

BANCHORY AND DEESIDE U3A

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2025

Chair summary

As we reach the end of the u3a year, it's interesting to reflect on the past twelve months. I have covered this in some detail in my Chair's Report which can be accessed on our webpage, and here I will be more brief.

I think we can congratulate ourselves on continuing to grow with membership now in the upper 200s and over 30 groups in operation with more in the pipeline. We have achieved charitable status bringing us into line with most u3as around the country. I believe we can look to the future with confidence, but as always the Committee is open to any ideas you may have on what else we might add to our activities. Ideas for speakers, groups and events are always welcome. Our u3a belongs to a This brings me to mentioning the tremendous contribution two of our now former Committee members have made to our existence and successful establishment. Both served on the Steering Group going on to become Committee members after our Inaugural Meeting in September 2023. Each of them felt that after three years it was time to retire from the Committee as those of you who attended the AGM will already be aware. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to both of them. Karen Hutchison was one of my greatest supporters in the year leading up to our very first exploratory meeting three years ago in June 2022. Without her, I doubt that we'd have made it to the starting block let alone to where we are now and since then as the director of our programme of monthly meetings and our publicity expert and general readiness, she has been a tower of strength always ready to pick up anything which required to be done. The second person to whom I wish to pay tribute is our now former Secretary Peter Davis. Peter has quietly but efficiently all of us and we all have our part to play in ensuring that we meet the needs of all members.

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We have been fortunate to secure the services of Committee member Arlene Norris as our new Secretary. We are hoping to establish a secretarial team to assist Arlene and would

welcome any member who feels able to form part of this team. This would involve being responsible for a particular small bit of the job and need not involve becoming a full Committee member.

The extra general meeting held recently was, I believe, heart rending, dealing as it did with the situation in Kyiv from the personal perspective of some of the Ukrainian refugees who have been living amongst us in Banchory. I was unfortunately unable to attend but the reports I have received indicated the effect it had on those present and the bravery of Ukrainians in that fractured country but also amongst the exiles severed from all they love. Peace is so important and for all of us, is such a fragile thing.

To turn to happier circumstances, most groups are having a summer break and our next monthly meeting will be in September when I look forward to seeing many of you again. In the meantime, I should like to wish you a wonderful summer whether you are spending it here or further afield. Have a great time!

Mary Lennox

U3a Guest Speakers

We have been delighted to welcome a number of excellent speakers to our u3a monthly meetings so far this year. They include Rob Pollard who did a great job explaining the

geology of Scotland and Belinda Rowlands the founder of local charity The Seed Box.

Particular highlights were Innes Simpson from the charity Hearing Dogs for Deaf people. Innes shared some uplifting stories of both children and adults who have been given a new lease of life thanks to these hearing dogs who are expertly trained for about 18-24 months to suit the lifestyle and needs of their partner. We also heard some fascinating facts about the Norwegians, their traditions and culture from Jeanette Yuile. Jeanette, who was born and bred in Norway presented her talk dressed in her beautiful hand sewn national costume which she told us took about a year to make such was the quality and attention to the intricate embroidery!

For our autumn- winter programme our guest speakers will include Dr Alan Bowman, a global expert on ticks and Lyme Disease, Sir Graeme Catto, former President of the General Medical Council, on the topic of assisted dying. We shall also hear about the amazing stories being discovered from the Northern Picts Project with all the latest research from the archaeologists right at the heart of this literally groundbreaking Aberdeen University research.



Janette Yuile

Karen Hutchison

Visit to the Pitlochry Festival: 3rd September 2025

A coach trip to Pitlochry for the Pitlochry Festival Theatre season. To reserve a place on the coach please contact June, our Membership Secretary.

Cost: Cost of coach to be advised as it depends on numbers. Booking Required

The AGM

45 members attended the AGM.

Those of you who were at the AGM will be aware that we currently have a healthy bank balance. The committee are currently considering ways in which we might usefully spend this money. Please get in touch if you have any ideas.

The Committee members for the 2025-6 season are:

Chair	Mary Lennox
Secretary	Arlene Norris
Vice-chair	Maggie Dornan
Treasurer	Marjorie Taylor
Membership Coordinator	June Wilson
Groups Coordinator	Anna Mackay
PR coordinators	Maggie Dornan and Elizabeth Russell
Minutes secretary	Jane Bruce
Members	Sheilagh Clark Margaret McLaren Rod Stone

Maggie Dornan

Interest Groups

We now have around 30 groups in the Banchory and Deeside u3a organisation, all of which are meeting at least monthly, and in some cases fortnightly. Recent additions have included a Meteorology Group and a second Art Appreciation Group. As ever, please email our Groups Co-ordinator, Anna Mackay, if you want more information. Anna's email is annamackayu3a@outlook.com

Over recent months we have tried to start a Practical Art group which has not managed to get off the ground, partly due to the difficulty of location (our local cafes are not suitable for obvious reasons). If you have any ideas about how to progress this group (or any other group) after the summer, please get in touch with Anna.

As ever, we are deeply indebted to our Group Coordinators for their contributions over the last year. Our groups could not operate without them. Unfortunately our bi-annual sandwich lunch, which acts as a thankyou from the Committee to the Coordinators, had to be cancelled recently due to lack of available numbers - too many of us were on holiday! We hope to host this in September or October instead.

As Mary has mentioned, most, if not all, of our groups are having a well-earned break over the summer - we hope that you all come back recharged and refreshed, raring to go! If you have any queries in the meantime, please get in touch with either Anna or myself. Safe travels and happy holidays

Maggie Dornan

Next Slide Please

This phrase has become something of a mantra for us, a light-hearted nod to the unpredictable nature of technology.

Karen and Aileen have been on a steep learning curve over the last few years trying to navigate the technology to ensure that the Monthly Speakers can use the West Church's presentation system. We are incredibly grateful to the Church for allowing us to use their facilities, and being able to watch the slide presentation certainly adds an extra dimension to their talks.

Despite the number of members within the u3a I fear that the sight of that large sound deck with so many sliders, knobs and lights, not to mention at least 6 remote controls, has dissuaded any offer of help!

A couple of times over the years it has completely flummoxed us, and also quite a few times when it has suddenly worked at the last minute, often without knowing why! Somehow the gadget to change the slides by the Speaker refuses to cooperate, so we have had to go back to the 'next slide please'.

Karen and I are now stepping aside to let others have a take their turn, and they have a new 'deck' to help them support the Speakers. If anyone with IT experience would like to offer some support they would be made very welcome.

Aileen McHardy

Poem

We are grateful to David Ellix for this delightful poem. I'm sure many of us have been there!

I Missed a Beet

My hostess made me salad, so perfect and complete.
But suddenly I realise, I've mislaid half a beet.
Is it down on her carpet, spreading redness at my feet?
I need to investigate, but I need to be discrete.
Without drawing attention, I ease back on my chair.
I know I need to look, but somehow I hardly dare.
My eyes catch just a glimpse, then open wide to stare,
At my nice new trousers – the red stain growing there!

Jan 2025

Forthcoming programme.

The following talks have been arranged:

- September 11th: Alan Bowman on Lyme Disease
- October 9th: Ellie Graham on the Northern Picts project
- November 13th: Sir Graeme Catto on Assisted Dying.

Other speakers are being finalised for the rest of the season, but if anyone has suggestions for talks please let Maggie Dornan know.