

Banchory and Deeside U3A

Newsletter February 2026

Dear Members

I hope by the time you read this the weather will have changed for the better. It is sometimes said that there is no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothes, but it seems to me that the start of 2026 has disproved this. I long for a sight of sun and blue skies and look forward to being able to go out the front door without having to tog up in fully waterproof gear.

It's not just the weather that needs to change in 2026. By the time we reach our AGM in June we will have been a fully affiliated u3a for three years. This means that according to our constitution those Committee members like me who have held the same position for that period must either step down from the Committee or change role. A number of us have indeed been in post for more than three years as we also served during the year or so before affiliation when our brand new u3a was being set up and our very first groups were beginning to operate. From those first tentative beginnings we have now grown to over 300 members and more than 30 groups. For me it has been an exciting and rewarding time and I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to be your first Chair.

Committee membership is not of course for everyone, but to safeguard our future it has to be for some. We already have candidates for the main officer posts, but at the AGM in June we really will need two or three of you to become Committee members. While most Committee members take on a role such as membership or events, not all Committee members have specific responsibilities but are there to represent members and to assist with things like taking attendance or welcoming visitors at monthly meetings on an ad hoc basis. Being on the Committee is really not a huge commitment; it is enjoyable but it is also essential that some of us take our turn to ensure our continued existence.

Except for July and August we meet once a month in the Legion for an hour and a half. At the moment this is at 9.30 on the Friday morning following the monthly meeting. All Committee Meetings are open to all members so why not come along to see what it is like? Feel free to contact me, Vice Chair Maggie Dornan or any Committee member beforehand or just turn up. You would be most welcome. Please give it some thought.

Right now I'm off to do some research for one of the History Groups I belong to and then to prepare to brave the elements to walk the dog. Enjoy your u3a activities too.

Best wishes Mary.

TALKS

WE have had some thought-provoking and entertaining talks in the past few months. Our November speaker was Sir Graeme Catto who, as well as being a superb speaker, gave us a deeply informed overview of the different positions on Assisted Dying and the influence of organisations rather than of individuals on the views of politicians. In December we were enthralled by the stories of migrating birds that pass through Fyvie National Nature Reserve, especially the tiny birds who fly for up to a week without stopping from North Africa to our coast. Sadly, the snow cancelled our January talk (which will happen in the autumn). And this month we heard about a really encouraging development not far from here, the Glensaugh Climate-Positive Farming Initiative (see photograph below), in which scientists are working with nature instead of against it.



INTEREST GROUPS

There are now groups on about 40 topics, ranging from Adult Mindfulness to Walking. More information can be found on our Banchory and Deeside website under groups at [Groups - Banchory & Deeside](#)

BRIDGE: DO YOU PLAY BRIDGE?

If you are interested in playing a social, friendly game please let me know. Venue etc. to be decided depending on response. Please reply in the first instance to: June Wilson - juglemo@gmail.com

Should you wish to learn to play bridge, the national u3a run a Beginner's Bridge Tuition Course which can be accessed through their website. Details are outlined on their factsheet.

METEOROLOGY

The Meteorological group (Meteo for short) met every month since starting in February 2025. (Individually we take breaks at various times through the year, with the result that our enrolled number may be 12, but usually one or two are off having more fun - so we do still welcome new members!)

We've covered local weather - clouds, sunsets etc, Global influences - hurricanes, ocean currents, Jetstream, and the impact of the Sun on the World's weather patterns. November's subject was Solar Flares and Radiation, and you may have seen very recent news reports on the urgent need to instal software updates on Airbus 320 aircraft, to counter the adverse effect of solar radiation on their control systems. So it's all relevant to life today. And that's before we mention Climate Change.

We meet on the last Wednesday of each month at Firbrae, near Hill of Banchory school, 2.30-4.00. In true U3a style, we're a self-help group who do our own research, with the occasional guest speaker. Join us through Annackayu3a@outlook.com.

Ken Lennox, group co-ordinator.



The Walking Group on the steps of Drum Castle

A BUCKET LIST - HAVE YOU GOT ONE?

Like most people, I have things on my "Bucket List" about which I occasionally ponder. One of those is Madagascar, a country I have always wanted to visit, but not all of them are quite so expensive! I wondered if anyone would be interested in a new u3a group - The Bucket List Group! My idea (taken from a u3a magazine, so not original) would be that the group met up, each bringing three ideas of a Bucket List activity. No, not Madagascar, but something a little more achievable and realistic! The group would then whittle down the ideas to 10 or so (common sense and practicality prevailing) and then see if we could organise one a month. Does that appeal at all? If so, please get in touch with Maggie Dornan on maggienlib@talktalk.net and if there is enough interest, I will set up an initial meeting to discuss it further.

ODE TO THE U3A (One selected at random from several written by members of the Creative Writing Group)

It's January 2026, days of gloom, rain, frost and snow

I'm bored and lonely, what shall I do?

Cuddle up with a book, yoga or mindfulness?

Educate with Philosophy, Latin, French conversation or

Be energetic with the walking group or Pickleball?

I'm bored and lonely, what shall I do?

Art appreciation, creative writing or a game of cards?

Why not enjoy a game of Bridge, Whist, Mahjong, Scrabble or

Be curious with Genealogy, Canasta or Scottish history?

I'm bored and lonely, what shall I do?

Explore crafts, poetry, creative writing or Ornithology?

Perhaps a monthly lunch out with friends or

online interest groups and a summer outing?

I'm bored and lonely, what shall I do?

Join the U3a, its friendly, fun and only £12 a year

Be curious, come to a monthly meeting with a friend or

explore the U3a website to find out

U3A IN SCOTLAND SUMMER SCHOOL 2026

U3A in Scotland is running a summer school from Monday 24th August to Wednesday 26th August at Stirling Court Hotel in Stirling.

The topics covered will be:

Exploring Artificial Intelligence

British Sign Language

Japanese Sashiko Embroidery

The Picts

Positive Psychology

If you think you might be interested full details are available on the Summer School page of the u3a in Scotland website: u3asites.org.uk/scotland or email summerschoolu3a@gmail.com

Full board residential rates are available in hotel or university guest accommodation. Day rates are also available.



Pink-footed geese returning at dusk to the Montrose basin. From Steve McHugh of the Bird Watching Group