

My sincere thanks go to our Secretary, Anne Archer, for taking on the job of editing the February and March newsletters while I neglected all u3a duties in Brazil. A first newsletter is a daunting and time-consuming task and Anne tackled it with gusto and patience. I am very grateful for her terrific results.

Penny



Maurice Wilkins

Spring is definitely here and we have more outdoor activities to look forward to, including the walk and lunch group and also garden visits. Maurice Wilkins inspired us with his talk *With a Camera in the Garden* at the last Gardens and Wildflowers group meeting. Don't forget to take your camera to Achnacloich Garden, take photographs and perhaps share them with the newsletter editor, please. We are always keen to include your photos in the newsletter.

We also look forward to have two new members on our committee. That members are keen to contribute to the running of our u3a and that membership is increasing shows that Oban u3a is thriving!

Bob

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Calling all bridge players - 2023 Spring Charity Bridge Festival

Last year, the u3a held a special Bridge Festival as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations. A similar event is being run this year from Monday 22 May to Friday 26 May in aid of Alzheimer's Research and Age UK.

Play can be online or face2face; duplicate or a small gathering for Chicago or Social Bridge. Hands are supplied with commentaries available.

In the first instance, it would be useful if anyone interested in taking part would contact Sue Pollard via the usual contact information.

Details can be found here: [https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?club=u3abridgegroup&pid=display\\_page77](https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwx/bw.cgi?club=u3abridgegroup&pid=display_page77)

## LOCAL NEWS

### Special General Meeting:

We are in the unusual and fortunate position of having two more members who are prepared to serve on your committee. Between Annual General Meetings we can co-opt two but we have already co-opted one. It is therefore necessary to have a very brief Special General Meeting before the talk at April's monthly meeting so that members can vote for the new members.

The new 'candidates' are Neil and Jo Sutherland. At the same time we will also be voting on the adoption of Sue Pollard, who was co-opted in December, as a member of the committee.

We need 20% of the members to be present in order for us to be quorate and so we hope to see you there. The SGM will be brief - probably less time than it has taken for you to read this paragraph.

### April talk:

10:30 coffee, 11:00 talk; Tuesday 4 April 2023; Corran Halls.

### **"Climate Change and Energy"**

Stephen Peake, Professor of Climate Change and Energy, The Open University

### May talk:

### **"Do the Highlands Need Rewilding?"**

James Fenton, Trustee, The National Trust for Scotland  
(further information in May newsletter)

Talks will be available as a hybrid meeting using Jitsi Meet. Please request to join by Jitsi by replying to the chairman's email reminder for the talk, which will follow this newsletter.

## GROUP NEWS

### Membership of u3a:

Please remember that, for insurance reasons, you cannot join the activities of a u3a group more than once if you are not a member. If you renewed your membership you will have received a membership card last autumn. If you are not sure, please contact Graham Cameron at [obanu3amemsec@gmail.com](mailto:obanu3amemsec@gmail.com) .

### Calligraphy Group:

The last meeting of the winter session will be on Thursday 6 April. After making a good start in which the group members learned and developed new skills, we will be taking a break over the summer. The Calligraphy group will be offered again at the u3a's September meeting, when existing group members and new people can sign up for the coming autumn and winter.



### Craft Group:

The Craft group meets together monthly to start, continue or finish a variety of projects. Weaving, knitting, tapestry, sewing up small books and embroidery are the different crafts being done by individuals.

### Creative Writing Group:

May we, before May tell our u3a, that Creative Writing's creating a growing group whose authors' words are hugely motivating. We share Poetry, some Fantasy and Memories galore, Short Stories with a 'novel' twist, and delve into Folklore. If you write for fun and wish to join please contact our leader today. All help will be given to guide you to where your first meeting will be in May.



### Discussion Group:

We will meet in the Royal Hotel at 2.30pm on Thursday 6 and 20 April. All welcome.

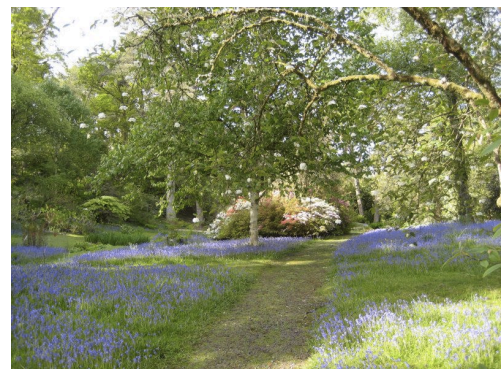
### French Conversation Group:

The French Conversation Group meets weekly at 2pm on Fridays in the Lancaster Hotel enjoying a cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate while chatting with members in the French language. We also read a little in French, the current book being La Tresse by Laetitia Colombani. We are a friendly, supportive group, and would welcome new members to join us. Please contact Kathy Murgatroyd, French Group Convenor, on the email at the bottom of the page.



### Gardens and Wild Flowers Group:

Achnacloch Garden, Connel, 2pm Saturday, 22 April  
This garden is only open on Saturdays, from 2 till 4pm. A donation of £5 is requested at a donation box on the way to the car park. The owners are supporting Macmillan Nurses through the Scottish Gardens Scheme. Group members will be emailed prior to the meeting. The idea is to go round the garden in small groups, having met in the car park. The meeting will only go ahead if the weather forecast is suitable.



## Geology Group:

The Dawn of Animals part 2: we have one meeting on Tuesday 18 April when we will look at the sudden development of life in the Ediacaran period that followed the last of the three Snowball Earth events. It was long believed that the evidence of the fossil record showed that life exploded from nowhere in the Cambrian period. In fact the fossil evidence for the preceding Ediacaran was there, but being soft-bodied life the fossil traces were not easy to discern. Modern techniques now reveal these in some abundance, and what strange animals they were!

This is currently scheduled to be the last indoor session of the season, so Life Story will continue in the autumn as we enter the sudden explosion of shelly animals in the Cambrian.

For the summer season, it is clear that the proposed field excursion in late May will not work because of accommodation problems. Patrick and his colleague will now use that time to carry out a reconnaissance in the North-West Highlands with a view to finding a time later in the summer that will suit members and have better accommodation availability. We hope to have found suitable dates by discussion at the March meeting.



## German Group:

The German Group meets from 10 to 11.30am on Thursdays at Graham's house. We have a lot of fun. We have no native speakers in the group, but a few have lived in Germany long enough to expose us to a diversity of accents. Although we do not have a native speaker, we would welcome one. At the meetings we each speak for a few minutes, often on an agreed theme: this week "Breakfast". We then read simple German stories and watch a video. We currently have 10 members, and could probably squeeze one or two more in (on the basis that it's almost unheard of for everyone to turn up). Do get in touch if you are interested. All abilities welcome.

## Mahjong Group:

We play from 2-4pm on a Monday at the Royal Hotel over coffee and chat and would be delighted to welcome new members to our group. It is an easy game to pick up and most enjoyable.



## Out and About Group:

The May trip to Glasgow to see the Mousetrap is fully booked.

## Poetry Group:

The Poetry Reading Group meets on Tuesday 4 April to read our selections on the theme *Myth, Mystery and Magic*. The anthology will be circulated shortly afterwards. Please send your choices to Joy by the 4th or bring them to the meeting.



## Reading Group 1:

This last month we read a book of short stories by Penelope Lively called *The Purple Swamp Hen*. This was also the name of the first story and was told through the eyes of the Swamp Hen, an observer's take on life in Pompeii just before the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. The rest of the stories appeared to also be observations of lives of various hues. Most members found at least a couple of stories that they particularly enjoyed and the short story format was quite refreshing. The book for next month is "Kane and Abel" by Jeffrey Archer.

## Reading Group 2 (Crime):

The next meeting is at 5pm on Thursday 13 April at The Falls of Lora Hotel, Connel. Our current book is *The Fine Art of Invisible Detection* by Robert Goddard.



## Reading Group 3 (Fact & Fiction):

Two books were discussed in March.

*Salt To The Sea* by Ruta Sepetys: although this story aimed at young adults was gripping, some felt it was sanitised, whilst others couldn't cope with the detail. It is, however, an important story for young people to know.

*Dust On The Paw* by Robin Jenkins: a fascinating read 25 years ago, this book now made us feel uncomfortable. Although Jenkins is good at airing issues worth discussion, his outdated approach to colonialism, racism and misogyny put most of us off the book. There were no redeeming characters and the picture it drew of Afghans was not realistic, when they are a noble and hospitable nation. Those who had read other works by Robin Jenkins much preferred them.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 20 April, when the choice is *The Book of Form and Emptiness* by Ruth Ozeki.

## Science Group:

The Science Group held their last meeting of the season on the 29 March. It was a lively meeting with lots of discussion of the topic and also thoughts on what topics we should include when we meet again in the autumn. If you have any further thoughts on this, or a talk to offer, please get in touch.

## Scottish History Group:

The Scottish History Group meets at 2.30pm in the library on Tuesday 11 April. There will be an illustrated talk on:

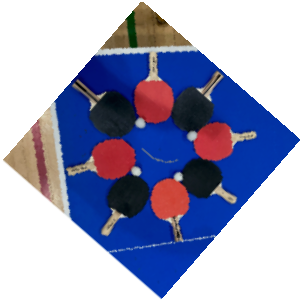
*Iona's nuns. Who were they? When did they live there? What did they do?*

The nunnery is the least-known of Iona's former glories, but has some beautiful ruins to dream in on a summer's day. This talk takes us back to their origins, their reasons for settling on Iona, their way of life – and a few mysteries. As usual, we know most about the wealthy men of the past and far less about women of any background. This session seeks to redress the balance.

## Spanish Group:

The Spanish group meets in the Lancaster Hotel at 11am on Wednesdays. We have some structured, prepared sections and we also try our best to have conversations. All levels of Spanish speakers, including beginners, are welcome.





### Table Tennis Group:

The group continues on its merry way - as witness the polite request from a nearby tai chi group that we refrain from laughing so loudly! (They eventually relocated to find somewhere more peaceful!)

In turn, March 27 will be our last meeting till after the Easter holidays because Atlantis are running sports camps for children - and at times that makes it difficult for the hard of hearing among us. So, we start again on Monday 17th April.

All are welcome at 2pm in the main games hall at Atlantis on Mondays. We aim to have fun, improve a bit - and have coffee afterwards!

### Walk and Lunch Group:

Tuesday, 25 April. Meet at 10.15am at Corran Halls. Time; approx. 2 hours

Lunch; at Cuan Mòr

Assuming clement weather, we are planning a walk up Battleship Hill, Oban. Park at the Corran Halls (probably paying by April) or behind the Roman Catholic Cathedral. The walk passes behind the seafront hotels and the Dog Stone to near Dunollie House, then follows a slightly rougher farm track upwards. The return route follows the farm track back to Dunollie, then we will climb gently up to the lower part of Dunollie Woods and hence return to our cars.

The brave amongst the group may be happy to climb to the very top of Battleship Hill, but there are lots of lovely views along the way. If you don't want to scramble up to the top of the hill, I suggest you bring a large carrier bag (shopping bag) or something similar to sit on whilst the hill party climb the last section.



Pantanal Wetlands jaguar. Not to be confused with the Oban puma!  
<https://www.obantimes.co.uk/2020/08/10/have-you-seen-obans-big-cat/>

I have taken the liberty of sharing a photo from our trip to Brazil. If you have been somewhere special and would like to share the experience with fellow members, please do send me a photo, with caption, to [obanu3anews@gmail.com](mailto:obanu3anews@gmail.com). I will try to include these in future newsletters along with the wonderful local photos members are kind enough to contribute.

Penny