

# Belfast U3A Newsletter No. 219 May/June 2025

#### From the Editor Helen McGlinchey

**W**elcome to the May/June newsletter. Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition. My thanks to the Chair, Jim Livingstone, Barbara McDermott and Ann Hayes 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. Convenors may be contacted through the website <a href="https://belfast.u3asite.uk/">https://belfast.u3asite.uk/</a>. Go to the Group tab, find the Group page and click on the convenor's name.

#### **Committee News**

As this message is being written over the Easter break and looking out of the office window at a leaden sky, it is hoped that the nice weather will return soon. Thinking ahead to the long bright days of June, what better way to spend one or two of them than at the NI u3a Summer School. This will be held at the Greenmount Agricultural College Campus on 5-6 June. Topics range from Astronomy, History, Art, Floristry, Mindfulness, Fun Drama and Yoga to activities on Campus and the offer of a guided tour of Antrim Castle Gardens. Further Information is given in the notice below.

As we proceed towards the end of our business year, plans for next year and the Belfast u3a 25th anniversary are shaping up well. The big event, to take place in the City Hall on 26 February 2026, is now confirmed and we are grateful to the Belfast City Council for their kind generosity in providing the venue and a contribution to costs. The celebration will take the form of a reception with afternoon tea, some entertainment and there will surely be a few words spoken about the realisation of where we are today and hopes for the future. In this context, Ann Hayes, one of the founding members of Belfast u3a, has now completed an illustrated chronicle of the early years, which can be found on the Website under the Members tab.

The first few General Meetings of 2025 included three excellent speakers, engaging with a breadth of topics. Eric Woods from Holywood u3a spoke at the January meeting, explaining

how the 'Silk Roads', a network of ancient trade routes connecting the Eastern and Western worlds, worked in the past and how today affect trade in far-reaching and unexpected places. On a subject closer to home, Jonny McNee gave a lively talk at the February meeting. The time went quickly in the telling of his fascinating story of unearthing the wreckage of a Spitfire P8074 in 2011, on the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal. The details and back story of the pilot 'Bud 'Wolfe made it all the more riveting. At the March meeting, one of our own members, Martin Malseed, talked about protecting our finances and indeed provided a wake-up call to remember to put our affairs in order sooner rather than later. Please see the information below about the General Meeting in April and the one in May, which includes the AGM.

# Belfast University of the Third Age\* 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM)

for the year ending 31 March 2025

# Thursday 29 May 2025 at 10.30h in the Balmoral Hotel

(as agreed at the Executive Committee meeting on 17 June 2024)

All documents (including Accounts) will be made available on the Website (under the AGM Tab) for members to examine two weeks in advance of the AGM. These papers will have been approved by the Executive Committee. Please read these papers, as printed copies will not normally be supplied.

Tea/Coffee will be served from 10.00h and the AGM will be followed at approx. 11.15h with the General Meeting, including a guest speaker.

The business of the AGM will include election of members to serve on the Committee of Belfast u3a (which has a maximum of 12 members).

There will be vacancies for two Officers (Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer), and one ordinary Committee Member. Officers can serve for a period of 2 (+2) years and ordinary members for not more than 3 consecutive years (from 29-05-25).

A nomination form can be obtained from Barbara McDermott, Business Secretary, by email to secretary@belfastu3a.org. Please return the completed form (with a scanned signature) to her, along with a copy to chairperson@belfastu3a.org, not later than Friday 9th May 2025 at 16.00h.

On request to the Secretary, arrangements can be made to receive a paper copy. Members are also invited to submit proposed and seconded resolutions by 9 May.

\*CCNI Registration: NIC 101362

### u3a Summer School

# Greenmount Agricultural College Campus Thursday 5th - Friday 6th June

A draft programme was circulated by email on 15 April. Further details are as follows:

- Costs in the region of £150 include:
- attendance at full 2-day school
- one overnight stay (5 June) in ensuite, single room
- hot drinks & scones, refreshments & conference dinner on 5 June
- option of overnight stay on 4 June for an extra £25.50
- breakfast and lunch are paid for individually
- attendance on one day only, around £30
- To register your interest in attending the Summer School and obtain updated information, please Email Nlu3aSummerSchool2025@outlook.com

#### Belfast u3a Website from the Web Admin Team

Belfast u3a Website: <a href="https://belfast.u3asite.uk/">https://belfast.u3asite.uk/</a>

Following our email to all members at the beginning of February, we were delighted to see how many of you logged in - we hope that you liked what you saw and will make full use of this resource in the future.

#### A few pointers:

- To see the full information about an **Event**, click on the title of the event (in blue). Look out for links to website descriptions of productions in the Concert and Theatre Group!
- Remember that the **Beacon** system, where your personal details are stored, is separate from the website, which is in the public domain. If your personal details change (email address, home address), please contact the **Beacon Administrator** (via the Contacts page of the website).
- If you have an interest that you would like to share with others, find out about **Starting a New Group** by going to Members/ Starting a New Group.
- If you click on a **location**, you will see the address and postcode of the location and in most cases a link to the website which will give other information relating to directions, accessibility, opening hours etc.

# **Bank of Ideas from Niamh Kelly**

Bank of Ideas - Open now

Do you have a creative idea for Belfast? The Bank of Ideas is a creative fund where people can be in with the chance to get up to £2,000 to bring their creative idea for their area to life. Open to neighbours, friends, schools, clubs, young people, one individual with an idea. All creative ideas are welcome – from recycling and baking to skateboarding and gardening! We're hosting Idea Generating and Support workshops so we can have a chat, help people come up with an idea, develop it and know all the info needed to fill out the Idea form. The Bank of Ideas is run through a Participatory Budgeting scheme, which means that residents decide how public funds are used in their area. This happens at a Voting Day in City Hall where each person/group has a stall to showcase their creative idea.

Workshops start on Friday 4th April and the deadline to send in your idea is Wednesday 14th May. **NB Some available workshop dates have passed.** 

Sign up to a workshop and get all the info here:

For all the info, including the Idea Form and Guidance,

visit <a href="https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/bank-of-ideas-2025">https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/bank-of-ideas-2025</a>

Here's the Eventbrite for workshops: <a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/bank-of-ideas-2025-workshops-4169583?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=creatorshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=odclsxcollection&utm-source=cp&aff=escb">https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/bank-of-ideas-2025-workshops-4169583?utm-campaign=social&utm-content=creatorshare&utm-medium=discovery&utm-term=odclsxcollection&utm-source=cp&aff=escb</a>

If you've any questions at all just give me a shout!

# **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.

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

#### THURSDAY 29 MAY 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Paul Stewart from the management team of Castle Espie will be giving us a history of the development of the centre and bring us up to date about what happens on a day to day basis. We'll hear about all the activities and the spectrum of wildlife available for visitors to view.

#### THURSDAY 26 JUNE 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Carol Ann Creagh was a trainee nurse in Belfast City Hospital during the 'Troubles' and will be filling us in on her most recent book *Angel City* which describes her experiences during this time. She will also be talking about her other books, *Angels under my Bed* and *A Short Stretch of the Legs* which are autobiographical and describe her cancer treatment and her adventures on the Camino de Santiago.

#### **Group News**



#### **Art Appreciation Group** – from Sandra Foster

In March the group visited the MAC to see the exhibition *I see his blood upon the rose*. It traced the history of the flower in art. Of particular interest were pictures of flowers by Mrs Mary Delany (1700 to 1788) created from hundreds of pieces of coloured paper.

In April we visited the F E McWilliam Gallery to see the exhibition *As far as the eye can see:* contemporary paintings from abc. This was an opportunity to see paintings from up and coming artists.

#### **Literature Group** – from Nuala Zahran



We are currently enjoying a special connection with that most Ulster of books *December Bride* by Sam Hanna Bell.

We end the year with an exploration of My Antonia by Willa Cather.

Our last session in May will be devoted to implementing an idea suggested by our revered deceased member Arlene Spiers. Many will remember her as a very efficient and hardworking member of Committee

We reconvene in early September to decide on our programme for next year. Members will have suggested books to be thought about over the summer. The books will be presented for consideration and 9/10 of them. will be chosen by vote.

We now have vacancies in the group. If anybody feels they might be interested in joining us next year you would be very welcome to join us at any of our sessions in May for a taster. We meet on Wednesday mornings in Finaghy Community Centre from 10 30 - 12 30.

#### Yoga Group – from Arthur Webb

There will be 5 sessions of Yoga beginning 28th May at 11am for 1 hour, ending 25th June, in Belvoir Studio.

# **Book Group 2** – from Nuala Zahran



We approach the end of our year's reading which has once again been an eclectic mix of genres. If success of a book group is measured by the amount of discussion engendered, then our year has earned many stars! April's book was *Greener* by Grainne Murphy. In May we read *Educated* by Tara Westover. The highlight of our book group year takes place in Portrush in June which we spend in a member's beautiful home. We will be reading *Moon Tiger* by Penelope Lively.

We have not yet decided whether we will be taking a 1 or 2 month summer break.

#### Backgammon Group - from David Blair

Our backgammon group meets every Tuesday at Newtonbreda Tesco in their Community Room. We play friendly games at each meeting and some members have formed a league which has more of a competitive edge. This will be finished by the end of June. Even if you have never played before, you are very welcome to join our friendly group to learn this fascinating and social game.

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

We meet on Fridays 1.30-3.00 in Shaftesbury Community Centre. We talk about anything and everything and always go home with a smile on our faces. New members very welcome.

# Classical Music Appreciation Group – from Keith Thompson



At the Classical Music Appreciation meeting in May (Tuesday May 13th 10.30am Finaghy Community Centre) will listen to two pieces for large ensemble - *Mozart's Serenade No 11 for woodwind* and *Mendelssohn's Octet for strings*. The aim is to listen closely to the pieces and think about the choices the composers have made in these works. For our final meeting of the session (Tuesday 10th June) participants will bring along recordings of favourite pieces to play and share their reasons for their selections.

We are a small group, and new members are always welcome.

#### Poetry Reading Group - from Mavis Turner

This group will continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month at 2pm in Finaghy Community Centre. At each meeting the group chooses to home in on a particular poet or theme, so the selection of poetry is varied and enjoyed by all those attending. Do come and join us to listen to contributions from our group members or take part. You will be made welcome.

Next meeting is May 13 at 2pm when the poet for consideration is Robert Graves.

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

This weekend retreat on 6-8 June was fully subscribed but a couple of people had to withdraw and there are now two spaces available. The cost of the retreat including 2 night's accommodation in a single room; all meals; snacks and two sessions of Non-impact Aerobics, is £300. The venue is the beautiful Tobar Mhuire Retreat and Conference Centre in Crossgar. If you have some mindfulness experience and would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please contact David at

#### mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com

Please get in touch if you have any questions or would like a detailed copy of the programme for the weekend.

#### **Singing for Fun Group** – from David Blair

At time of writing this group has only met once at the Four Winds bar/restaurant. We sing popular songs (currently using backing tracks) from a variety of genres. We are also investigating the possibility of using someone who could help with coaching harmonies and arrangements of songs. If you have these skills or know of someone who does, please get in touch with David Blair the current convenor.

Our sole aim is to have fun while making music and friends simultaneously. Why not come along and join us every second Thursday from 9<sup>th</sup> May starting at 3pm.

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

Our Myths and Legends Group continue meeting on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month in Clonduff Community Centre.

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 14 May at 2pm. We are using Stephen Fry's book Mythos as a basic for the Greek Myths which is proving to be both informative and inspiring. New members to our group will be made welcome. Come along at the time mentioned or get in contact with me for further information.

# Wine Appreciation Group – from David Blair



The current set of 6 sessions is nearly over and we've already uncovered some very tasty and reasonably priced wines.

We've been following a pattern of tasting wines from around the world which share the same grape varieties. This makes the comparisons very interesting and opens a wealth of understanding to help future choices.

There will be another chance to join this group later in the year. Look out for future notifications!

# **Creative Writing Group** – from Lena McCann Ormeau Library – Weekly on Mondays 2-4pm



Our weekly meetings continue to be a delight and attract new members. so much so, that the group is presently at full capacity. The diversity of inspirational stories and poems has encouraged individual members to extend the sharing of their stories beyond the group. This month, Anjali Kusurkar, is following in the footsteps of previous members, having been selected to read one of her true stories at the Tenx9 Black Box monthly event held in the Cathedral Quarter on Wednesday 23 April 2025. (*You can qooqle Tenx9 to get more details*). Other members have enrolled in Creative Writing Courses at The Duncairn (In-house and online) and have submitted entries to various Online Writing Competitions. The group finishes for the Summer on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June until September 2025

#### **Photography Group** – from A. Ross



Following a successful outing to Donaghadee, the next outing for the group is to Greyabbey. We continue to submit photographs on specific themes, this month the theme is Sunrise and Sunset, and to specific letters, this month the letter is I.

We continue to meet regularly on Zoom and now that the weather is finally starting to improve, further outings are planned.

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

Each Thursday between 15-20 of us go hill walking mainly in the Mournes. There are plenty of ups and downs! but we enjoy the challenges of the walks, the changing weather conditions, the amazing views and the craic! We walk for about 5 hours and cover about 10 km. Afterwards we retire to a local coffee shop for refreshments and chat. New members are welcome!

#### **All Weather Walking Group** – from Brenda McHugh



We enjoyed the recent beautiful weather, along with everyone else. However, with a forecast that said the spell of settled weather would end just as we were due to go on our Spring Walking Break, we were on tenterhooks as we packed our waterproof clothing.

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



- Tina The Tina Turner Musical GOH 15 May 2.30pm £60 TBC
- Murder for 2 Bruiser Theatre Co Theatre at the Mill 16 May 7.45pm £24
- The Importance of Being Ernest by Oscar Wilde Lyric 1 June 2.30pm £15
- Grease GOH 19 July 2.00pm £30 TBC
- The Girl on the Train GOH 14 August 2.30pm £36.50
- The Mother of all the Behans with Imelda May GOH 20 Sept 2.30pm £35
- Follies NI Opera GOH 20 Sept 2.30pm £62.50
- Shawshank Redemption GOH 2 Oct 2.30pm £42.50
- The Nutcracker The State Ballet of Georgia GOH 19 Nov 2.30pm £47 TBC

#### Booking for all events is now closed

# Golf Group – from Jim Lowry



After a very successful first outing of the year to Helens Bay GC in April when 23 members enjoyed playing a beautiful course on a lovely sunny spring day, we are now looking forward to our next outing to Aberdelghy GC. on 7th May. Hopefully the weather will be just as kind to us.

Whilst we have a healthy membership, we can always accommodate new members, so if you fancy giving golf a go why not get in touch with our convenor and come to one of our outings. You would be made very welcome.

Our future outings are: -

7th May Aberdelghy 11th June Ballyclare 2nd July Carnalea 6th August Edenmore 27th August Larne

#### 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? Since January we have met up in Belfast City centre, Ballywalter harbour and the Ulster Museum. And from May to September meet- ups are planned for Cregagh Glen, Greyabbey, Hazlebank, Killyleagh and Killynether Woods at Scrabo – not necessarily in that order. I have a schedule of meets ups available for the next few months. Contact me by email via the u3a website 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!

#### Informal Bridge Group – from Pat McNamee



Mon and/or Fri 2 to 4 pm. Contact Pat McNamee 02890612942

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.

#### **Bridge Group** – from Jim McDonnell

U3a Spring Charity Bridge Festival



On 28th March 2025, the Belfast U3a Friday Bridge Group took part in the annual U3A bridge festival.

The event was very well supported by our members (20 pairs). They deserve plaudits for their generosity.

The group raised £280 for the charity involved (Macmillan Cancer Support). The total raised across the UK was approx. £3200

In total there were 44 pairs competing in the Friday event from across the UK. Congratulations to Brian Moore and Mona McGarvey from Belfast U3a, who finished first

### Scrabble Group – from Hilary Davidson AB

We meet on Thursdays 1.30-3.30 in Clonduff Community Centre and are a group of mixed ability players. New members welcome.

#### **Local History Group** – from Elizabeth McKeown

Local History group started three years ago and what do we achieve? I hope your answer is "lots". Our activities are usually determined by what is on offer around us at the time. Local history is popular and so information about events is easy to find.

This piece is a report of what we do.

In a spirit of equal representation, we try to offer events in North, South, East, West and City Centre Belfast. Beyond Belfast is also on our radar. We have walked in the West and finished with tea and biscuits at St Comgall's Centre. We have investigated the industrial heritage of East Belfast. We have immersed ourselves in the Sailorstown identity. Simon at the Seafarers Mission put the kettle on, even though we weren't shipwrecked! We have enjoyed the hospitality of Tennant Street Egyptian Coptic Church when on the Shankill. This Spring our visit to the Harbour Office introduces appreciation of the Maritime Mile. A visit to Clifton House will remind us of efforts made to improve health and housing for many.

What about South Belfast? We need to get over there soon.

#### Other business

Around the table at Clonduff Centre we entertain each other with 'show and tell' sessions. Homework is compulsory. Some members bring along amazing family artefacts that they treasure. We value all contributions.

#### More other business

We encourage each other to attend talks and events, both in the Linen Hall Library and wherever.

We research and then buy tickets for history events at various Festivals. Armagh City tour was a good day out. Christmas 2023 we took the train to Lurgan then walked round to Brownlow House and the tour was excellent. We like trains so a repeat of our 2022 Portrush day out beckons - before the golf. All members are welcome to join us.

Our events appear on the Website Groups Page - Local History tab - and in the Beacon emails we send.

#### **Garden Visits Group** – from Rosemary Thomas.



The monthly visits to gardens got off to a great start on a glorious day in April. The group is currently at capacity.

# **About Our Climate Group** – Theresa McVeigh



We meet monthly to talk about climate change, to learn and improve our understanding of the subject.

The next meeting will be in our new venue – Morton Community Centre – on:

- Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> May at 2:30pm
- Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> June at 2:30pm
- Please note the slightly later start time.

New members welcome. Please contact the convenor, Theresa McVeigh, for further information.

#### **Play Reading Group** – from Sharon Adair

The members of the Play Reading Group would like to offer their thanks to Mr David Grant who very kindly visited with us and provided the group with entertaining and informative insight into the works of William Shakespeare.

Mr Grant's late mother, Meriel Grant was the original convenor of the Play Reading Group and is very fondly remembered by original group members.

# **Pilates Group** – from Rosemary Thomas



There are a few places available in the classes in Belvoir Activity Centre on Mondays and Wednesdays. Charges apply. If interested, please contact the conveners.