

Banchory and Deeside U3A

Newsletter July 2026

Report from the Chair

Dear Friends

My thanks to you all for making the last four years such an exciting and enjoyable time for me and I hope for you as well. I can hardly believe that so much time has passed since many of us attended that first meeting in the Town Hall on Thursday 23rd June 2022. I remember being nervous and fearing that no one would turn up and hoping that we might with luck have 40 people interested in joining. We had double that and had to scurry around to set out more chairs. At the end of the meeting when I asked for a show of hands of those who wished us to proceed, every hand went up. Over that summer those who volunteered for the Steering Group worked hard and at our Inaugural Meeting in September 100 people paid their subscriptions and became our founder members. Since then we have continued to grow and at the end of the financial year in March we had over 320 members.

It has been a real privilege to be Chair for these early formative years. To see the initial idea develop into the organisation we have now, to see new groups forming, to learn of new friendships being made, to work with like-minded people and to watch people sharing and learning together have been for me a joy, and I thank you all for being part of it and giving me the opportunity to experience what has been one of the most rewarding times of my life.

Now, however, it is time for new leadership. Our u3a constitution rightly ensures that this happens and, so my time is up. As those of you who attended our AGM on 11th June will know, we now have a new Chair: Maggie Dornan. Maggie has been Vice Chair since the very beginning and will be an excellent leader for our u3a. She has my very best wishes and she and her team have my full support.

Have a great summer.

Mary, Immediate Past Chair

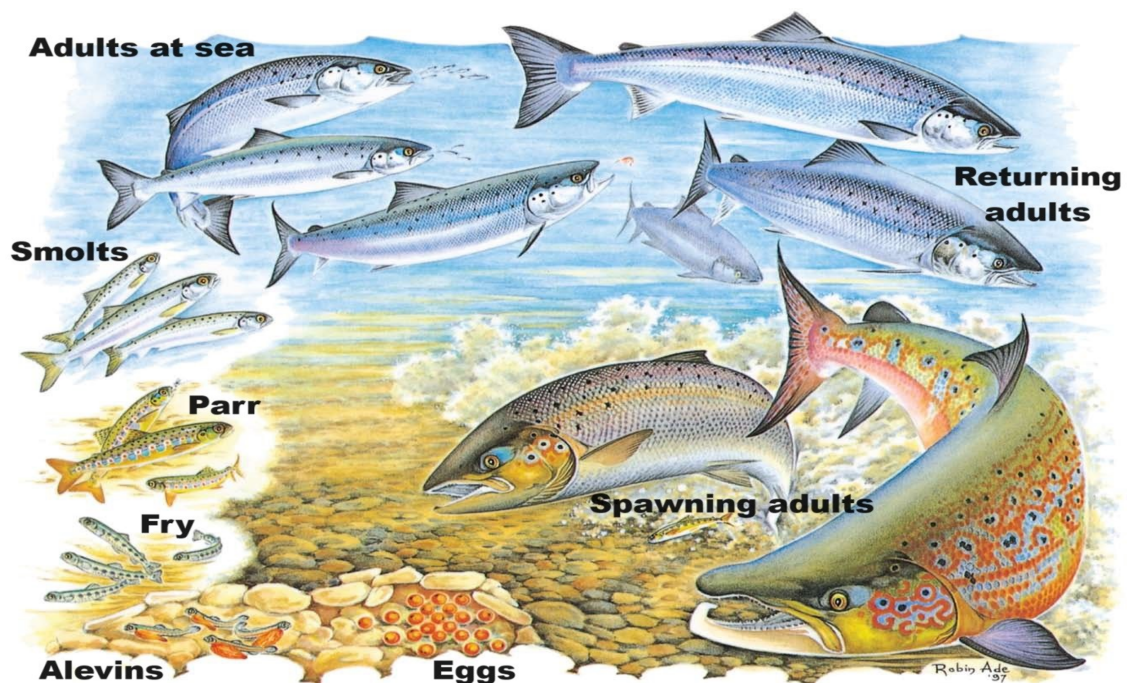
Talks

We have had another wonderful set of speakers since the last newsletter. Keith Roberts took us through the joys and vagaries of walking from Land's End to John O'Groats including gateways blocked by ominous-looking cattle. Marion White talked about the life of Myra Mackenzie, Aberdeen's first female medical graduate and her career that took her south and abroad to find work (plus ca change!). John Allen described vividly the incredible Scottish role in the Arctic Convoys, who sailed mainly from Loch Ewe (where there is an excellent museum) from 1941-45. These were merchant ships escorted by Royal Naval vessels whose official task was to deliver military and food supplies to Russia but who, in fact, became involved in several battles such as the Battle of the



Barents Sea. They sailed through some horrendous conditions (Fig. 1) and it is in many ways remarkable that only 85 of about 1400 merchant vessels were lost.

The last talk of the session was “Salmon on the Line”, given by Robert Harper, ghillie at Crathes for 50 years. Robert described the four challenges that salmon face at various stages of their life-cycle (Fig.2) and that have now reduced them to being Red Listed and Endangered. They are Predation, Climate Change, Pollution, and the High Seas. Fresh water pearl mussels, an important symbiotic partner of fresh water salmon, are also in crisis.



“The Salmon is the king of fish. Their journeys up rivers are some of the most thrilling spectacles in the natural world. And yet, now, their very survival is at risk”, Sir David Attenborough.

Despite this, Robert described the frustration and difficulties of getting any help or support from Government, who appear to be content with the supply of farmed salmon to consumers.

PS. Please note that there will be tea and coffee available after each talk. The Committee has suggested that members should feel free to bring their own cup to the meeting, purely in the interest of reducing our carbon footprint. This is not mandatory, but something that you are welcome to do, should you so wish.

Report from the AGM

64 members attended the AGM. The chair thanked especially the group coordinators, the tea and coffee ladies, and the venues who generously provide accommodation for the groups.

The following office bearers were elected for the coming session:

- Chair: Maggie Dornan
 - Vice-Chair: Anna Mackay
 - Secretary: Arlene Norris
 - Treasurer: Marjorie Taylor
 - Other committee members:
 - Sheilagh Clark
 - Margaret Coutts
 - Mary Lennox
 - Steve McHugh
 - Elizabeth Russell
 - Rod Stone
 - June Wilson
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Time or place? N'importe! French Conversation Group 1

In a conversation group any subject is valid as long as it is discussed, in our case, in French. So since our last article here - too long ago (desolés, tout le monde) - we have explored the paths of personal news and memories, current affairs and history, culture and customs - with some surprising detours along the way.

Our accounts of our “favourites”, whether holidays, big events, plays, paintings and so on are too numerous to report here, but they have never failed to reveal unusual experiences. When we came to our “worst” journeys, meals or visits, some became quite alarming.

These chats have taken us around the world but we always come back to France. We have discovered some dramatic stories from past times. Find out about Raoul Minot from the Archives Nationales. That gentleman managed to take over 1,000 clandestine photos of the German occupation of Paris in World War 2, providing the Resistance with invaluable information before his sad betrayal and despatch to Germany. The Frères Lumière are well known as inventors of the cinématographe and are key figures in cinema history. Less well known is the catastrophic, fatal fire at the high society charity sale, the Bazar de la Charité, in 1897 which was caused by careless use of their invention in an elaborate indoor village constructed in wood.

We are in touch with modern France as well. We have read up on many traditions and in the case of French weddings (very different to ours both legally and culturally) we completed our day as guests

at the dinner table, sharing typical exchanges between strangers. We have used technology as well. A recent zoom session was a chance to hear about daily life from a young French mother of two boys, the younger arriving a week after our conversation. Unexpected was her description of French education – another area where differences between our two countries are striking.

Last Summer we went through all stages of a trip to Paris. We started out at Aberdeen airport, got right through the journey to our hotel and finally had a splendid meal in the magnificent surroundings of the world-famous restaurant, Le Train Bleu. And all without leaving the couches of the Tor-na-Coille. Role play, as we learned, can reveal some excellent acting skills while providing much useful vocabulary for real journeys.

Not unconnected was our research into the number of words in French for ‘eateries’. Our list was checked over by helpful French contacts, but even they did not expect to find 62 different terms. Those of you who travel in France will have visited restaurants, cafés, bistrots and brasseries. But did you know that the stand in the park where you bought your coffee and croissant is a buvette? One day, did you find the only place to eat was a boui-boui (greasy spoon)? Perhaps future travel will take you to a café-concert (café with live music), a bouillon (traditional, affordable French cuisine), a rôtisserie (steakhouse), a baraque à frites (takeaway) and many more. Bon appétit!

Margaret, June 2026

Another PS. We all know that fuel prices have increased. We thought it worth mentioning that it would be courteous to offer some sort of recompense towards the sharing of fuel costs when you are given a lift.

Latin then and now, Latin Group

On leaving school in '64 our class rejoiced because no more
Would we endure the weekly dread of homework in a language dead.
The point of learning Latin then
was quite obscure especially when
Our teenage interests lay elsewhere - in music, parties, what to wear.
About the endless Punic wars we quickly tired of hearing
Were unimpressed by elephants who mastered mountaineering
Not one of us could ever give
a fig about the ablative
cared not at all for Caesar's ploys
Verb conjugations were just noise
Deponent verbs caused us to doze
Gerundives left us comatose.
The sixties blossomed bold and free
We languished in the years BC.
But what a massive turnaround-
In our advancing years we found

That Latin is an ideal way
 To put on hold brain cell decay
 Our memories are exercised
 Our thinking skills are honed
 We gamely tackle Latin prose
 Brain atrophy postponed
 But really why we do it is for fun and recreation
 The joy we get from this pursuit beyond our expectation
 We laugh a lot, enjoy the chat, and sometimes we do lunch
 From this I'm sure you'll gather we're a very happy bunch.
 We're active and we're learning; we have more ups than downs
 We will accept declining,
 But only Latin nouns.

Current U3A Groups

• <u>Adult Mindfulness</u> • <u>Art Appreciation</u> • <u>Beginners Bridge (Group 2)</u> • <u>Bird Watching</u> • <u>Board and Card Games</u> • <u>Book Group One</u> • <u>Book Group Two</u> • <u>Canasta</u> • <u>Craft</u> • <u>Creative Writing</u> • <u>Discussion Group</u> • <u>French Conversation</u> • <u>French Conversation 2</u> • <u>Gardening</u> • <u>Genealogy</u> • <u>General History</u>	• <u>Latin</u> • <u>Lunch Group One</u> • <u>Lunch Group Two</u> • <u>Mahjong Group One</u> • <u>Mahjong Group Two</u> • <u>Meteorological Group</u> • <u>Philosophical Conversations</u> • <u>Pickleball</u> • <u>Pickleball 2</u> • <u>Poetry Appreciation</u> • <u>Poetry Group One</u> • <u>Poetry Group Two</u> • <u>Scottish History</u> • <u>Scottish History 2</u> • <u>Social Bridge</u> • <u>Walking Group</u>
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