

From the Editor Helen McGlinchey

Welcome to the Sept/Oct newsletter. Thank you to all those who contributed to this edition. My thanks to 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 magnificent weather we have had to enjoy activities and leisure time over the past few months. Since the Newsletter was last published at the beginning of May and before the Committee took a break for July and August, u3a business proceeded at a pace with two Committee Meetings in May / June and the Annual General Meeting on 28 May.

The AGM held was well attended and there we reported on changes in Committee membership.

The Chairperson role being vacant since March, we were delighted that John Meikleham agreed to be put forward and he was elected for a 2 (possibly 4)-year term. John chaired the June Committee meeting and what was a packed agenda was kept very well on track and time and lightened with fitting humour. Geoff Crowther was elected as Vice-Chairperson, having dealt with the complexities of being Groups Co-Ordinator for a term of 3 years. Unfortunately, no one has come forward to take over this role so, as Geoff says, he is currently 'a locum', double jobbing until a replacement is found. Tom Capper resigned as Deputy Treasurer and he was thanked for doing a brilliant job over the past three years, making a substantial contribution by dealing with all the direct debit payments for membership fees. Tom was replaced by Trevor Busby, who had attended as an observer for the previous few months, getting to grips with many aspects of the job. It was unfortunate that both John McQuillan and David Blair, both key players in the Operations Sub-Committee, finished terms of office at the same time. Thankfully John, as Events Organiser, has agreed to stay on Committee for another year and has great plans already in place for

the Xmas Party. And David, who has done a fantastic job in attracting such varied and interesting speakers for the General Meetings is continuing to do so, at least until another suitable arrangement can be put in place. Sean Canning was a co-opted member of Committee for the last year as Website Manager and it is re-assuring to have him now on board for a 3-year term, knowing our web presence is in such capable hands. And Helen McGlinchey continues in the role of Newsletter Editor, also working with Sean to develop how best we communicate u3a news to members.

So, while we have a great team continuing to help deliver all that Belfast u3a offers, there are still two vacancies on Committee and any help forthcoming would spread the load. It is of course possible for interested individuals to be co-opted at any time to see how it works, get to know current members and find out what sort of contribution suits them. Members can share their general organisational, administrative or leadership skills, all developed over many years, for the benefit of the organisation and fellow members. You can find details of the current Committee members on the website at <https://belfast.u3asite.uk/contact/> and any of them would be only too happy to have a chat with you.

It has been a momentous year for Belfast u3a, of particular note being the meeting and lunch for Group Convenors on 17 September at Belfast Castle, the place where the first meeting was held in Autumn 2001; then we had the 25th Anniversary celebration hosted by Belfast City Council in the City Hall on 26 February, close to the actual date on which full membership of the Third Age Trust was granted. Coming at the end of the year, a Summer Gathering was held on 25 June at Smoke Specialist BBQ, located in Carryduff. It was a spectacular day as far as weather was concerned, but this was outshone by the array of food and entertainment arranged by the Operations team, led by David Blair and helped by John McQuillan, Geoff Crowther and other members of Committee. A selection of barbecued meats and vegetables was served on large platters, and fun and games after included a raffle, giant Jenga, a quiz and a wonderful performance by the Singing for Fun Group. By all accounts, it was an afternoon much enjoyed by members, and a fitting finale for Belfast u3a's silver jubilee.

During the coming year, there are more great social events planned, and the very successful series of monthly talks will continue, with the speakers for Autumn confirmed as below . . .

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 10.15. We will send out a reminder a week before the meeting.

THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 11.00 am, The Balmoral Hotel (Tea/coffee from 10.15)

Joan McEwen, Head of Policy for Marie Curie NI. Joan will talk about her role and the different aspects of the Charity that we may not be aware of.

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER

Mark Tully, Professor of Public Health and Director of Research, School of Medicine at Ulster University; the title is *Age is just a Number* and he will talk about the Northern Ireland Cohort for the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (NICOLA), the largest public health investigation in Northern Ireland, examining how health, lifestyle and overall wellbeing change over time.

THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER

Ward Vaughn retired recently from his job as Head of Outside Broadcasting for BBC NI. He was responsible for covering the Royal funeral and events such as the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. We'll learn what goes on behind the scenes for the planning and execution of these.

THURSDAY 21 JANUARY

Mark Scott is an author who has published four historical non-fiction books so far. The latest book came about after Mark met the late Charlie Warrington whose mother was evacuated from Nazi occupied Germany and came to Northern Ireland.

Belfast u3a Website from the Web Admin Team
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Belfast u3a Website

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

Don't forget to check out the official [Belfast u3a Website](https://belfast.u3asite.uk/)—your go-to hub for everything happening in our community. Visit the site to browse our 70+ active interest groups, contact convenors directly, and view our upcoming monthly meetings. If your group has news, photos, or events to promote, you can easily get them published by emailing our volunteer [Web Administration Team](mailto:webadmin@belfastu3a.org) at webadmin@belfastu3a.org. Bookmark the page today to ensure you never miss an update!

NEW You can now access the Belfast u3a website quicker by using the QR-code below, to use this just point your camera on your mobile device and scan the code.



Membership Cards with Barcodes

The membership secretary issued everyone with a new membership card which now bears a unique barcode. These cards are required to be shown at the monthly meetings as they will be scanned upon entry to the meetings. If anyone does not have access to a printer or smartphone, please get in touch with the membership secretary and a card will be provided.

Group News

Groups Update from Geoff Crowther

We are planning to relaunch the former *Out of the Box* group under a new name and new *management* shortly. Watch the website for details.

Two skills courses have been organised with the sign language course starting in September and an essential first aid course running in October.
Both courses are fully booked with options for further courses being explored.

The new *Afterlife Studies* group has been meeting in 2 Royal Avenue since July, further details on the website.

A Convenors conference is being planned for 30th September in the Four Winds, further details will follow.

Scrabble Group – from Hilary Davidson



We resume on 10th September at Clonduff Community Centre and all former and new members will be very welcome.

Informal Bridge Group – from Pat McNamee



Mon and/or Fri 2 to 4 pm in the convenor's house. Contact Pat McNamee tel 02890612942

New members who have learnt basic knowledge of bidding and play and who wish to practice their play in an informal setting are very welcome. Queries about bidding and play can be discussed in a relaxed atmosphere though members should have enough knowledge to bid and play without constant teaching and advice. If needed beginner's courses are available elsewhere. You do not need to come with a partner.

Garden Visits Group - from Rosemary Thomas



Our last visit of the season was to L'Arche Village Community Garden, next to Lagan College. This year's visits have included Antrim and Hillsborough Castle Gardens, as well as old and newer private gardens. One private garden which we visited contained an Anglo-Norman motte. Some photos are on our webpage.

Classical Music Appreciation Group – from Keith Thompson



We are a group of music lovers who listen to and discuss classical music of all different genres. The meetings are informal and everyone is encouraged to select pieces and offer an opinion on the music. We also include presentations on particular pieces and the September meeting (Tuesday 8th September) will be on Bartok's 1943 masterpiece *Concerto for Orchestra*.

Mindfulness Group – from David Blair



We have decided to change the format of the Mindfulness group this session. Instead of the 8-week course I have delivered in the past, we will meet and share preferred practices from our individual experiences so that we can learn from each other. I have also changed the venue for this to the Musgrave Park Bowling Club Pavilion, and it will start at 11.30, following on from the Tai Chi session. Once numbers are finalised, a small charge (£3-£5) will be levied to cover the room hire, otherwise the sessions are free. Please let me know if you are interested by using the following email: mindfulnessu3abelfast@gmail.com

The April Mindfulness Retreat was so successful that I have been asked to run another in the Autumn. The dates have not yet been set but, if you are interested, please use the above email to let me know.

Tai Chi Group – from David Blair

There are three sessions planned for the autumn term and places are available in each. The details are as follows:

Tuesday 10.00 at Shaftesbury Bowling Club

Tuesday 11.30 at Shaftesbury Bowling Club

Wednesday 10.00 at Musgrave Park Bowling Club

Each of these is starting in the first week of September.

Each session lasts for 1 hour under the tutelage of our qualified instructor Sheenagh. The charge for 8 sessions is £40. If you are interested, please email David at taichibelfastu3a@gmail.com or contact him through the website.

Writing Group 2 – from David Jamison

Writing group 2 will be continuing to meet in 2 Royal Avenue on the last Friday of the month over the winter months. The next meeting will be 11 am on Friday 25th September. At this meeting we will be discussing the programme for the incoming season.

Finding Your Creative Talent Group – from Lynda McCleery

Finding Your Creative Talent is an exploratory and experimental way to work with all kinds of items in a creative way.

The process has a random element and a choice element. It is designed this way to give you the opportunity to try something unexpected and surprising - something you might not have used before, but also to give you some choice.

The first stage is to randomly select three groups from the 20 offered.

For the second stage, you choose something within each of the three groups to use together. Each of these 20 groups has a selection of broadly similar items within it. For example: one group has pens with different widths and pencils with different leads, another group has acrylic paints of a variety of colours, and another has a variety of stencils. However, one group is a 'wildcard' with items that have no connection to each other. These items will change over time as they are used and replaced, but not necessarily with the same thing.

Along with the glue, scissors, paint brushes and other materials provided, you use your imagination to create something. There will be many types of paper at your disposal. With these circumstances, you are in a strong position to think dynamically, to learn and to have fun in the process. A favourite goal is to produce greetings cards. Coming up to Christmas this would be something to work towards but any kind of greeting card could be produced.

The workshops are being held on Mondays 14:00 – 15:30 at the Community Room Tesco Knocknagoney (on the road to Holywood). The first class is free and the next classes are £5 to cover the cost of materials.

Backgammon Group – form David Blair

This group continues to grow, and some new people have already expressed interest in joining. There are novices and more experienced players who come along to Tesco Newtownbreda (in the community room) every Tuesday afternoon 13.30. The room is fairly small, so let me know if you intend coming especially if you need someone to go over the rules of play. For more serious players we run a league (just for fun) so we get a chance to play against multiple partners.

Please use:

backgammonu3abelfast@gmail.com to get in touch.

Singing For Fun Group – from David Blair

No auditions! No previous experience required! If you are free on a Thursday afternoon why not come along and join our merry band? We meet at the Four Winds Bar/Restaurant at 14.30 on alternate Thursdays starting on September 10th. Megan, our very talented Musical Director, guides us through pieces from every genre of music. For those of you who have heard the performances at the Christmas bash and the BBQ, we all had a great time singing the songs. For those who would like a less structured approach, we can allocate some time for “sing-along” material.

All Weather Walking Group (Ramblers) – from Gerry Court



Until further notice Geraldine (Gerry) Court has agreed to act as Ramblers Convenor in the absence of Brenda McHugh. Weekly walks will continue as usual lead by volunteer leaders. A reminder that ALL RAMBLERS should be looking for a walk to lead in order to keep the group active.

The Autumn Break will be organised by Maureen Pimley.

Autumn Break 2026

Sunday 25th Oct – Wednesday 28th October

Glenavon Hotel

52 Drum Rd

Cookstown

BT80 8QS

0288676494

3 nights dinner B&B twin/double £262.50 pps

Single £322.50 pp

Facilities include super pool, steam room, ice bath.

Easy to moderate walks in the area which includes forests, Lough Fea, Lissan House, Beaghmore Stone Circles plus 40 square miles of the Sperrin Mountains.

Early booking would facilitate the hotel. Please quote Belfast u3a.

Myths & Legends Group – from Mavis Turner

The Myths and Legends Group will be meeting on Wednesday 9 September at 2.15pm in Clonduff Community Centre to start our autumn term.

We will continue our group meetings on 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 2.15pm. Following on from our coverage of Greek Myths we plan to start the term by concentrating on Roman Mythology. Roman mythology picks up on the same core group of famous gods and stories as in Greek mythology but differ in cultural focus.

This group gives you a chance to start enjoying some legendary stories which you might not read about otherwise. We always start with a cuppa. If interested in joining the group, please contact me or come along at the time mentioned.

Photography Group – from A. Ross



After a break for July and August during which the group did not have any organised outings or Zoom calls, we start again in September with an outing planned to Antrim Castle Gardens and a Zoom call one week later.

Further outings are planned on a monthly basis to Mountstewart for the autumn colours and to the Titanic Quarter. An evening outing is being planned for the Titanic Quarter to catch the reflections etc.

We are actively trialling some new software which will allow us to have a more accurate and balanced judging process for our photographs.



The Last Word Group – from Hilary Davidson

We restart for the 2026/7 session on Friday 4th September at Shaftesbury Community Centre and look forward to seeing existing and new members.

Poetry for Pleasure Group – from Christina Haycock

A welcoming poetry group that meets on the **2nd and 4th Tuesday** of every month, running September to June.

Time: 2.00pm – 3.30pm **Place:** Finaghy Community Centre

Enjoy **chat, friendship**, shared poems, and of course a cuppa.

We dip into everything from the playful storytelling of *Roald Dahl* to the lyrical beauty of Irish poets like *Heaney and Boland*, and even the timeless lines of *Shakespeare*. Whether you love modern verse, childhood favourites, or classic poetry, there's always something new to enjoy and discuss.

A relaxed space to read, listen, and connect with others who simply enjoy poetry for pleasure.

Creative Writing Group – from Dorothy Byrne

The Creative Writing group last met on 15th June 2026 and are due to meet again on 14 September 2026. During the summer break the group has put up on our website a selection of members' favourite stories written last term.

Additionally, group members have also been in discussion about writing a sequel to a previous story undertaken by past and present members a few years ago. It is hoped that this will help awaken literary inspiration on our return!

The Creative Writing group is currently at full capacity and any new interested members will be placed on a waiting list.

Golf Group – from Jim Lowry



This year's outings concluded with a trip to Carrickfergus GC in August with fifteen members playing.

Fortunately, the poor forecast didn't really materialise with just a few intermittent showers throughout the day. Two nearest the pin prizes were up for grabs on a couple of the tricky par 3's - with Graham Cochrane and Chris Anderson winning one apiece. Congratulations to you both. We haven't had the best of weather for our outings this year though most outings have been well attended and enjoyable, nonetheless.

We also welcomed a number of new faces this year which is good for the overall health of the group.

Unfortunately, our programme of outings is finished for this year but after a break over the winter we will resume next year when we will have our usual preseason meeting around February time to plan our programme for 2027.

We are a mixed ability group (although unfortunately not really suitable for beginner golfers) so if you fancy joining in a sociable society feel free to contact me.

I'd like to thank all of the u3a golfers who attended the various outings this year and look forward to seeing you all next year.

Pilates Group – from Rosemary Thomas

Classes in Belvoir Activity Centre resume on 14 September under a new instructor, Averil Porteous. As there are already waiting lists for both classes, the waiting lists have now been closed.

Literature Group – from Nuala Zahran

Our year finishes at the end of May. Members take time over the summer thinking about books which they might propose for the coming year's programme. This list is discussed and voted on early in September (September 9 this year) and the year is underway on October 7. We meet weekly.

If any new U3A members feel that that they might be interested, the September 9 meeting would give you a sense of what the group is about. Contact me if you would like to attend. Once the programme has been formed, it will be put on the U3A website.

Book Group 2 – from Nuala Zahran

After a break of two months, we are looking forward to resuming our meetings. We are delighted to be welcoming two new members which will bring us back to our full complement.

We had a very interesting year in 2025 -2026 and can only hope that this year's selections will be as productive of interest ,discussion, and best of all, vigorous disagreement. We start the year with *ASTRAY* by Emma Donoghue.

Book Group 4 – from Anna Carraher

This group has been in existence for two years and initially met in Lisburn Road Library; however, due to fluctuating numbers of attendees members felt that the cost of room hire in the library was too variable and too high. We now meet monthly in Malone House which has proven a success. We are a small group with a waiting list but unfortunately few retirees from the group – I keep a list of members wishing to join and can assure them that if there are vacancies, I will be in touch with them. We have read an eclectic range of books and always have a lively discussion with praise and disagreement. Most recent books include Irish writer Donal Ryan's *The Time of the Child* and *This is Happiness; from the other side of the Atlantic*. Percy Everett's take on Huckleberry Finn, *James*; Helen Dunmore's Leningrad duo, *The Siege* and *The Betrayal*, and most recently *London Falling* by Patrick Rodden Keefe.

Immersive Spanish – from Patrick Monaghan

Immersive Spanish, a class where we try to keep things in Spanish whilst learning about the language and culture of the country. Contact Patrick through the u3a website.

Play Reading Group – from Sharon Adair

Play reading group, meets every Tuesday Community Room, Tesco Newtownbreda, 1030 - 1pm.

Come and join our group, members enjoy reading contemporary and classic plays. We're not acting, we're reading great plays for the joy they bring.

Concert/Theatre Group – from Maureen Pimley



1. QFT 'MORNING MELODIES' with NIOpera. Saturday 17th October 2026.
11am. £20.00 TBC includes light refreshments. Only 7 tickets left.
2. The Mac. 'THE GLASS MENAGERIE' by Tennessee Williams' Tinder Box Theatre Company. Tuesday 20th October 2026. 7.30PM.
£25.50 TBC.
2. Grand Opera House. 'PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (SORT OF)'.
Wednesday 21st October 2026. 2.30pm. £42.50 TBC.
3. Ulster Hall. NIOPERA CHORUS. Monday 16th November 2026. 7pm. £10.00 TBC.
4. Lyric Theatre. 'LITTLE WOMEN'. Sunday 3rd January 2027. 2.30pm. £16.00.
5. Grand Opera House. 'JERSEY BOYS' Wednesday 3rd February 2027. 2.30pm.
£55.00 TBC.
6. Grand Opera House. 'SINGING IN THE RAIN' Saturday 20th February 2027
2.30pm. £65.00 TBC.
7. Grand Opera House. 'DIRTY DANCING'. Wednesday 31st March 2027. 2.30pm.
£62.50.
8. Grand Opera House. JOHANNES RADEBE. 'Finally Home'. Saturday 24th
April 2027. 7.30pm. £58.50.

Rambling with a Sketchbook Group – from Judith Loder

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

Do join the Rambling Sketchers. We visit gardens, parks, markets, riversides and the coast, heading inside into the museum or a gallery when the weather is awful. We travel independently meeting up at the venue 10.30/11.00am usually on the last Sunday of the month and we bring our own materials. If you join, 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 cafe or pub or we might just be eating our own packed lunch weather permitting.

Part of the craic is a *Show and Tell*. This is not about good, better and best artistic efforts; it's just it is fascinating how different we all are in our approach to things and in the materials we choose. While there is no formal teaching as part of this set-up anyone in the group, particularly the more experienced, is willing to share their knowledge, and will support , advise , inform.

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? I have a schedule of meet ups planned for the coming months.

Contact me by email and I'll send it to you or find me at the monthly meeting and collect a schedule there.

Cheers....I hope you've got the picture