

**From the Editor Helen McGlinchey**

**W**elcome to the Sept/Oct newsletter. Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition. My thanks to the Chair, Jim Livingstone, Barbara McDermott, Ann Hayes, June Martin & Noreen Caffrey for their help & advice.

**Contacts**

For reasons concerning compliance with General Data Protection Regulation, Belfast u3a is no longer publishing the personal email addresses of *Committee Members*, including the *Newsletter Editor*, on the public website. Contact details can be obtained by emailing the relevant person directly through the *Contact Tab* on the *Belfast u3a website* <https://u3asites.org.uk/belfast>. Go to the Group tab, find the Group page, and click the pigeon icon.

**Committee News**

What a washout of a few months; let's hope for an Indian Summer, or maybe you are fortunate and can get away for an autumnal break in a sunnier spot. Anyway, since the Newsletter was last published at the beginning of May and before the Committee took a break for July and August, a lot of things happened in the intervening period: two Committee Meetings, two General Meetings, and the Annual General Meeting.

The AGM held at the end of May was well attended and there we reported on changes in Committee membership. Jim McDonnell resigned, and he was thanked profusely for doing a brilliant job over the past three years, facilitating administration, communication and growth in membership. And he was replaced by two people! Margaret Stirrup took over the roles of Vice-Chair and Membership Secretary, and Patsy Torney the position of Beacon Administrator. But, going into the 2024-25 year, there is still one Committee position vacant. As our u3a continues to grow we can potentially look forward to exciting new groups developing, making more new friends, new types of events to attend throughout the year, and so on. However, NONE of this can actually happen without volunteers stepping forward to act as group convenors or committee members. We are an entirely voluntary

organisation with no paid staff or offices. This is why there is only a minimal charge for membership. Volunteers usually play a particular role for a couple of years or so and then hand on to others. But without such volunteers the outlook would be grim. Frankly, the organisation would quickly cease to exist. But volunteering is not a chore; it can be interesting and even fun. In doing so, members can share their organisational, administrative or leadership skills, all developed over many years, for the benefit of the organisation and fellow members. Could you help? Would you help? In addition, for the following year, it will be necessary to recruit a new Treasurer to manage the finances. The volunteer does not need to be an accountant or financial wizard. Most of the systems are automated and therefore it is mostly about ensuring members' fees are properly managed and banked, bills are paid, and an annual report is produced in collaboration with the Deputy Treasurer, who is also a member of Committee. It would be ideal to attract a recruit before Christmas, so that that person has time to familiarise themselves with the systems before taking on the role next May, when the current Treasurer, Neil McQuillan, steps down after a very successful period at the financial helm. If you have a background in office management or administration or business or finance, please consider volunteering as our next Treasurer. Your help is needed, and you will be making a really important contribution to the life of Belfast u3a.

In talking about giving of time and expertise, Liz Hunter, the Website Administrator, is hugely worthy of mention here. A few months ago, she got together a group of IT-savvy individuals, including Campbell Morrison, Mary-Rose McBrien, Irene Cauley, Teresa McVeigh and Mairead McGouran. One cannot be but impressed by their painstaking effort to transition the website content onto a new platform, which provides a more customer-friendly interface and enhanced content. And there are lots of photos illustrating just how much interest and energy there is around in Belfast u3a. The Website Development Team is keen to go live with the new website design in early September, so look out for the alert that it is ready to view. You too can have your say and contribute to content as further development takes place.

The mainstay of the Belfast u3a offering, the General Meetings, were particularly popular at the end of last year. The speaker at the June meeting was Anne Dines, who gave a captivating talk about her travels in Japan - what an amazing adventure she had! The presentation was full of interesting historical and geographical facts, all illustrated by stunning photographs. Along the way, she gave us perceptive insight into Japanese culture and peppered the talk with amusing anecdotes. It is possible that Anne may have enthused a few of the audience to make tracks to their local travel agent! To mark the end of the u3a year, the Committee decided to extend the usual hospitality. About 120 members and a few friends were able to enjoy a light buffet lunch organised by John McQuillan and were

entertained by our one and only David Blair. And, as Speakers Co-Ordinator, he has already firmed up a varied programme for next year; there is an exciting line-up, which we are sure you will enjoy. Here are the speakers for Autumn.

### **Information on Monthly Meetings**

**Monthly Meetings in the Balmoral Hotel**, Blacks Road, Dunmurry, Belfast BT10 ONF.

Please note that monthly meetings are usually held on the last Thursday of the month at 11.00h. Dates to note are: 26 September, 24 October, 28 November.

Tea/coffee is served from 10.30h. We will send out a reminder a week before the meeting.

**THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel** (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Marie Therese Rogers-Maloney, 'For the Sins of my Mother'.

Marie Therese will give an insight into her book and the traumatic upbringing at Nazareth House described within its pages. She will describe how she took control of her situation to create opportunities for herself. This will be a unique opportunity to hear, first-hand, the experiences of this incredible woman.

**THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel** (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Neil O'Brien from Victus Energy has entitled his talk 'It's All About Energy'.

Neil is a lively character who will be telling us what is in front of us regarding the future sourcing and consumption of energy in all its forms.

**THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel** (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Declan Lawn of 'Blue Lights' fame.

This is one of the most popular police dramas to hit our screens. As one of the writers, Declan will give a 'behind the scenes' perspective on the series. Nearer the time, we'll be looking for questions from you to put to Declan for this exciting Q & A session.

### **New Members Meeting**

Belfast u3a is always pleased to welcome new members. Since May 2024 several new members have joined, and we would like to invite you to come to a brief introductory session at our September meeting at Balmoral where one of our members will give you a brief introduction as to how Belfast u3a works and how to get involved. It will be very informal, lasting only 20 minutes before the formal meeting and is aimed at giving you an insight into how to make the most of your membership of Belfast u3a.

If you would like to come to this brief introductory session, please email [membership@belfastu3a.org](mailto:membership@belfastu3a.org). In addition, there will be a more formal introductory session for new members which will take place in November (date still to be finalised). We very much hope you will come along to our September meeting and avail of the opportunity to meet current and new members.

## New Website


The Web Administration team is happy to announce that the new website is now live. You will for a while be redirected to the new website from the old address, but we advise using the new address by typing it into your address bar. The new address is:

<https://belfast.u3asite.uk>

You may want to save that on your home screen for handy access.

We very much hope you enjoy exploring the new website and would welcome any feedback or suggestions. A member of our team will be at the September meeting (at a table before the meeting) and will be happy to answer any questions you may have or show you what you can do on the website!

## Group News

**Art Appreciation Group** – from Sandra Foster 

In May the Royal Ulster Academy (RUA) invited members to a talk on the Belfast artist John Luke. This provided an opportunity for us to see his mural, *Solomon Building the Temple* which is in what used to be the Masonic Hall in Rosemary Street.

In June we were given a private presentation in the Ulster Museum on the two Caravaggio paintings – *The Taking of Christ* and *Supper at Emmaus*. Members of the group then went to view the paintings.

August was a busy month. We visited the F E McWilliams gallery to explore the exhibition *The Scottish Women Artists: 250 Years is Challenging Perceptions*. We also attended a social event, organised by the RUA, which gave members the opportunity to meet and talk to their Academicians.

**Art Group** – from Nick Wright

The art group at Belvoir Hub commences on Tuesday 10 September at 10.30am. There are vacancies at present.

**Literature Group** – from June Martin



The Literature Group planning meeting will be later in September, and we will be resuming regular meetings in October.

New members are welcome to join us on Wednesday mornings from 10.30 – 12.30 and if anyone wishes to have more information, please contact either of the convenors.

More precise details of the planning meeting will be circulated to regular members in early September and as usual suggestions for our reading list are always welcome and should be forwarded to the convenor asap.

We look forward to another year of stimulating reading and discussion.

**Book Group 1** – From Anne McGovern



We resume after the summer break on Monday 2nd September when we will be discussing two books. *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* and *How to Build a Boat*. We will meet as usual on the first Monday of the month for the rest of the year.

**Informal Bridge group** – from Pat McNamee



Mon and/or Fri 2 to 4 pm. Contact Pat McNamee 02890612942 or via the website groups pages.

**S.O.S. Before covid the group had two or three tables each day. Now enough members have not returned in order to achieve at least two tables and, during the summer, sometimes not enough for even one table. We need new members to join our group which provides the opportunity for anyone with a basic knowledge of bridge to practice and develop their playing skills.**

**Classical Music Appreciation Group** – from Keith Thompson



Meetings of the Classical Music Appreciation group recommence on Tuesday 10th September in Finaghy Community Centre (Geeragh Place, BT10 0ER) from 10.30am-12.30pm. Our late founder and coordinator Kristin Nelson was fond of the music of Joseph Haydn so we will therefore begin by listening to her presentation on the composer's life followed by an analysis of his Symphony No. 100 (the Military). In October (Tuesday 8th) there will be a talk on the classical guitar by Keith Thompson and Dr Robert Cuthbert illustrated with performances of its music. (*This is a rescheduled meeting following its cancellation in June.*)

**Wine Appreciation Group** – from David Blair



This will be arranged for later in the year. Dates and venue are still to be confirmed. Watch out for information in the next newsletter or on the website.

**The Last Word Group** – from Hilary Davidson

We recommence on Friday 6th September at 1.30 in Shaftesbury Community Centre and would love to welcome some new members eager to have 'the last word'.

### **Mindfulness Group** – from David Blair

There will be a new 8-week programme which will cover the basic aspects of Mindfulness in a friendly relaxed atmosphere. Because of the demand for the last course, it will not be possible at this stage to offer places to new applicants. I'll be getting in touch with all those members who were placed on a waiting list when I couldn't accommodate them in the programme, last Spring.

I would be grateful if all of you who were placed on the waiting list could re-confirm your intention to attend by email to [mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com](mailto:mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

The planned dates for this next 8-week programme are Wednesday 11 September and each Wednesday until the 30 October at the Morton Community Centre, Lorne St from 1000hrs to 1200 hrs.

### **Myths & Legends Group** – from Mavis Turner

The Myths and Legends Group meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month in Clonduff Community Centre at 2pm - 3.15pm.

This is a relatively new group which started in April 2024. The group started with the topic of Irish Mythology. This new term we would like to continue with Norse Mythology, which should make for interesting subject matter with much to learn and enjoy.

We would welcome new members to the group. If interested, please turn up to the group meeting or you can contact me via the website groups pages.

### **Ukelele Group** – from Geoff Crowther

The group has been running since last November and has made great progress since most were beginners. We meet the first and third Tuesdays 1100-1230 in 2 Royal Avenue.

Beginners are still welcome to learn ukulele, but we also need someone to provide percussion – drum/ tambourine/cymbals etc.

If you are interested get in touch via the website groups pages.

### **Creative Writing Group** – from Lena McCann



Monday Group (Weekly Ormeau Library)

The Group return from the summer break on Monday 16 September '24, from 2-4pm in the Ormeau Library. We hope to welcome new members from the enquiries received over the last few months.


Prior to that, there is an informal gathering of group members for coffee in Bobbins Coffee Shop, City Hall at 11 am Tuesday 27 August '24

### **Concert/Theatre Group** – from Maureen Pimley



#### **Events**

- Lyric Sun 3 November *The Tragedy of Richard 111* 2.30pm £15
- Theatre at the Mill Tues 5 November *Magical Mozart by Candlelight* 7.45pm £25.50

**Scrabble Group** – from Hilary Davidson 

The Scrabble Group recommences on Thursday 5th September at 1.30 in Clonduff Community Centre. New members will be very welcome.

**Golf Group** – from A. Ross 

Our last outing of the year will be to Larne Golf Club on 4th September. After that, all thoughts will turn to our season ending trip to the Ballymascanlon Hotel for a few days.

**Photography Group** – from A. Ross 

Members of the group continue to take photographs on themes e.g. Colour, Arches etc and letters e.g. a and b. We also continue to have outings to such locations as Strangford/Portaferry and Antrim Castle Gardens.

We also meet regularly on Zoom to review photographs taken during the month.

Discussions continue to restart a joint initiative with the Creative Writing group.

The group's webpage within the Belfast U3A webpage show some of the photographs taken by the group.

**All weather Walking Group** – from Brenda McHugh 

Despite the unpredictable weather, the All Weather Walking Group has been living up to its name.

On several days when the clouds looked ominous, the Ramblers defiantly turned up in places like Glenarm, Stormont Estate, Redburn Country Park, Quoile Riverside to name but a few. Frequently the clouds kept at bay until the walk was over.

Our annual BBQ took place in June in warm and sunny conditions in Crawfordsburn Country Park.

Have a look at some of our photos on the website.

As we often affirm, there's no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong type of clothing and footwear.

Happy walking everyone!

**Pilates Group** – from Rosemary Thomas 

The autumn classes in Belvoir Activity Centre resume the week beginning 2 September.

Monday. 12.45-1.45. & 2-3

Wednesday. 12.45-1.45

**Garden Group** – from Rosemary Thomas 

In spite of the weather, the group managed to visit some inspiring gardens over the summer. Check out the photos on the Garden Group's page on Belfast u3a's website.

### ***Scramblers Group*** – from Rosemary Hunter

The Scramblers walking group have had a very good walking year despite being challenged by the weather on many occasions!

We now meet every Thursday and walk for 4-5 hours, mainly in the Mourne and have explored many new routes. We welcome new members.

We take it in turn to lead the walks.

Because we all love the outdoors, together with Lisburn u3a, we spent a day with the Mourne Heritage Trust on a 'litter pick' at Donard Park and were amazed at the amount of litter we collected. See attached photo.



### ***Local History Group*** – from Margaret Stirrup

The Local History Group usually meets the third Wednesday of every month from 1.30 - 3.00 pm at Clonduff Community Centre situated just off Montgomery Road in East Belfast. In addition visits to various places of historical interest are organised for different dates across the year.

For our Sept meeting a visit to the Linenhall Library to take their Blue Plaque tour of Belfast City Centre on Thursday 19 September is planned. In Oct we will meet at Clonduff on Wed 16 October where our focus will be on *Food choices in the 1950's/60's*. This follows on from a previous meeting looking at this period but from a different angle.

New members of the group are always welcome and the Convenors - Elizabeth and Margaret - will be available at the September U3A meeting at Balmoral Hotel if members wish to join or have further queries.

### ***Yoga Group*** – from Arthur Webb

Yoga classes re-commence at Belvoir Studio 11am Wednesday (1hr) for 6 weeks from 2nd October. (£20 to cover hire).



### ***French Groups*** -from Mina Kelly

French Groups resume in the first week of September. There are 4 groups catering for 4 different levels: Beginner, Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced.

**Beginners:** this group meets on Wednesday mornings in the Morton Community Centre, Lorne Street (off Lisburn Road) from 11.00 to 12.30. Basic grammar, vocabulary conversation.

**Elementary:** we meet on Friday mornings in the Morton Community Centre, Lorne Street (off Lisburn Road) from 11.30 to 1.00. Use of main verb tenses and basic structures, vocabulary building, varied conversation and pronunciation.

**Intermediate:** this group takes place in the Morton Community Centre, Lorne Street on Friday mornings from 10.00 to 11.30. The main focus of the class is discussion arising from texts on current issues mainly but not exclusively of French interest.

**Advanced:** we meet in Finaghy Community Centre from 2.00 to 3.30 on Monday afternoons. A good bit of reading required in advance of the meeting; articles from newspapers and magazines, topics of general interest- politics, history, art, society, literature - usually pertaining to France. A good standard of fluency required for general discussion.

There are 2 **group trips** organised this year; the Intermediate Group is going to La Rochelle during the week 8 to 15 September and the Elementary Group is going to Bordeaux from 29 September to 5 October.

### ***Folk Singing in Harmony*** – from Anna Monks

Our sessions will recommence on Wednesday 25th September at 11am, venue to be confirmed. I will email details to everybody who has contacted me about the group.

We meet on the **second and fourth Wednesdays** of the month at **11.00** and usually keep going until 12.30 - 13.00.

This term we will sing a mix of traditional (mainly English) chorus songs and traditional carols. We start each session with familiar rounds and other exercises to get warmed up and singing in harmony.

**NB - there is no sheet music**, we learn tunes by listening and copying. Nobody minds if some notes are wrong. It is the traditional way of learning songs gradually. We sing in a circle, so everybody is facing into the centre and able to hear each other.

I email word-sheets to members, so we all learn and sing the same version of a song. (Folk songs have endless variations!)

This group is **not** about performance – just singing together for the pure pleasure of the moment.

If you want to sing but have been told you cannot, this is the group for you.

***Rambling with a Sketchbook*** - from Judith Loder

Hi....have you got the gear to cope with local weather and the inclination to practice your sketching or indeed painting skills outside?

Do join in with the Rambling Sketchers. We travel independently, bringing our own materials, meeting up at the venue around 10.30/11.00am. We visit gardens, parks, town and village centres, markets, riversides and coasts and head for galleries or the museums when the weather is awful. If you join in, I'll give you my mobile number so you can locate me on site.

Once at the venue we disperse for a couple of hours to do our own art thing having agreed when and where we are going to meet up again. That might be in a café or pub, or we might just be eating our own packed lunch outside.

Part of the craic is a show and tell. This is not about good, better and best artistic efforts; it's just fascinating how different we all are in our approach to things and the materials we choose to use.

Be very clear I am hopeless at sketching – it's not 'my thing', that's why I started this group, but I do enjoy the outdoors and the discipline of looking at things very closely.

So, when do we meet up? I have a schedule of meets ups available for September to December 2024. Contact me by email and I'll send it to you or watch out for me at the monthly meeting and collect a schedule from there

I hope you've got the picture!

***Backgammon Group*** – from David Blair

This is a fairly new group, and it is open to all members who might be interested in learning the game or playing competitively. We meet in the Community Room at Tesco Newtownbreda every Tuesday afternoon from 1330 hrs until about 1630 hrs.

You don't need to bring anything with you and tuition will be provided to any new members of the group. Tea and coffee are provided FoC.

We formed a ladder to encourage play with different people but joining this is optional.

Backgammon is a fascinating game and if you have never tried it, I would encourage you to do so. No two games are the same and there is a great balance between the luck of the dice and the strategies you might employ to win against your opponent. Please come along, we'd be delighted to see you.

***Golf Group*** – from A. Ross 

Our last outing of the year will be to Larne Golf Club on 4th September. After that, all thoughts will turn to our season ending trip to the Ballymascanlon Hotel for a few days.

***Table Tennis*** – from Herbie Ross

Anyone interested in Table Tennis can contact the convenor via the website groups pages. We meet Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursday mornings.