

u3a Aberdeen **our news**

learn, laugh, live NEWSLETTER 2026 ► aberdeen.u3asite.uk

**Develop your interests,
make new friends
and enjoy yourself**

**CELEBRATING
25 YEARS**

**10 MONTHLY
MEETINGS**

**26 ACTIVITY
GROUPS**



NEWSLETTER EDITOR/DESIGNER
John Brown

Call for contributions

Do you have a story or some photographs related to any u3a activity groups or monthly meetings you have attended through the year that you would like to contribute to the next **ournews** newsletter? Speak to John Brown or a committee member at the monthly meeting.

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Brig o' Balgownie: Norman Thomson/istockphoto
Mah Jong: powerofforever/istockphoto
Scrabble: John Brown
Scottish Heritage: Mary Queen of Scots letter,
National Library of Scotland
Travel – Arbroath: Julia Clark
Walk in the park: Mary Hill



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elcome to a new year of u3a in Aberdeen

As we enter our 26th year of Aberdeen u3a, having successfully celebrated the quarter century, we as the newly elected committee would like to invite you to come along with us and join in.

Come and share your interests with like-minded people, develop new skills and interests and enjoy the social side too, of course.

We will be running a good number of interest and social groups and have a full programme of fascinating monthly talks in the pipeline.

Our membership is growing and we will be working hard to try and establish new groups which meet the interests of old and new members. To that end we do need more helping hands though, so this is also an appeal for willing volunteers to help run groups. We are always at hand to provide help and guidance if needed.

This year we will be reviewing our publicity and the ways in which we can attract even more members to ensure we remain viable well into the future.

We hope you will find this newsletter of interest and hope to see you all at the various groups and monthly talks.

ABERDEEN u3a COMMITTEE

Our celebration



Margaret Mitchell, one of Aberdeen u3a's founders cuts the anniversary cake



We had a special lunch celebrating our 25th Anniversary, meeting on 4 June at the Park Inn by Radisson.

A complimentary drink welcomed over fifty members who sat down to attractively decorated tables, a two course lunch and a piece of anniversary celebration cake.

This was preceded by an equally well attended AGM when Bettina Hoppe became the new Chair. She said, "We had a very good turn out for this special event with some long-standing members recounting some of their memories of the group over the past few years. Making mention of speakers and their engaging presentations which have stuck with them." She went on to say, "The committee worked hard to make this an enjoyable event and one to remember. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed their lunch and the rest of the afternoon catching up with friends and making new ones."





“After six years with Aberdeen u3a, I have found that retirement is anything but quiet. By balancing a passion for literature by being on a book group and a vital role on the organisation’s leadership committee, I think it is a perfect formula for staying socially connected and mentally sharp.”

MARY C HOGGARD

“I joined, with my husband, a little more than a year ago. I’ve always wanted to write about my family history and I’ve now taken the first step towards doing this. Among other writings my novel has commenced and I hope to continue being inspired and completing it. I joined a few groups: drawing, which I’m getting lots of help with and I always fancied doing but never got started. I get a great game or three of scrabble once a month. As a member of a book group, I’ve read several books I wouldn’t have lifted. Writing your own story and creative writing have been the best. All this thanks to the u3a.”

CELINE SIMPSON



“I have been attending the monthly meetings and have joined some of the groups, so am enjoying the discussions and interaction with others.”

ANONYMOUS

“I am enjoying being a member of u3a and I’m happy to be helping run one of the groups.”

ANONYMOUS



Aberdeen u3a – A Brief History.

The history of the group from its origins in 2000 is available on our website – <https://aberdeen.u3asite.uk/our-history-u3a-to-u3a/>

From shaky early days



I had recently retired early through ill health and was looking for things to fill my time without being too strenuous. I was in the Rosemount Community Education Centre attending a computing course when I saw a poster advertising an open meeting: Come and find out about the Aberdeen branch of u3a. There was general information about u3a, but no details of the groups. I thought it sounded potentially interesting.

From the wording on the poster and its professional appearance I assumed that the branch was well established, and was disappointed on arrival to find the meeting described as the first AGM.

There were about 50 people in attendance, all, as far as I could establish, like me looking to find out more. The only others were a formidable woman from the Inverness branch, who had come to support the fledgling Aberdeen group; and Win Stephen, who was the treasurer.

After some initial confusion the Inverness delegate took over the running of the meeting. We heard that there had been an inaugural meeting a year before. A chair, secretary and treasurer had been appointed, but Win was the only one of them to have turned up today. She was landed unexpectedly with giving a report of progress during the year. The answer was nothing. The committee had never met.

After a brief talk on u3a aims and organisation we were divided into smaller

discussion groups. We were asked what we felt we could contribute to an Aberdeen branch. Hoping to get the ball rolling, I said I would be willing to give a talk at one of the monthly meetings about my holiday trekking and white water rafting in Nepal. The Inverness lady immediately jumped on me and said: "Good! You can run a travel group." This was not quite what I had meant, but I did so for the next 12 years.

Nobody else volunteered anything, so after the meeting she twisted my arm to become secretary. Jean Birnie, who had also rashly opened her mouth during

"I am quite proud of the fact I played a part in setting it up"

the meeting, was similarly persuaded to be chairman and Win agreed to continue as treasurer. I can't now remember how we managed to acquire another couple of committee members.

I took on the role very much with the attitude that I was not going to knock my pan out, but it just seemed a shame, if 50 people were interested, that nothing should happen simply because nobody was willing to organise it. If nobody came to anything we organised and the whole thing folded, then this would simply show there was no need for it, and we couldn't do worse than the last committee. In the event, to the best of my knowledge we never saw any of those original 50 again.

Our first task was to organise some meetings. We basically went round the

committee asking what group each member felt they could organise, and/or could persuade a friend or relative to take on, as well as any contacts who might be willing to speak at a monthly meeting. For any group organised by someone other than a committee member all committee members were obliged to attend, whether or not they were interested, to ensure there was a group for others to join. This was agreed after one of the first groups, a craft group, folded after Doreen was left on her own with no attendees after the first couple of meetings.

The community education department were very helpful offering us a room in the Rosemount Centre free, and in printing off some posters for us to put up in libraries, church halls etc. We omitted to record where we had placed them, unfortunately, so some of them were never updated or removed. My name and phone number

were on them as the contact for further information, and was sometimes surprised, years after no longer being on the committee, to receive a phone call wanting more information. I also received help from ACVO (Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations) in drawing up a draft constitution and registering us as a charity. It was then that I learned from the Charities Register that an organisation with a very similar name had registered a number of years previously. I was never able to learn what had happened to them.

I continued to serve on the committee for a number of years, as secretary, treasurer or chairman, before deciding I had done my bit and passing over to a more energetic chair. Looking at the branch now it is unrecognisable from those shaky early days, and I am quite proud of the fact I played a part in setting it up.

MARGARET MITCHELL

An alphabetised quiz

The 26 answers are place names in modern day Aberdeenshire, and each starts with a different letter of the alphabet apart from Q, V, X and Z which appear elsewhere in the answer. Answers on page 26.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Better known as Foggieolao | 14 Fresh venison |
| 2 Royal burgh at the mouth of the Deveron | 15 How some may refer to their mother |
| 3 Tune often used for the 23rd psalm | 16 The blue toon |
| 4 They have six sides | 17 QUIET THE MORN |
| 5 Half an old Aberdeen department store | 18 This flower is cheerful |
| 6 "Who's" (in Doric) + "what"
(as Manuel might say) | 19 Sounds like a hank of wool |
| 7 Horticultural settlement | 20 Difficult |
| 8 The sun has got his... | 21 ON A DIY STUNT |
| 9 A pre-metric measure of distance | 22 Parish by Inverurie and by Inverness |
| 10 Home for Elton in his retirement? | 23 Paler remains of a fire |
| 11 Early "Hammer of the Scots" | 24 BEILLMRX |
| 12 A lair for Scottish chimneys | 25 Memorial to a prime minster,
the Prop of ... |
| 13 She was invited into the garden | 26 Where painter Farquharson was laird |

Monthly Meetings 2026–27

These will be held at **1.30pm on the first Thursday of the month**, September until June (unless the date has to be changed e.g. for a public holiday) in the **Mercure Caledonian Hotel, Union Terrace, Aberdeen AB10 1WE**. (OPENS MAP)

We have a visiting speaker and the meetings aim to bring members together, publicising the activities of the groups and other social events and giving members a sense of community.

We are always happy to have suggestions from members and visitors are welcome to attend one monthly meeting to get a feel of what the u3a has to offer before becoming a member.

Attendance at the monthly meetings will still cost £3. If you wish to have refreshments after the meeting there will be an additional charge of £3.

OUR VENUE

The **Terrace Suite** in the Mercure Caledonian Hotel on Union Terrace is the location for our monthly meetings. Centrally located whether walking, travelling by bus or car. There is multi-storey or on-street parking in the area. Accessed from Union Terrace there are ten steps up, with handrails, to the reception foyer, turn right through to the Terrace Suite's Lounge. From Diamond Street, at the back of the hotel, it is all on one level, turn left once past the reception desk. Toilets are on the same level. The Hotel has chargeable on-site parking at the rear.



Programme 2026–27

All meetings
start at 1.30pm

3 September Clare Smith – We need to talk about water...

Clare will pose key questions such as: Is there too much water? Or too little? What is the real price of water? She will look at how this vital resource is undervalued in the present and what is likely to happen in the future.

1 October Malcolm Duckworth – Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team and Scottish Mountain Rescue

The creation and operation of the Aberdeen Mountain Rescue Team within the wider context of Scottish Mountain Rescue and the Blue Light Services.

5 November Bob Keiller – Our Union Street

Bob outlines the challenges opportunities, and progress in our efforts to restore pride to our city centre.

3 December Gary Brindley – Oh No It Isn't! The History of Pantomime

From its beginnings in Ancient Greece to its rise in popularity during Victorian times, including a look at some of the traditions of panto which persist to the present day. There may also be some terrible jokes and audience participation!

2027

7 January Mike Gibb – My Life with Dogs

Mike will talk about the charity DAWGS, which he co-founded in 1994, sharing many funny, crazy, and at times poignant stories about the dogs the charity has cared for.

4 February Pamela Cornwallis The Northern Lighthouse Board – For the Safety of All

An overview of the work of the Northern Lighthouse Board, a little about Pamela and a description of her role looking after our Aberdeenshire Lighthouses.

4 March Mike Urquhart North East Crime Reduction – Scams and Frauds

Computer-enabled fraud accounts for over 50% of all recorded crime across the UK. The talk will provide real examples of frauds that have affected people in the NE and discuss ways to stay safe online.

1 April Dr. Kathryn Martin Institute of Applied Health Sciences, University of Aberdeen – Healthy Ageing

Kathryn examines factors that shape how individuals age during their life – physically, mentally and socially. Highlighting the importance of physical activity, diet, social support, outlook and independence, she discusses how these influence the quality of life in later years.

6 May Sarah Mackie – The MacRobert Trust

Sarah will tell us about the history of the MacRobert family, origins of the Trust and future plans.

3 June Annual General Meeting

Interest Groups 2026-27

Our groups hold meetings at various locations across the city. These include the Northern Arts Club (NAC), Methodist Church Hall, Central Library, Art Gallery, Ma Cameron's, Wetherspoons (Union St) and The Brig 'O Don Pub & Restaurant.

In 2025-26 we ended the session with 26 groups meeting regularly, covering a range of topics. The Aberdeen u3a website has all our group details and provides an easily accessible source of information for both potential and existing members. You can message group leaders from there directly with any questions you may have or you can use the contact details given here. All members are encouraged to try group taster sessions to help with finding activities that you can enjoy with other members.

It is important to contact the group leader first to arrange a taster session or to check there are spaces in the group.

IMPORTANT:

- Attending a group is restricted to Aberdeen u3a members.
- As a member you are welcome to try a group without commitment.
- **If you join a group, please remember that members are expected to attend regularly and contribute to the group sessions.**

Sign up, Show up, Step up

ART APPRECIATION

Jennifer Logan

2nd Wednesday of the month

14.00 – 15.30 **NAC**

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Gwen Marshall

Natalie Pendrey

2nd and 4th Mondays of the month

11.00–13.00

Aberdeen Art Gallery, upstairs café

BOOK GROUP 1

Anne Simpson

2nd Friday of the month

13.30–15.30

**Aberdeen Methodist Church,
Crown Terrace**

BOOK GROUP 2

Mary Hoggard

3rd Friday of the month

14.00–15.30

Aberdeen Central Library (mezzanine)

BOOK GROUP 3

Anne Simpson

1st Friday of the month

11.00–13.00

**Aberdeen Methodist Church
Crown Terrace**

CINEMA

May Martin

Every Tuesday afternoon

14.00–16.00

Cineworld, Union Square
Times/venues may vary

CREATIVE WRITING

Sylvie Redvers

2nd Thursday of the month

14.00 – 16.00

**The Snug, Ma Cameron's,
Little Belmont Street**

CURRENT AFFAIRS

John Wood

1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month

14.00–15.30

1st Tuesday via Zoom

**3rd Tuesday Wetherspoons,
Union Street**

DISCUSSION LUNCHES

Sheila Noble

3rd Wednesday of the month

10.45 for 11.00 start

Brig o' Don Restaurant

DRAWING GROUP

Joyce Grahame

4th Tuesday of the month

11.00 –12.30 **NAC**

FRENCH

David Craig

2nd and 4th Mondays of the month

Intermediate class

13.00–14.00

Advanced class

14.15–15.45 **NAC**

GERMAN (Intermediate)

Brian Anderson

1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month

11.15–12.15 **NAC**

GERMAN (Advanced)

Fiona Watson

1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month

10.00–11.00 NAC

INTERNATIONAL LUNCHES

Mary Hill

Helen Smith

**4th Thursday of September, November,
February, April and June.**

Venues by arrangement.

Sign up at the monthly meetings

KNIT AND NATTER

Julia Clark

Anne MacRitchie

2nd Friday of the month

11.00

**The Snug, Ma Cameron's,
Little Belmont Street**

LOCAL STUDIES: COUNTRY FOLK AND CITY FOLK

Anne Simpson/Sylvia Carrillo

2nd Thursday of the month

10.00–12.00 NAC

MAH JONG

Jenny Smith

3rd Monday of the month

14.00 – 16.00 NAC

SCOTTISH HERITAGE

Jane Catto

Roberta Constable

3rd Thursday of the month

10.00–12.00 NAC or as advised

SCRABBLE

Sylvie Redvers

3rd Monday of the month

14.00 – 16.00 NAC

SPANISH CONVERSATION (Beginners)

Joyce Grahame

Marina Mearns

4th Tuesday of the month

13.30 – 15.00 NAC

SUNDAY LUNCH GROUP 1

Jenny Smith

3rd Sunday of the month

12.30

Venues by arrangement

Sign up with the group leader

SUNDAY LUNCH GROUP 2

Louise Sutherland

2nd Sunday of the month

13.00

Venues by arrangement

Sign up with the group leader

TRAVEL GROUP

Julia Clark

Albert Craig

4th Friday of the month (usually)

**Full day outings and occasional
longer trips.**

Sign up with the group leader

WALK IN THE PARK

Mary Hill

3rd Tuesday of the month

Sign up with the group leader

WRITE YOUR OWN STORY

Cath McKay

1st Monday of the month

11.30

The Snug, Ma Cameron's

Little Belmont Street

Review of Group Activities in 2025–26

Art Appreciation

This was the third year of our Art Appreciation Group and we have covered a vast number of paintings thanks to diligent research by our members. We started in September with the theme of “Hidden Meanings in Painting” followed by “Power and Portraits” in October. November and December were individual choices on the theme of “Water” and “Winter”. January we had to move to zoom due to inclement weather but still managed to look at Vettriano and Banksy. February “Protest and Power” in paintings, including the Norman Rockwell below; then March and April the themes of “Flowers” and “Water”. May was “The Group of Seven” and we finish in June with a choice of favourite paintings.

As you can see a very busy year.

JENNIFER LOGAN



Arts & Crafts

We are a small, friendly Group started in 2024 and we meet up twice a month for crafts, coffee and chat. New members are very welcome. Bring your work in progress along or simply come for the chat. All crafts are welcome. Please contact us beforehand if you would like to come along as we need to confirm that the meeting has enough numbers to go ahead.

GWEN MARSHALL & NATALIE PENDREY

Book Group 1

This is a traditional Book Group. Once a month at the Aberdeen Methodist Church we meet and enjoy the shared experience of discussing a specific book; a single title.

One aim of the book group is to read and enjoy discussing books selected by our fellow members; while one objective of the group is to read books we would not normally have chosen for ourselves. As a result, every meeting holds out the promise of a fresh start in our reading lives, be it a new title, a new author or a new genre. Light dawns; opinions change; paradigms shift. Or not.

And what joy we all get from the enthusiasm of fellow members and bibliophiles who say with their eyes lit up and an assurance to their listeners ‘this is one of the best books I’ve read in a long time!’ To me, it’s magic.

There's a refreshing cuppa at the end of each meeting. Our choices in 2025–26 were *Orbital*, *Our Souls at Night*, *James*, *Yellowface*, *The Book*, *Passing*, *Frankenstein*, *The Road* and *The Bridges of Madison County*.

ANNE SIMPSON



Book Group 2

Book Group 2 has gone from strength to strength this session with good monthly attendance at the welcoming meeting place in Aberdeen City Library. The group is pleased to have welcomed three new members, thus adding new perspective to the monthly book discussions. Members have each chosen a title for 2026-2027, with most of the books provided to us by Aberdeen City Library Service. An interesting selection of books awaits the group this coming year with a varied range of titles.

MARY HOGGARD

Book Group 3

There are a lot of options on how to run a book group. Not everyone likes to read other people's choices. Be it fiction, 'faction' or non-fiction in Book Group 3 we won't (necessarily) have all read the same book. And that's the difference!

It's a great format for people who are keen to share their own reading delights and also discover new books and authors. Our presentations are always lively and unpredictable. We share books we've read and which in recent months have brought us joy or bored us to tears – or (in some cases) left us scratching our heads. For five sessions we plan our reading around themes which we, as a group, have voted on.

In 2025-26 our themes included: A book which is laugh-aloud funny, a favourite book from childhood, books with a one-word title. We meet monthly at Aberdeen Methodist Church, taking a break in July and August. After each meeting, as group leader, I type up and distribute notes to the group on all the titles discussed. It's great fun!

ANNE SIMPSON

Cinema Group

The Cinema Group has seen some interesting films this year including, "Nouvelle Vague" which showed how "Breathless" was made, "Hamnet" and a modern Asian version of "Hamlet".

Recently we watched a rather quirky feature, "The Sheep Detectives".

Notwithstanding Cineworld's

choice of horror films, sometimes there is something which is worth watching.

MAY MARTIN

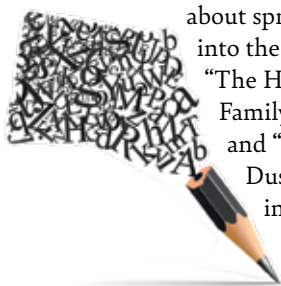


Creative Writing

We are a new group which has only been meeting for the past year and we have room for a couple of new members. Each month we agree a topic and the following month read our efforts out and discuss what we have written in a relaxed atmosphere.

Three of the topics we have covered this year were "How many words and phrases about spring can you get into the one story"; "The History of a Family Wedding Dress" and "What was in that Dusty Old Trunk in the Attic?"

SYLVIE REDVERS



Current Affairs

This year the group has seen a change in venue from Zoom only, moving back to the NAC. Unfortunately, this was not successful and, as an alternative, we are now going to meet at Wetherspoons in Union Street, Aberdeen on the third Tuesday of the month as well as retaining a Zoom contact on the first Tuesday.

Discussions have continued to be lively



**LATEST
NEWS**

and have covered recent as well as recurring issues such as conflict,

criminality, independence and AI.

Members are encouraged to get involved by providing the agenda on one occasion in the month. Group numbers are around 10 although this can fluctuate but is always a viable number. New u3a members are most welcome to come and try the group before making a commitment to join.

JOHN WOOD

Discussion Lunches

This session our meetings have been back to our usual 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Brig o' Don restaurant and pub. We have a varied group of members and the topics discussed depend on what is current with lots of local and worldwide topics coming from members too. Discussions are usually lively but respectful. Hopefully we will continue to grow, all members are welcome.

SHEILA NOBLE



Drawing

The drawing group currently meets on the last Tuesday morning of the month; next session we will meet on



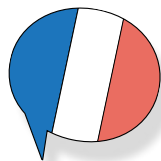
the fourth Tuesday of the month to avoid confusion in the longer months.

We currently have 11 members with 6–8 attending regularly. At present there is no waiting list, so we would welcome new members. The group has various drawing skills, including beginners, and normally work using pencils, coloured pencils and pastels. Members seem to prefer to choose their own subjects, although I often suggest a theme and bring along various images. All find it very therapeutic and satisfying.

JOYCE GRAHAME

French

As we head towards the end of this year both the Intermediate and Advanced group have had a successful period and currently have two non-members waiting to join in the Autumn. Our Christmas meal was held at Amarone and 16 members attended. We are currently arranging our end of term meal, restaurant options being discussed and agreed.



We have ongoing group generated items to read, prepare and discuss for the Advanced Group and the Intermediate Group works mainly from a Coursebook.

Arrangements/bookings are in place for another trip to France in October, this time to Rouen, Normandy with 23 members from Aberdeen, Banchory, Elgin, Dingwell, Oban and Edinburgh u3a! Flights will be from Aberdeen & Edinburgh plus 3 travelling by railway. One of our day trips will be to the WW2 Normandy landing beaches.

During the summer period we will continue meeting as usual in the Bonnymuir Gardens – taking advantage of their marquee and the bad weather option of sitting inside.

DAVID CRAIG

German

Intermediate Group

The group continues to meet twice monthly on a Tuesday morning at the Northern Arts Club.

Following each meeting we head for a café/Kaffeehaus for a cuppa and a sociable relaxing chat (in English). In the event of bad weather, we arrange to meet over zoom for our German study and follow this with a second zoom meeting to have that cuppa and friendly chat.

Our study material is sourced mainly from the DW – DeutscheWelle – Learn German website, together with activities from a grammar book to reinforce our understanding of any German grammar that needs further study. The DW activities address topical articles in German and involve reading, translation, and the answering of questions on the article. This leads to a fair bit of discussion about the topic and the structure of the German language. We are a small friendly group and would welcome new members.

BRIAN ANDERSON

The Advanced Group has ten members and we take it in turn to lead our twice monthly meetings in the Northern Arts Club. Group members draw on a variety sources to provide texts for reading and translating as well as topics for general discussion.

The past year has included articles on Hermann Goering's lesser-known brother Albert, the history of the "Trabi" (East Germany's equivalent to the VW Beetle), the father of AI, and the deployment of German soldiers to Greenland, as well as a short story about preparations ahead of the possible arrival of Catherine the Great.

We've discussed when a pastime becomes a hobby and whether some Netflix offerings are dumbed down. As we are constantly



amazed at the number of English words Germans now use, it was a welcome change to reflect on the words of French origin which are common in German and also to read about Swiss German. Our discussions often continue in our post-class coffee-shop stops and also at our informal gatherings on other Tuesdays when we meet for Kaffee and Klatsch. We are a very friendly bunch and always welcome new members.

FIONA WATSON

International Lunches

The International lunch group has flourished this year with bimonthly lunches in a variety of restaurants. New venues have been explored including Mediterranean, Vietnamese and Indian cuisines.

In addition, we aim to visit old favourites to enjoy Italian and Turkish lunches.

Members have enjoyed the variety of menus and the opportunity to socialise with fellow u3a members in relaxed environments.

This group is open to all and members can sign up for lunches via email or by the sign-up sheets at the monthly talks. The only restrictions are the capacity of restaurants and if they have a limit on numbers the group will operate on a first come first served basis. This has not been an issue to date and we have had over 20 people enjoying the meal each time. The group currently meets on a bimonthly basis.

MARY HILL

Knit & Natter

There is always plenty of nattering on many subjects during our get-togethers. We knit, crochet and stitch as well! The work produced by the members



varies from stuffed toys to beautiful garments indifferent yarns and colours.

When someone has a problem deciphering a pattern or has run into difficulties, there is always someone in the group to lend a hand to help solve the problem. Which goes faster, the needles or the tongues?!

JULIA CLARK



Local Studies: Country Folk & City Folk

Local history is that of a particular place or community and the people who live(d) there. Local events such as Farm Shows, football matches and Hogmanay provide communities with a 'social glue'.

While history is an account of past events; heritage is a legacy which we inherit. It stands for such things as – the Turra' Coo, the Fodderletter Lum, the Hazlehead maze, Sunset Song. It's what we want to hold on to and pass on to others.

In our group we interpret the word 'Local' broadly. Our 'anchor': the historic counties of Aberdeen, Kincardine, Banff, Moray, Nairn and northern Angus.

'Studies' is an umbrella word which ensures a breadth of approach and an open-ended time frame. Meetings are member-led. Some read brief summaries of their personal research interests; others share favourite passages from books or poems by North East writers or from the local press. Sometimes we're invited to have a quick trip to one of our favourite places: Memory Lane.

Our June meeting often involves a visit to a place of interest in Aberdeen and we enjoy a break in July and August.

ANNE SIMPSON

Mah Jong

The group has continued to be popular following the change to meeting only once a month this session. Members enjoy the combination of skill and luck involved in completing the different challenges as the game progresses.

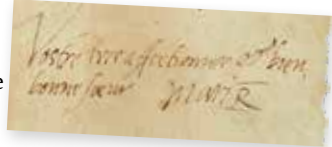
We do note scores during play, but these are not taken seriously, and the emphasis is on having fun in a friendly social setting.

JENNY SMITH



Scottish Heritage

This has been another well attended session with topics such as castles of Scotland from the highlands to the borders and Scottish islands such as St Kilda, Isle of Mull and Iona to name but a few. Some of us went to Perth Museum to see the last letter of Mary Queen of Scots and our June outing is to Arbroath, visiting the abbey and the Declaration exhibition.



As always, we had a lunch in January and plan to have another in July. We intend to investigate the Lowland Clearances and the Vikings in Scotland in the next session as well as other topics which may be suggested.

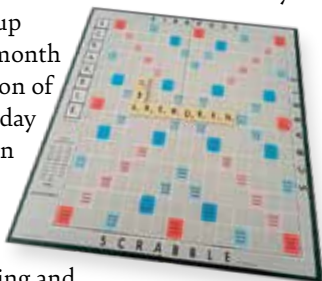
JANE CATTO

Scrabble

Formerly known as Lexico or Alph, this much-loved board game really gained popularity after it became known as Scrabble in 1948. It's now estimated that 30,000 games are started worldwide every hour! Our group meets once a month on the afternoon of the third Monday at the Northern Arts Club in Bon Accord Square.

We enjoy playing and happily welcome new members. It does not matter if you have never played Scrabble before, everyone can play and we are always happy to help each other.

SYLVIE REDVERS



Spanish Conversation

Beginners

This recently formed group currently meets on the last Tuesday afternoon of the month, which will change to the fourth Tuesday of the month from September. We currently have 10 members with two people from the waiting list joining for a taster session in June.

At first there were one or two teething problems due to the varied level of fluency, from degree level to those who found learning a new language too challenging. We are now all keen beginners, except of course Marina, whose first language is Spanish and who skilfully guides us along in pronunciation and vocabulary. We aim to make the sessions fun and satisfying.

JOYCE GRAHAME



Sunday Lunch Group 1

Our group meets monthly at a local venue, decided at the end of the previous lunch, and members take turns to make the booking. We like to try different venues, but are also happy to return to favourites such as Al Fresco and the Cove Bay Hotel. The aim is to enjoy good food and friendly chat over a relaxed lunch.

The size of the group is restricted so that everyone can take part in the conversation. Last year we continued to meet during the summer break.

JENNY SMITH



Sunday Lunch Group 2

Formed in October 2024, and continuing this last year over the summer, we have had tasty and friendly lunches at the Falls of Feugh restaurant (Banchory), the Anchor Inn (Johnshaven), the Garlogie Inn, Slate & Grain (Chapelton), Tornacaille Hotel (Banchory), the Station Hotel (Stonehaven), the Marine Hotel (Stonehaven), and the Ploughman (Peterculter). For the next outing we plan to go to the Ship Inn (Stonehaven).

Different members make the booking once we have decided where to go next and the group (8) is kept small enough for everyone to hear and join in.

LOUISE SUTHERLAND

Travel

The group has travelled together, rain hail or shine, every month this year to various destinations using our bus passes. We have been tourists in our own country, visiting the seaside town of Arbroath to the south

and nearby Inverurie to the north; visiting parks, museums, places of interest and stopping for a fly cuppie.

The opportunity to view, in Perth Museum, what is thought to be the last letter of Mary Queen of Scots before her execution was too good a chance to miss. On a beautiful, warm and sunny day in April we had a day trip to Elgin and enjoyed the colourful display of spring flowers in the Biblical Gardens beside Elgin Cathedral.

The farthest afield outing was to Glasgow, where we stayed overnight in the hotel that gives a good night's rest (according to Sir Lenny Henry)!

We hope many more will join us on our adventures next session.

JULIA CLARK

Walk in the Park

This is a new group which was set up at the start of the session. The aim of the group is to enjoy short walks in the pleasant surroundings of the park and garden areas in the city. Our first outing took place in Duthie Park where we explored the various statues, sculptures and history of the park. This was followed by outings to Johnston Gardens and Walker Dam, Seaton Park and the River Don and Diamond Bridge areas. In February we returned to Duthie Park and followed the Deeside Way out to Auchinyell Bridge and



back to the park along the riverside. The following month, at the request of group members, we visited the



beachfront and explored the Footdee area with its colourful and quirky streets and houses. The walks have been well received and we have discovered lots of local history and places of interest as well as spotting wildlife in the city including birds such as the heron and even an inquisitive seal at the harbour. The end of each walk is usually marked by a visit to a nearby café where we enjoy a welcome cuppa and relaxing chat.

This group is open to new members and meets on the third Tuesday of the month.

MARY HILL

Write Your Own Story

We are a small group of six that meets on the first Monday of every month in The Snug at Ma Cameron's. We are writing 'our stories' – something to share with our children and grandchildren! Our work includes stories from our childhood, our parents' lives (and deaths), our holiday adventures, our first jobs, having our own children – very different stories from our lives that we share with each other over a coffee.

We find the meetings friendly and motivating – having a monthly prompt helps us to produce a piece of writing to share with our fellow members. We give each other feedback and encouragement – it's fun!

CATH MCKAY



More than just a walk in the park...



Tuesday, 18 November saw the first walk of this new group. We went to Johnston Gardens, had a leisurely walk through the gardens then up to Walker Dam. The forecast was not great but it was actually very calm and although only two degrees didn't feel too cold. We went through the gardens, looked at the memorial to those killed in the 2009 helicopter crash off Peterhead bringing BP workers back onshore from the Miller oilfield.

Up at Walker Dam we saw a heron and numerous ducks, and discussed the history of the dam and the role it played in the bleachfields in Aberdeen's past. We rounded off with a visit to the Gordon Highlanders cafe for an enjoyable coffee and chat, and were impressed by the poppy displays outside, which were all hand knitted or crocheted.

December was cold but bright and with

no wind, so felt pleasant despite the frost. A group of seven visited Seaton Park and looked round the walled garden. We went down to the river Don and walked along the riverside path to the old Brig of Balgownie. The walk was through a gorge with interesting views and again saw ducks and heron on the river. We continued downstream finishing in the Brig O'Don restaurant for a coffee and a good chat. Sharing interesting facts about the park and surrounds including its previous use as a racecourse.

In January we again met at Seaton Park this time walking along the edge of the park towards St Machar Cathedral and on past the Wallace Tower to see the new cafe there. We then sauntered down towards the Diamond Bridge and back along the Don to view the community hydro scheme.

Returning to the park we encountered a large area of flooding at the bottom of the walk up to the cathedral. We continued downstream finishing in the Brig O'Don restaurant for a coffee and a good chat.

We had snow showers in February before setting off but it turned out a lovely sunny morning, walking from Duthie Park along the Deeside Way as far as the Auchinyell Bridge then back along the riverside. Afterwards we had a cuppa in the Duthie Park cafe and as it was Shrove





Tuesday some were tempted by a pancake!

March's walk took place on a sunny but blustery morning. A group of 10 met at the beach front and walked to Footdee where we enjoyed exploring the quaint and interesting streets as some members had not been there before. At the harbour mouth a few were lucky enough to spot a curious seal before it dived out of sight. We looked at the new statue erected last year for North Sea divers then circled past the small playpark and north pier before returning along the beach front for a welcome cuppa.

The group had an enjoyable April walk, completing a circuit from Persley Walled Garden down the north side of the Don and crossed the Grandholm Bridge returned up the south side back to the car park at the garden. The weather was beautiful and we explored the history of the area which had numerous mills in the past, including Crombie Mills which produced high quality cloth and employed

over 3000 people at one point, as well as older mills producing cotton. There were a few relics including old machinery, remnants of buildings and the canals which fed water from the Don to power the mills. Afterwards we had an interesting coffee break in a sand café.

Seaton Park was the starting point for May's Walk. Going up the Don to the Diamond Bridge, over into the old Crombie Mill and though some of us had been round this way last month there is always something catches your eye. We viewed the old mill stream here and had a photo shot before walking round to the Mother Earth sculpture and back along the Don to recrossing the Diamond Bridge and headed up to the Community Hub in Tillydrone for a very welcome hot drink. The weather was not very kind to us as it rained the entire walk but everyone was dressed for it and did not let it hamper our enjoyment.

MARY HILL

WALK IN THE PARK GROUP COORDINATOR



Where do you fancy going?

That's the question put to our group members, who suggest places they might like to visit and a programme of outings is put together. The Travel Group plan a number of day trips, mostly utilising the free over 60s NEC bus pass. Trips are generally the last Friday of the month but may occasionally change depending on the destination. Longer term, some trips further afield, that incorporate overnight stays, are anticipated.

This year our first visit was to Inverurie and a pleasant time was spent at the Garioch Heritage Centre, which tells the story of the domestic and working life of the people in the area. The centre sits in the renovated Carriage and Wagon Workshop, part of the Inverurie Locomotive Works.

Our destinations in February, were Perth Museum and the Black Watch Museum. The focus of the visit was to view, what is believed to be Mary, Queen of Scots, last letter written before her execution six hours later. The Stone of Destiny is also housed in the museum. A short walk alongside the River Tay and across the North Inch took us to Balhousie Castle home of the Black Watch Museum.

Our first overnight stay was in the middle of March to Glasgow. There is so much to see there, therefore some of us opted for the Hop-On Hop-Off Bus. In the evening we headed for the nearby Merchant City area looking for an evening meal, eventually ending up at a recently

opened restaurant serving small plates and sharing dishes. The following morning as it was a beautiful spring day, we changed our plans slightly and walked to Glasgow Cathedral and the Necropolis then had a wander at the Botanic Gardens. The outing ended seeing one of the famous Play, Pie and Pint productions at Oran Mor.

We have been planning for the forthcoming session's itinerary and some trips include: Alicante, Malaga or Faro; Belfast; Oban; Inverness and Fort William; The Edinburgh Fringe and the Falkirk Wheel.

JULIA CLARK & ALBERT CRAIG
TRAVEL GROUP LEADERS



St Mungo mural on the High Street, Glasgow.

Book Group 2

We meet in Aberdeen City Library, the third Friday of the month.
Each member of the group has chosen a title for 2026–2027, with most of the books provided to us by Aberdeen City Library Service.

Here is the interesting selection of books for this year...

MARY HOGGARD

BOOK GROUP 2 LEADER



Being a u3a Member

All members are expected to abide by our Code of Conduct. The u3a movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main principles:

- The Third Age Principle
- The Self-help Learning Principle
- The Mutual Aid Principle.

Further details are on our website: <https://aberdeen.u3asite.uk/membership/>

Membership of Aberdeen u3a

Joining your local u3a is a great way to find and develop new interests and make friends in a relaxed environment. Membership is open to everyone who is not working full-time and new members are very welcome. Further details and membership forms can be downloaded from our website: <https://aberdeen.u3asite.uk/membership/>

Renewal forms are sent to existing members each August. The membership fee of £12.00 allows access to any u3a in the UK. Full members of another u3a may, on proof of membership, become associate members of Aberdeen u3a at an annual cost of £4.00.

Monthly Meetings

Our monthly meetings take place in the **Mercure Caledonian Hotel, Union Terrace, at 1.30pm on the first Thursday of each month** (except July and August).

Attendance costs £3.00. Speakers give a talk, often illustrated, and may take questions. Any announcements and notices follow. There then is a chance to meet friends or make new ones, over a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit for an additional charge of £3.00. The programme of talks is on page 9 and our website Events page:

<https://aberdeen.u3asite.uk/events/>

Aberdeen u3a Interest groups 2026–27

Currently 26 groups cover a range of different topics with potential groups being considered. The frequency and venue of group meetings may incur additional charges to join interest groups and these fees are listed on the groups enrolment form.

Members are welcome to try a group activity, without any commitment, provided there is a space. **They must contact the group leader to arrange the visit before attending a session.**

Making more of your u3a membership

Interest Groups Online

Interest Groups Online offers a variety of peer led, online learning opportunities for its subscribers.

Members across the UK generously volunteer their time and share their knowledge, skills and experience with members in their groups. Some groups are more interactive than others, with an expectation that all members take it in turns to present their knowledge. If in doubt, give it a go. The more groups you try, the more likely you'll find the one you love.

To join a group or find out more visit: www.u3a.org.

uk/what-we-do/learning/interest-groups-online/interest-groups-online-groups

In addition there are some Scottish online groups: <https://scotland.u3asite.uk/groups/>



Online learning events



Free online talks, workshops and courses

u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations.

All events are bookable via Eventbrite. Please ensure you can attend when booking and cancel if you are unable to make it so others can participate. Events are exclusively for u3a members. Sign up to the events mailing to get monthly online events straight to your inbox. www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events

u3a matters magazine

u3a matters is the membership magazine of the u3a movement.

It is packed with stories about members and u3a activities, plus celebrity interviews and features on technology, recipes, travel, competitions, plus a lively and popular letters section. Published five times a year, there is also a screen reader-friendly version available for every issue.



Celebration cameos

A few photographs capturing the after lunch conversations and a couple of quotes.



“ I attended my first Mahjong meeting. It was fun. My new colleagues were so helpful, as it's been over twenty years since I last played ”

ANONYMOUS



“ I have joined one group and I had a taster session with another, which I intend to join next term. I cannot always come to the monthly meetings but did manage a few and found them interesting. ”

ANONYMOUS



QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Aberchirder 2. Banff 3. Crimond 4. Dyce 5. Esslemont 6. Fasque 7. Gardenstown 8. Hatton 9. Inch 10. Johnshaven 11. King Edward 12. Lumsden 13. Maud 14. New Deer 15. Old Deer 16. Peterhead 17. MonQuhitter 18. Roseheart 19. Skene 20. Tough 21. Udney Station 22. Daviot 23. Whiterashes 24. Millbrex 25. Ythsie 26. Finzean

Report of Aberdeen u3a AGM

Report of the Aberdeen u3a AGM held on 4th June 2026.

Bettina Hoppe as Vice Chair welcomed 50 members to the meeting. The minutes of the 2025 AGM were proposed by Mary Hill and seconded by Jenny Smith. There were no matters arising.

Bettina reported that another year had flown by, with us now well settled in the Mercure for our regular monthly and committee meetings. Monthly talks continue to be well attended with an average of 50 plus members. Weather only interrupted once, in January resulting in a cancellation. The annual Christmas event was celebrated with mulled wine and festive bakes. The year has finished with a healthy 220 members, 13 more than last year. However, as membership increases, more people are needed to come forward to run groups. Committee numbers started at eight elections at AGM, increased to nine with the co-option of Secretary after the meeting, briefly went up to 11 and ended the year on 10, after two new/old members were co-opted in March. Unfortunately, our Chair resigned on health grounds in May; however, the Committee rallied and continued to function well together.

Thanks went to the all Office Bearers and Committee members who have put in a great deal of work and commitment. Special thanks go to the Speaker Organisers, Jenny Smith and Joyce Grahame who are both leaving us at this AGM.

Finally a mention was made of the website, very effectively managed by Fiona Watson, which is experiencing healthy traffic so that is a very positive development.

**OFFICE-BEARERS AND COMMITTEE
2026-27**

CHAIR

Bettina Hoppe

VICE CHAIR

Sylvie Redvers

TREASURER

Mary C Hoggard

SECRETARY

Vacant

GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR AND

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Gwyneth McWilliam

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Brown

Mary Hill

Claire D Wallace

WEBSITE MANAGER

Fiona Watson

NEWSLETTER EDITOR/DESIGNER

John Brown

<https://aberdeen.u3asite.uk>