

**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 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 <https://belfast.u3asite.uk/>. Go to the Group tab, find the Group page and click on the convenor's name.

**Committee News**

What great summer months we have had to enjoy all that this country has to offer. Or perhaps you got away to appreciate even more exotic climes for different vistas, culture and food.

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. In particular, Neil McQuillan stepped down as Treasurer and he was thanked profusely for doing a brilliant job over the past three years, making a substantial contribution re-organising financial recording practices. Neil was replaced by John Nicholson, who was co-opted five months previous, so he certainly hit the ground running and we are all seeing the benefit of this.

But, going into the 2025-26 year, it was highlighted that there will be a total of **five** vacancies on Committee at the end of the year. So, the call is out now for people with an interest in event management or to co-ordinate Group activities, arrange speakers for the General Meetings, organise and edit material for the Newsletter or to act as Deputy Treasurer. That being said, if none of these roles particularly interest you, please do not be deterred; speak to one of the current Committee, who will be able to answer any questions

about all that is involved. It is of course possible for interested individuals to be co-opted to Committee to see how it works, get to know current members and find out what sort of contribution suits them best. Members can share their general organisational, administrative or leadership skills, developed over many years, for the benefit of this charity organisation and its members. Your help is really needed and you will be making a very important contribution to the life and future of Belfast u3a.

It is going to be a momentous year ahead for Belfast u3a, and there is much to look forward to. It has been mentioned a few times already that this will be our **25th anniversary year**. And now it is possible to let you know of the exciting schedule of events that are in place for the celebrations. First, there is a meeting and lunch for Group Convenors on 17 September. This takes place usually on a yearly basis, but this year will be special, as the event will be held in Belfast Castle, the place where Brian Connors, having visited Foyle u3a, obtained some European Funding and organised an open day in the Autumn of 2000 to begin the creation of the Belfast u3a. Convenors will be joined for lunch by Committee members, past and present, to recognise all contributions to the evolution and prosperity of the organisation. Then, the big event will take place early next year in Belfast City Hall on the afternoon of 26 February 2026. This date is more or less a match to the date that full membership of the Third Age Trust was granted (on 28.02 2001). We are grateful to the Belfast City Council for their kind generosity in providing the venue and a contribution to costs. Coming to the end of the anniversary year in mid-June 2026, a showcasing of Group activity will be held at a gathering at Smoke Specialist BBQ, located in Carryduff. And of course, during the year, the very successful series of monthly talks will continue, with the speakers for Autumn confirmed as below.

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

Belfast u3a Website

<https://belfast.u3asite.uk/>

(You can also find the website by googling Belfast u3a ....)

It's the beginning of a new u3a season and perhaps a good time to think of new skills and activities we might wish to develop. Why not browse through the opportunities by navigating to the Groups tab on the website and seeing what's available? By clicking on one of the blue boxes, you can view Groups in alphabetical order, by category, by meeting day or by venue. And if you want more information about a group, go the Group page by clicking on the Group name. If you are interested, you can contact the Convenor (leader) of the Group by clicking on their name and sending an email.

If you have any questions about the website, we have a table at the monthly meetings where you can come and chat to us.

## Information on Monthly Meetings

**Monthly Meetings in the Balmoral Hotel**, Blacks Road, Dunmurry, Belfast BT10 0NF.

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

Eamonn Mallie is a multi-award-winning political journalist. He has interviewed people as wide ranging as Mother Marie Theresa and Bill Clinton. He is an author too and has written several books ranging from the *End Game in Ireland* to *Eyewitness to War and Peace*. He will be talking about some of the personalities he has met as part of his work.

**THURSDAY 30 OCTOBER 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel** (Tea/coffee from 10.30)

Trevor Martin is a specialist in local history and will be giving us the benefits of his years of research.

## Group News

**Art Appreciation Group** – from Sandra Foster



In June the group visited the Ulster Museum to see the exhibition *Wild Ireland: Past Present Future*. Renowned wildlife painter, Julian Friers, had collaborated with Ulster Museum Natural Sciences curator, Dr Mike Simms, to create over 50 remarkable paintings of our flora and fauna, past and present.

Most of the animals you would see in the exhibition have vanished - victims of natural catastrophes, environmental or evolutionary change. Others have departed our shores but live on elsewhere on the planet.

**Book Group 2** – from Nuala Zahran



We finished the year with a wonderful day in Portrush in June. Part of the enjoyment of the day was discussing *Moon Tiger* by Penelope Lively. We took a longer break than usual and will resume our meetings in September when we will be reading *The Noise Of Time* by Julian Barnes.

### **Bridge Lessons 2025-26** – from Jim McDonnell



This year I am running a course of Bridge Lessons for Improvers, starting on the 2 September in St Annes Parish Hall, Dunmurry. The course is over-subscribed. There are no more places available.

#### **National U3a Bridge Course for Beginners**

Each year, National U3a run several Online Bridge Courses for Beginners. There is a new course starting in August, which lasts about 26 weeks. The course is delivered online by experienced teachers, using the excellent No Fear Bridge teaching resources, and the Real Bridge online platform for supervised practice sessions. At the end of the course, learners should be able to play a competent game of bridge at club level.

For further details please click on the following link or copy and use this web address:

[www.bridgewebs.com/u3abridgegroup](http://www.bridgewebs.com/u3abridgegroup)

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

While at the Belfast ukulele festival we met a member of Foyle u3a ukes.

They have invited our group to play a session with them, and arrangements are in hand for us to attend next month. They have very kindly agreed to collect us from the train station and provide catering.

As a follow on a Belfast Jam is being planned for all the u3a Ukelele groups in the region to come together for a Big u3a ukes jam session. Funding may be available from NIREC.

We have continued to meet throughout the summer in 2 Royal Avenue 1100 -1300.

We plan to restart beginner's sessions later next month.

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



After our summer break we reconvene on September 18th.

This will be a Planning meeting to decide our programme for the year from October 2025 to May 2026.

Members will have already submitted suggestions . On that day each will present reasons for choosing that particular book and we will then vote. We usually manage about 10 books a year .

There are some vacancies in the group. Anyone who might be interested is very welcome to come to that meeting and use it as a taster. Do contact me if you are thinking of coming.

We meet in Finaghy Community Centre. On that particular day our starting time is 10 am.

### **Wine Appreciation Group** – from David Blair



This group will not be starting until after the Christmas and New Year break. Look out for more information in the next newsletter.

**Book Group 1** – from Anne McGovern

We are meeting again after the summer break on Monday 8 September at 2 pm in Ann's home. The book we are discussing is *Caledonian Road* by Andrew O Hagan. We haven't yet chosen a book for October.

Before we begin our discussion, we will take a few moments to remember our dear friend Susan Mageean. She was a member of the group almost from the beginning and we will miss her insightful comments and useful suggestions. May her gentle soul rest in peace.

**Backgammon Group** – from David Blair

As planned, the Backgammon group will start again on the 2 September, 13.30hrs at Tesco Newtonbreda. Anyone who wishes to join this group please contact David at [backgammonu3abelfast@gmail.com](mailto:backgammonu3abelfast@gmail.com)

No previous experience is necessary, we have boards for you to use, and all are welcome. The venue also provides free tea/coffee and biscuits!

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

We restart on Friday 5th September at our usual venue Shaftesbury Community Centre. We would welcome anyone who would like to come along for a *taster*. We talk about a wide variety of topics and usually go home with a smile on our faces having set the world to rights.

**Out of The Box Group** – from Ann Dickson & Barbara Hebdon

Let us introduce you to your new group, *Out Of The Box*. Our aim is to offer members opportunities to participate in some new, and some not so new, activities that we hope you will enjoy. We are delighted that many of you have expressed an interest in joining us.

This month we start our programme with a visit to Falconry Experiences NI. Members will be offered an interactive experience with their birds of prey and have the opportunity to watch a Peregrine Falcon in action.

We have also been accepted by Hillsborough Castle to participate in their Community Access Scheme. We will now be offered visits to the castle and grounds during the year, which will be FREE to members.

We hope you will enjoy participating in our activities, and we look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months.

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



The Classical Music Appreciation group restarts on Tuesday 9th September (10.30am Finaghy Community Centre). During the Autumn session we will try to gain more understanding of opera beginning with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* as an example of an early masterpiece.

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

***Poetry Reading Group*** – from Mavis Turner

This well-established group will meet again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of the month at 2pm in Finaghy Community Centre.

At each meeting, the group selects a poet or theme to concentrate on. The selection of poetry varies and often leads to stimulating and interesting conversation in the group.

Do come along and join us to listen to contributions from the group members or take part.

Access to the Community Centre is via Benmore Drive on Finaghy Road South.

Our next meeting is on 9 September at 2pm.

You will be made welcome.



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

The Singing for Fun group will recommence on Thursday afternoons starting on 11th September. We will be coached by our new Musical Director, Megan who will be guiding us through some harmonies. For those of you who didn't meet her in June, she is a very talented and charming person whose enthusiasm is tremendous. There will be a charge of £40 for 10-weeks. You can make this payment to the *Paying for Group Activities* account using *SING* as your reference prefixed by your membership number and name.

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

Our Myths and Legends Group will recommence on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm.

This group meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month in Clonduff Community Centre. Recently the group has been using Stephen Fry's book *Mythos* as a basis for the Greek Myths, which we will continue to do for this term. This book is easy reading. The group have found the Greek Myths both interesting and inspiring.

New members to this group will be made welcome, either come along at the time mentioned or get in contact with me for further information.

**Mindfulness Group** – from David Blair



The Mindfulness group will be a slightly different format this autumn. Instead of following the 8-week programme, this time, we will be working through a follow-on programme called *Deeper Mindfulness*. This may not be entirely suitable for those of you who are new to the subject and if this is the case you would be advised to wait until the next cohort is running (probably in the Spring of 26).

If you have completed the first Mindfulness course or if you already have some experience in the subject, you are welcome to join us. Please indicate your intention to do so by sending an email to David using [mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com](mailto:mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com)

We will be working together through the new book called *Deeper Mindfulness* by Danny Penman and Mark Williams. You will therefore need to order this ( either hard copy or Kindle edition) and read the first 5 chapters before we start. This is essential reading. Chapters 1-4 are general information about the programme and chapters 5-12 thereafter are the week by week topics we will be working through together. The venue is the Morton Community Centre, Lorne St. from 1000 - 1200hrs every Wednesday from September 10. I have booked the room for 9 weeks initially and we can add to that if necessary. There are no costs involved but I do need your commitment to attend regularly

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



After the summer break, our weekly meetings are due to begin again on Monday 15 September 2025 at the usual time of 2pm-4pm.

Our last meeting on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> June was an eventful one on two counts: -.

It was the last meeting for Judy Morris, our guest member from a Creative Writing Group in Makay Australia. Judy joined us for our four final weeks and regaled us with her own stories from *Down Under*. She also very kindly on the day we finished, presented a talk about her homeland and her local u3a to which she belongs.

The second big event was an Invitation from one our members to her home to join in her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations -or perhaps I should say the beginning of her birthday celebrations! Because of data protection we cannot name the 'birthday girl', but we'll give you a clue.



*When we left the library*

*Three cars were enough*

*To travel up the road to Carryduff.*

*To the birthday lady's name*

*We claim no authenticity*

*Her pseudonym rhymes with Electricity!*

On the 11 August we had an impromptu coffee meet up in the Bobbin Coffee Shop in Belfast City Hall. Numbers were few but the chat was mighty!  
We really are a sociable bunch!!

**Photography Group** – from A. Ross



Having taken a break from zoom meetings and organised outings during July and August, the photography group start back early September with an outing to Royal Hillsborough and look forward to a group break away to the Brown Trout.

The ongoing themes continue with the first one they face being *Herbavores*. The monthly challenges to take photographs starting with a specific letter also continue.

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



Over the summer, walking really comes in to its own.

We have had a varied programme of walks, with the addition of the last Thursday of the months of July and August because of no Belfast u3a meeting on those dates.

Our usual BBQ was held in uncertain weather conditions and of course we were lucky enough to have one of our members who offered us a Plan B - we held the BBQ in the shelter of her garage. As luck would have it, the rain didn't come!

Similar gremlins dogged us on our planned trip to Rathlin Island. People were advised to book the ferry in advance. This turned out to be very fortuitous because on the morning of the trip, people were contacted by the ferry company to say that the sailing they had booked would not be operating.

Many walkers decided not to go at all, but those who chose to take an alternative sailing were rewarded with a lovely day rambling on Rathlin.

Another notable outing was a Heritage guided walk in Donaghadee. Elizabeth McKeown, who is the Convenor of the Heritage Group invited us to join her group to learn about the very interesting history of the area.

As a group, we welcome joining together with other groups to benefit both.

I have highlighted only a few examples of the range of routes we undertake, but that's not to detract from our overall programme, details of which can be found on the Ramblers page of the Belfast u3a website.

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



Events

20th September 2025 2:30 pm

Outing. *Follies* with NI Opera \*\*\*. BOOKING NOW CLOSED \*\*\*

Venue: Grand Opera House Cost: £62.50

2nd October 2025 2:30 pm

Outing *Shawshank Redemption* \*\*\* BOOKING NOW CLOSED \*\*\*

Venue: Grand Opera House Cost: £42.50

19th November 2025 2:30 pm

Outing *The Nutcracker* The State Ballet of Georgia \*\*\* BOOKING NOW CLOSED\*\*\*

Venue: Grand Opera House Cost: £47.00 TBC



**Golf Group** – from Jim Lowry



We have had six very enjoyable outings this year to a variety of courses namely Helen's Bay, Aberdelghy, Ballyclare, Carnalea, Edenmore, Larne.

Amazingly we have been blessed with beautiful sunny weather on each outing (except for a delayed start at Larne golf club when the weather eventually came good) with some great golf played.

Probably more importantly, we have had fun and had the opportunity to meet up with some old and some new golfing friends and welcomed some new members who hopefully will return next year.

We generally play 'fun' golf, but this year we introduced a league for those golfers who were interested, with the four best scores counting from six outings.

As the season draws to a close, we are looking forward to our final outing which is a couple of days away at the Ballymascanlon Golf Hotel in early September which will hopefully be the usual mix of golf, food and great company.

So, September really closes out our season but we can then look forward to our meeting in early 2026 when we discuss our plans for next year.

We are a mixed ability friendly bunch who always welcomes new members so if you're interested, why not give it a go next year - you'd be more than welcome.

**Pilates Group** – from Rosemary Thomas



The normal timetable of classes resumes in September.

Monday: 12.45-1.45 & 2-3.

Wednesday: 12.45-1.45

As the classes are popular, places are extremely limited.

**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 the beginning of this year, we have met up in Belfast City centre, Ballywalter harbour, the Ulster Museum, Cregagh Glen, Greyabbey, Hazelbank, to name but a few and not necessarily in that order.

I have a schedule of meets ups available for the coming months. 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!



**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.**

**Scrabble Group** – from Hilary Davidson



We restart on Thursday 4th September and would welcome any new players.

**Local History Group** – from Elizabeth McKeown

The Local History group continues to meet monthly at Clonduff Community Centre - third Wednesday of the month 1.30-3.00 pm and /or additional dates for arranged visits to places of interest .

Please feel free to come along to our Oct meeting on Wed 15 where the planned topic will focus on how migrant communities through history have shaped our environment. Note we will not meet in Sept due to other scheduled u3a activities .

We look forward to seeing established members and those new to Belfast u3a .

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

The activities of the group are drawing to a close as our last visit of the season is in September. We have been blessed with dry sunny days for our visits this year. We have visited: an inspiring community and wildlife garden, beautiful private gardens which the owners have generously shared with us, and a walled garden in Greenmount College where the next generation of professional horticulturalists are being trained. Photos are on the Belfast U3A website, on our group page.

***French Group*** – from Mina Kelly

After our customary summer break, the French groups are re-starting the first week in September:

Advanced Group on Monday afternoons 2.00 to 3.30 in Finaghy Community Centre.

Intermediate Group on Friday mornings from 10.00 to 11.30 in the Morton Community Centre.

Elementary Group on Friday mornings from 11.30 to 1.00 also in the Morton Community Centre.

Beginners (not complete Beginners) Group on Wednesday mornings from 11.00 to 12.30 in the Morton Community Centre. If there is sufficient interest it may be possible to open a new Complete Beginners Group.

Other news: A group of Intermediate and Advanced students is going to Montpellier at the end of September to attend a week-long French Course and enjoy a new region of France.