

Inverness and Black Isle u3a Newsletter

June 2026

Welcome to the June newsletter



N'er cast a clout till May is oot

(so you should be okay now)

A word from our Convener

General Meetings Questionnaire

Members should have received an email giving the link for this, do please complete and return by 30th June. Our programme of meetings for session 26-27 is now complete and we will continue to experiment with days, times and venues. The results of the questionnaire will be used for future planning along with the attendance data from meetings.

Listed Buildings in Inverness Project Team

We have two members willing to lead a few members to research one or more of the listed buildings in Inverness in line with the new u3a project. See information below. Let me know if you would like to join them ibiconvener@gmail.com. At present this is intended to be a short term project but it might be that a new group will arise from it.

Inspired by Historic England's national Missing Pieces Project, the u3a developed our own version and would love groups to take part. They're asking us to share visual or written records inspired by a listed building in our area. This could take the form of memories, photographs, artwork, a creative writing piece or historical research. Relevant groups include:

- Local history
- Research
- Architecture
- Family history
- Creative writing
- Photography
- Art or painting

More information, including a learning pack, can be found on the u3a website: [Missing Pieces](#).

Memories of 25 years of u3a

With our important anniversary coming up it would be lovely to share our recollections, thoughts, memories and photos. It would be lovely to hear from as many of you as possible, especially those with recollections from the early days. Please send them to me at ibiconvener@gmail.com



Roll up, roll up, good people, and lend us your ears! The esteemed Committee for the 25th Birthday Bash is absolutely delighted to bits to bring you news that'll set your hearts a-tapping and your toes a-twinkling!

Prepare yourselves for a performance of pure musical delight, for we've secured the talents of three of our organisation's finest maestros! None other than the wonderful Sue Lightman, the delightful Ian Charles Sharp, and the marvellous David Martland have graciously agreed to grace the stage!

Mark your calendars, my dears, for the 15th of October, when these musical marvels shall take to the stage in the magnificent Grand Hall of the Town House! They're cooking up a glorious programme, a veritable feast for your auditory senses, designed purely for your entertainment!

The precise tunes they'll be performing are still under wraps, a delicious secret indeed! So, keep your peepers peeled and your ears to the ground, for we'll be announcing the full programme very, very soon! Watch this space, folks, watch this space!

Invitations to the party will be dropping into your inbox during the month of July, so have your reply buttons at the ready

New Group - The Strollers!

Are you looking for a gentle walk at a relaxed pace? We are trying to set up a brand-new group called **The Strollers**. This group is specially designed for those who find the current Shorter Walks group a bit too demanding. Our goal is to offer walks that are approximately 2 to 2.5 miles in length, predominantly on flat ground, and taken at a nice, slow, steady pace.

Our First Success!

We held our very first pilot stroll on 20th May, and it was a wonderful success! Led by Pam and Daphne, seven people joined in for a lovely outing. We were incredibly lucky with the weather and were even treated to a spectacular view of dolphins! There was even time to catch up over coffee and drinks at the Fortrose Golf Club.



All the details of future walks will be decided by the members once the groups are set up and we will need to find two group leaders to run the group as well as volunteer walk leaders to guide the occasional stroll.

Our next walk will be on Tuesday 16th June at 10.30am around Merkinch and the canal.

To register your interest or volunteer as a group leader or to find out more about the group, contact the Group Co-ordinator at ibiu3agroups@gmail.com.

Holidaying with fellow u3a members



Two of us recently enjoyed a walking holiday in Crete with fellow u3a members from the Cotswolds. The company was excellent and it was interesting to find out what our fellow members get up to. We would definitely recommend getting together with other group members if the opportunity arises.

u3a online Across Scotland Bridge Group

All our members in U3A Inverness and Black Isle are entitled to join any of the u3a Online Across Scotland interest groups. These groups were set up to cater for the needs of people with disabilities who cannot get out and people in remote areas. There are currently eleven very varied groups <https://scotland.u3asie.uk/groups/> among which is our bridge group. We cater for everyone whether remote and/or disabled or not. Bridge is a game that needs regular practice to improve so we play every week. We have a beginners' group and a group for more experienced. Both groups have some tuition in the winter months but the Play and learn play all year.

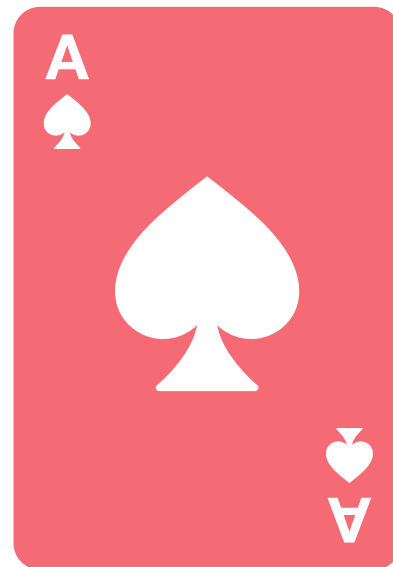
I have run the bridge group for U3A AIBI for many years and when Covid started had never played bridge online nor hosted a zoom meeting, far less able to assign people breakout rooms etc., but quickly had to learn.

During Covid several new bridge platforms were developed making it very much easier to teach online and we use two of them in our classes. We use Shark for the beginners because it is very easy to demonstrate points and we can set it up to maximise everyone's experience of playing. We use Real Bridge for the Play and Learn as you can both see and hear the people you are playing.

Covid is over, so why do we continue online? We no longer need to physically set the hands, travel to venues, transport boxes of bidding boxes and hand wallets and table covers and spend time setting up and putting away. More of our time is spent teaching and it is much easier to demonstrate points to more people on the special bridge platforms. Having set it up it was very easy for us to include people from elsewhere and it makes our beginner classes more viable. Have you ever come across three bridge players in search of a fourth player?

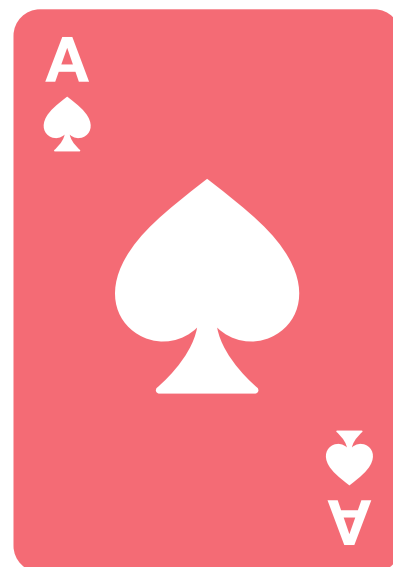
We have been running through U3A Online Across Scotland now for 2 years and it is working well. We still retain many of our local members but also have participants from many areas of Scotland.

Beginners play at 9.30 on Friday mornings from 26 Sept and the Play and Learn group play all year on Friday mornings at 10.30. In the winter the Play and Learn have a tutorial on a topic on alternate weeks and there is a discussion on zoom after the play.



Help is given to master the technology before you start. All lesson materials are supplied. We have our own specialist bridge website, and we are asking that people who would like to join us complete the registration form at the right side of the webpage. <https://www.bridgewebs.com/u3aoasbridgegroup/> Please do not pay until you have attended twice. It would be great to get some local beginners but both beginners and more experienced are welcome. You do not need to have a partner. If you wish further information, you can contact me via the link on the website.

Ann Wickens



Gardening Group

On a very wet Monday in mid-April, we were welcomed by Finlay Ross to Poyntzfield Herb Nursery near Cromarty, now the only herb nursery in Scotland open to the public.

Set in a one-acre Victorian walled garden, the herb garden and nursery grow over 400 varieties of herbs which have culinary, medicinal or aromatic qualities. Managed organically, the herbs range from familiar favourites to rare exotics as well as native plants with herbal properties.

Another visit in late April took us on a slow meandering stroll round the garden at Berryfield House near Inchmore. The blue skies and far-reaching views across the Beaulieu Firth were a real bonus to the stories of the garden Lynda Perch-Nielsen shared with us. The flowers at their best were the cowslips – stretching right across the three-acre meadow that 20 years ago was a horse paddock. (The photo shows a cowslip and a hybrid with a primrose ... which is which?)



Lynda told us about some of the many varieties of heritage daffodil that have grown here for years. And enticed us back later in the summer with promise of orchids, yellow rattle, autumn crocus.



Poyntzfield Nursery

Travel Group



Having been to Falkland Palace and gardens, the Japanese Garden at Cowden and Branklyn Gardens in Perth, I put this forward for consideration at the Travel Group. Thus four of us headed off by car for an overnight in Perth first week in May. One shower of rain later we all agreed we thoroughly enjoyed all three venues. At Falkland we were very fortunate to see an actual display of the kind of tennis Mary Queen of Scots played on the court there. The cherry trees' petals carpeted the ground in pink, beautiful. The Japanese Garden, despite being dull weather, was stunning as always. I am sure all will revisit. Finally, Branklyn Gardens, a profusion of colours and scents that only nature can rise to. One of us paid tribute "to the dedication and hard work all the people who created all of the spectacular gardens we saw". A road trip of 34 hours to heaven and back.



.....and finally

Thank you again for all your emails. There was a lot to go in this month so my apologies for any mistakes or omissions. Comments and suggestions are welcome from everyone. Please let me have your contributions for next month's newsletter by 24th June. Please send everything to ibiu3anewsletter@gmail.com