Thank you again for all your emails. My apologies for any mistakes or omissions which are entirely accidental. Your comments and suggestions will always be welcome Please let me have your contributions for next month's newsletter by 24th March. It would be lovely to have more of your group news along with photos as long as the members are in agreement. Please send everything to ibiu3newsletter@gmail.com