

Inverness and Black Isle u3a Newsletter

September 2025

Welcome



***To the September
newsletter***

History of IBI u3a Part 3

This month, in the third of a series of articles exploring the history of our u3a group, we shall take a look at the early General Meetings.

In the first year, 2001-2002, the majority of the General Meetings were presented by u3a members; usually a talk, but twice there was an open discussion. One of these was entitled 'Members' Reminiscences' which included topics such as 'Buying furniture in Kashmir', 'What I did in the war', 'My first job', 'An accident of marriage' and 'Chasing John McAdam'.



John McAdam



Kashmiri Chaise
Lounge

Two of the meetings were collaborative; 'Bring a Book' invited members to talk about a book that had particularly influenced them, and for 'A Work of Art', members presented a favourite or other piece of fine art.

We know from the records that the books chosen by members were 'Ghandi', 'The Alexandria Quartet', 'The Campaigns of Wellington', 'Benjamin Franklin' and 'The poems of John Keats'

The two external speakers in that first year were both from The Highland Council; 'Community Education' with Fraser Macpherson, Director of Community Education. and 'Planning' given by John Rennilson, Director of Planning.

The final meeting of the year was a summer outing; the programme states that this was to be a cruise on Loch Ness. Did this take place? Did any of you go on this outing and does



History of IBI u3a Part 3 continued

Looking through the records, one of the stand out things in the early years of our group is that every member contributed to the organisation in one way or another; volunteering to be on the committee, leading one of the Interest Groups and/or giving a talk at a General Meeting. So this is an opportunity to remind all our current members that we are a 'self-help' group and can only survive in the long term if enough of you volunteer. Please contact Fiona Martland on ibiu3aconvener@gmail.com if you'd like to help sustain the group.

A word from our Convener

Welcome to a new year of u3a activities. Our General meetings start on 1st September with a walk from one of our own members: Clive Soley, Baron Soley of Hammersmith, a former Labour Politician will talk on 'How and Why I became a Politician'. The talk is at 10.30am in North Kessock Village Hall, note the different venue and time.

As you will see we are trying to meet the requests of members to avoid afternoon meetings in the winter, to avoid holding all the general meetings on Mondays and to hold meetings in a central Inverness venue. Obviously this will not suit all members.

However, I hope that it will enable more of our members to participate in what I hope will be an interesting selection of talks.

Timetable of General Meetings 2025/26

Monday	1 st September	10.30am	North Kessock Village Hall	How and Why I became a Politician	Clive Soley
Monday	6 th October	2.00pm	Culloden Baptist Church Hall	Your Amazing Brain	Barbara Manson & Nina Semple
Friday	7 th November	10.30am	CullodenBaptist Church Hall	The Flow Country, a UNESCO World Heritage Site	Milly Revill-Hayward
Thursday	4 th December	10.30am	Town House, Inverness	Future Proofing Local News	Steve Barron
Friday	9 th January	10.30am	Town House, Inverness	Highland Retreats: The Architecture and Interior of Scotland's Romantic North	Mary Miers
Monday	2 nd February	2.00pm	Fortrose Free Church Hall	Transition Black Isle, Local Solutions for Global Problems	Martin Sheering
Monday	2 nd March	2.00pm	CullodenBaptist Church Hallo	The Bookseller of Inverness and other books	Shona MacLean
Friday	10 th April	10.30am	Town House, Inverness	Representing the UK's Largest Parliamentary Constituency	Jamie Stone MP
Monday	18 th May	2.00pm	CullodenBaptist Church Hall	The Arctic Convoys in the Second World War	Representatives from Museum
Monday	8 th June	2.00pm	Fortrose Free Church Hall	Anta – A local business, how it started and what it does today	Annie Stewart
Friday	3 rd July	10.30am	Town House, Inverness	The works of Gilbert & Sullivan. A talk illustrated with music and video	Bernard Lockett

Above meetings are correct as at end August 2025 and may be subject to change

General meetings continued.

Tea/coffee and biscuits are available after each meeting

- Access to the Town House, Inverness, is via the front steps. Step-free access is available via entrance and lift on the Castle Street side of the building,

Interest Groups

As you know we added several new groups last year and the committee are always keen to support any ideas for new groups.

A play reading/play writing group will have its launch meeting on Thursday 25th September at 1.30pm in North Kessock Community Hub.

This would work by a meeting of between one and two hours at agreed times. We could select a short play and read it with each taking a part to read. It would not be acting - just members of the group reading agreed parts. It is not formal acting - you can remain seated for the duration! Or we could select a longer play and just do a part of it or whatever we felt worked. The plays could be modern or classical.

If anyone wanted to try writing a play - short or long - we could read that or just do constructive criticism if that is what the writer wanted. Writing plays is usually easier than writing a novel - in my very limited experience! The key is to focus on plays and just read them or parts of them. The group might evolve into other aspects of plays.

How many people would be interested in joining such a group?

Clive Soley has agreed to lead this group, let me know ibiconvener@gmail.com if you plan on attending.

Opportunity to visit the Secret Bunker in Inverness

The Secret Bunker near Raigmore Hospital is now open The bunker was built around 1939/1940 for use by the RAF as a RADAR filter room. The Home Guard (and some of the ROC) occupied it for some years after the war. In the late 1980s it was renovated and hardened (nuclear, bio and chemical). Early in the 1990s- after the fall of the Berlin wall - the building was adopted by the Highland Regional Council as an Emergency Response Centre. Tours of the bunker are guided and by appointment only and last for 2 hours if you are interested do let me know so that we can try and agree a suitable day and time for the visit. ibiconvener@gmail.com

Pictish Trail Outing



14 members enjoyed a splendid tour of local Pictish sites; expertly led by one of our members, Alistair Morton. We started in Eddington then visited the Heritage Centre in Tarbert. After that it was time for lunch in Balintore before looking at the Hilton stone and finishing up in Nigg Church. As well as the Pictish stone in the church we were all fascinated to see the cholera stone, which marked the spot where a parishioner had seen a miasma that he believed to cause cholera and had trapped it with a blanket!

Pickleball

Inverness Leisure have allowed us to book a few months ahead so I have a few dates for everyone to put in their diaries - all Thursday mornings 9.30 -11.30.

4th September

2nd October

6th November

4th December.

After playing we head over to the cafe at the Botanic Gardens.

The next few dates for **Black Isle Leisure Centre** are:-

19th September

17th October

21st November

19th December.

We'll have time to plan a Christmassy theme for this one!

All the **Black Isle** sessions will be on Fridays at 15.00-16.30 and will be followed by a visit to a local cafe for a laugh and a drink.

If you are interested in giving it a go, all you need are shoes suitable for use in an indoor sports hall, clothing that allows freedom of movement, and a water bottle for hydration. We charge £2 per person towards replacement balls and additional court fees.

A Philosophical Question

Our philosophy group, though dormant for the past year, but there has been some interest expressed in reviving it. To reignite our collective intellectual curiosity, we're returning to a question posed by Margaret Ferguson that sparked a particularly engaging discussion at IBI u3a's second general meeting in the autumn of 2001:

“What is a person?”

A Question for All Seasons 🕒

This fundamental question proved to be a fertile ground for diverse perspectives and its enduring relevance was affirmed when it reappeared as the "Question of the Month" in the April 2022 issue of *Philosophy Now*. This timeless inquiry invites us to explore the core of what it means to be a human being, a topic that has captivated thinkers for millennia

A Call for Engagement 🙏

If you're intrigued by the prospect of delving back into this topic, we propose a preliminary meeting to gauge interest before committing to the formation of a new group. The only thing standing in our way is the need for a volunteer to facilitate this initial discussion. If you feel compelled to guide this exploration, please reach out to Fiona Martland at ibiu3aconvener@gmail.com. Your contribution would be instrumental in reviving a space for intellectual exchange.

The Short Walks group



The Short Walks Group continues to meet fortnightly on a Wednesday. The average attendance on meets is fourteen members. Since last September we have taken part in over twenty varied walks. Not only have we enjoyed the exercise, fresh air and each other's company, we have learned so much.

Pat and Rosemary led a walk around Dunglass Island where we watched the Archimedes Screw as it made electricity. We learned about the old lime industry as we visited the lime kilns on the walk from Reelig Glen to Lettes. We visited a replica whisky still on Audrey's Abreachan walk and discussed the illicit whisky manufacture of the past. There was a talk about the battle of Clachnaharry between the Munros and Mackintoshes as we passed the monument to the said battle on our ascent of Craig Phadrig. Elspeth led us on a walk on Dunain Hill where we visited an ancient burial cairn and identified many wild flowers including orchids. On Derek's walk we heard some of the history of Culloden House, admired the tree carvings on Culloden Avenue and even walked on the old A96. Alison led a walk from Evanton where we visited the ruins of Kiltearn parish church. Alison told us about its history and we also saw in the graveyard the burial place of the Munros of Foulis Castle, which is the seat of the clan Munro. Alison also told us some of the history of Drummond Farm which was on our route and the part it played during the Second World War.

On our walks we often stop to identify wild flowers or birds we have seen in the passing. Usually someone in the group knows what they are. If not, smart phones are very helpful.

We had a change of routine recently when we drove further than usual to a walk starting at Coylumbridge and had lunch in a cafe afterwards. As this proved popular with those who participated, we may "lunch out" occasionally in the future.

Many thanks to all walk leaders. Without you the group could not function.

u3a Mindfulness for Living

We would be pleased to see you as a member of the next group of people on a U3a Mindfulness course which will start this September.

Mindfulness is at the heart of the ancient practice of meditation. It could be seen as a life skill which can help us feel better about ourselves and the somewhat frantic 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.

Our u3a course is based on the well-researched evidence-based 8 week Mindfulness Based Living Course (MBLC). We also explore the usefulness of Mindfulness in relation to ageing well.

The course is not a therapy group, it is secular and open to everyone. Each group is kept small and can be run weekly or fortnightly. The course can be face to face or online on Zoom depending on the wishes of group members.

A taster session will be held on Saturday 6th September at 2pm. It will be held online on Zoom and last around an hour. This will be an opportunity to ask questions, get an idea of what the course will be like and find out if it is for you.

If you send me an email address, I will send you an invitation to this taster session a day or so before the event.

If you would rather have a chat on the phone or send me an email first, please email :

Kate at kml.boyd@hotmail.com or

Mobile 07554 375363

Cycling Group



We have had three outings during July and one in August so far.

On the 1st July three members started from Inverfarigaig and cycled through Gleann Liath and past Loch Bran on our way to Whitebridge, from there we followed the River Fechlin to its start at Loch Killin. We returned the same way apart from a slight diversion missing out Loch Bran. A total of 26 miles on a fine sunny day. Unfortunately both Cameron's cafe and the Whitebridge hotel were closed so we missed out on our usual refreshment stop.

Note:- About two miles beyond the southern end of Loch Killin, at the junction of the rivers Glenmarkie Burn and Allt Odhar, Lady Lovat, during the time of the Boer war, organised the building of Stronelarig Lodge, now just a ruin of stones, the photo above was taken prior to it's demolition. It was to be a welcome home surprise for her husband on his return from the boar war. It was he that was responsible for the formation of the Lovat Scouts.



The next outing on 15th July saw four members take part starting from Fortrose on a circular trip of 26 miles around the Black Isle. We cycled uphill to Killin and onto Wester Strath where we followed a forestry track to Mounthigh. From there we cycled on back roads to Jemimaville and then onto Cromarty where refreshments were taken in a local cafe. After leaving Cromarty we took the American Road and then joined the quiet country road past Eathie Mains and Craighead to Rosemarkie and back to the start at Fortrose.

Note:- The "American Road" on the Black Isle is a historic route on part of the old General Wade road that runs along the spine of the peninsula. The term "American Road" is a colloquialism used by locals because the road is very straight which is typical of American roads, in contrast to the more winding roads found in the rest of the Black Isle.

The final trip for July was on the 29th and started from Blackfold. It was a part circular trip around The Aird area taking in Abriachan and Kiltarlity, a total of 35 miles and 2650 feet of ascent. Six members and one prospective new member took part. Coffee and cake was enjoyed in the Kiltarlity shop cafe on our way back.

On the 12th August we started from North Kessock on a circuit via Munlochy, Culbokie, Kilcoy and Red castle where we stopped for a picnic lunch. From there we followed the coastal road back to North Kessock, a total of 28 miles.

.....and finally

Thank you again for all your contributions this month. Your comments and suggestions are welcome as always. Please let me have your contributions for next month's newsletter by 24th September. Keep including photos as long as the members are in agreement. Please send everything to ibiu3newsletter@gmail.com