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## Chair's Remarks

My sincere thanks go this month to Ray Leakey, who stepped in to produce this newsletter after the announcement that we would not be able to compile a newsletter for the next few months. This decision was made after the sudden retiral of two committee members - we thank them for their work and hope that the family illness they are experiencing is soon resolved.

In fact, we received no less than three offers of help. What a wonderful bunch of folk!

Would you consider joining that group of people who step up to keep Oban u3a the thriving community that it is? As well as not having a permanent newsletter editor on the committee, we currently have no business secretary. As you can imagine, neither task is too onerous unless it is on top of other responsibilities. At the AGM in September, Oban u3a will be left with an extremely depleted committee who will have to put in many hours just to keep our groups going. Please don't leave us in that position! Please consider joining the committee, now or in September, so that our tasks don't overwhelm us.

In other news, there's a 'save the date' from u3a in Scotland below. Here in Oban we have welcomed three new members this month, bringing the total membership to 171. Take a look at [all the choices on the website](#) if you want to try something new within our energetic and friendly community.

Penny

Chair

## Local News

### Monthly Member Meeting Speaker

1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 (Corran Halls, 10:30 am)

#### *The Man from La Manchester, Tony Beckett*

Tony is an Oban u3a member and runs the Spanish group. According to Tony, the title 'The man from La Manchester' is a little esoteric and is clearly a pun on Don Quixote, 'The man from La Mancha'. Essentially, the talk will be about Spain as seen from the saddle of a bicycle. He will use a route he followed from San Sebastian in the Basque Country to Tarifa the most southern point in mainland Spain, as the spine of the talk, breaking off to share experiences and observations of Spanish life, geography, culture, history and architecture en route. He will also include a section on 'How to be a good tourist in Spain' and there will be an element of audience participation



### **Advance notice of alternative monthly meeting location**

The **April** monthly meeting (above) and June meeting are at the **Corran Halls**, as normal.

However, the **May** 2025 meeting (speaker Bob McCulloch on recording the history of Oban) will be held in the **Rockfield Centre**.

### Oban u3a Information Leaflet.

A reminder that we have a new information leaflet about Oban u3a that will be available at monthly meetings as well as venues in Oban and surrounding area.



## National News

### Save the date: Scottish Jamboree, Friday 29 August

The u3a in Scotland, at this time of changeover in the organisation of the Third Age Trust, would like to celebrate the u3a community north of the border by holding a jamboree. **Provisionally**, this will be held on Friday 29 August at Craiglockhart Campus in Edinburgh. Many u3a groups will share their skills and experience and it is hoped that members from all over Scotland will share in the gathering. More information will follow after the date is confirmed.

### The u3a Friends newsletter

The u3a Friends newsletter is the best way for every u3a member to keep in the loop about national u3a opportunities, and to see what other u3as are doing across the UK. Plus, subscribers also get access to our discount and offers scheme, *Friends Extra*. Please encourage members of your u3a to sign up directly on [the u3a website](#).



### u3a Online Learning Events

A reminder that u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organizations.

Topics for April include Aviation, AI, Bridge, Family History, the Human Brain, John F Kennedy, Mindfulness and Meditation, the Pre Raphaelites, Sustainable Wardrobes, Robotics, Yoga, and more...

[See all our online learning events](#)

## Oban u3a Groups

*Group names in italics are links to Oban u3a website group pages.*

### Art Visits Group

#### **CINEMA:**

A few of us enjoyed *Dawn of Impressionism: Paris 1874* at The Highland Cinema, Fort William, this month.

Two more documentary films of interest are on their schedule:

***Tim Stead: Magician with Wood*** followed by a Q&A with film-maker, Beatrix A Wood, **Saturday 3rd May at 5.00 p.m.**

**Michaelangelo: Love & Death, Tuesday 20th May at 8.00p.m. and Sunday May 25th at 12.30p.m.**

#### **ART EXHIBITIONS:**

Spring/Summer exhibitions in local galleries:

***Argyll Hope Spot Retrospective*** Rockfield Centre, Oban; 24th March to 21st April

***Coast*** Rockfield Centre, Oban; **Friday 3rd to Saturday 25th June**

Launch Event: **Thursday 2nd June at 6pm**

***Jemima Hall: Seaweed Shelter*** at An Tobar, Tobermory, from **3rd March to 16th May**

#### **A BOOK RECOMMENDATION:**

***All the Beauty in the World*** by Patrick Bringley

*A revelatory portrait of a great museum and the moving story of one guard's quest to find solace and meaning in art.*

When Patrick's older brother dies at twenty-six, all he wants is to retreat. So, he does. He quits his job and seeks refuge in the most beautiful place he can think of: New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. *All the Beauty in the World* recounts Patrick's time as a museum guard,

keeping quiet vigil over some of the world's greatest treasures and uncovering the Met's innermost secrets. As his connection to the art and the life that swirls around it grows, so does Patrick – and gradually he emerges transformed by heartbreak, community and the power of art to illuminate life in all its pain, pleasure and hope.

*Sunday Times Art Book of the Year*

*Financial Times Best Book of 2023*

*PLEASE CONTACT JOY IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN ATTENDING AN EVENT AND CAN GIVE OTHERS A LIFT OR IF YOU'D LIKE TO GO AND WOULD APPRECIATE A LIFT*

### Bridge Group

Unfortunately our absolute beginner has left but we still have six folk working hard to master the intricacies of modern Bridge. By the time you read this one of our number may have played in a Scottish competition, albeit for beginners. We are hoping to welcome visitors along for a gentle game after Easter. We meet (almost) every Thursday at 2pm in the Kilmore Hall. Please let Sue P know if you would like to join us.



**Creative Writing Group**

Sadly, the meeting once again, saw only 3 attendees. Sue was still incapacitated and with other members taking time out or exploring the world, it turned out to be an extraordinary meeting (of minds, if not numbers)! Several poems, worthy of publish were contributed by both Hazel and Maurice, while Caroline decided she needs to pull her socks up!

Submissions from Maurice included 'Why Winter' and 'Of course I've been to Pakistan' while Hazel produced the 'Symmonds Yat Spat' and 'Fantasy in F'. Caroline contributed 'Note to Self'.

Lengthy discussions on what motivates us to write and what inhibits us took up a fair amount of time which led us to the mystery object, contributed by Maurice and being a rather humble little brass bell with an inscription.



*Photo Courtesy of Maurice Wilkins*

Ideas ranged from a poem about childhood memories of brass cleaning, to a Spanish Church visit in Spain. It concluded with a description of the bell and an overview of what was occurring around the table during the delegated 10 minutes of scribbling! It transpired that the delightful object was, in fact, believed to be a hand cast alter bell which would be rung at various intervals throughout a

Service. Being well worn, it was agreed that it had been of some significance.

The meeting closed with a moving poem from Hazel 'Bernadette', and from Maurice, 'The Smoke Alarm' and 'The Standing Stones of Salachary'. It is hoped that for the next meeting, the entire group will be able to attend.

**Discussion Group**

The Discussion Group meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 2pm in The Royal Hotel. Discussions are animated and friendly; all are welcome. March meeting dates will be the 6th and the 20th of the month.

**French Conversation Group**

The French Conversation Group meets every Friday afternoon during school term time in the Lancaster Hotel dining room. We catch up in French over a cup of coffee, tea or hot chocolate and welcome new members, with an intermediate or above level of French conversation, to join us.

The book we are reading at present is *Un sac de billes* (A bag of marbles) by Joseph Joffo. It is a true story about two Jewish boys in Second World War France.



Please note that we will not be meeting on Good Friday, 18th April.

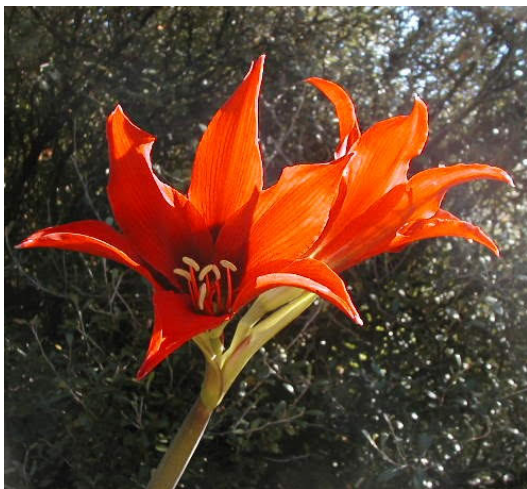
Please contact Kathy Murgatroyd or Anne-Marie Robertson either at the monthly coffee morning or through the Oban u3a website if you would like to know more.

### Gardens & Wildflower Group

A very successful Gardeners' Questions type of meeting was held in the comfortable community room at the Oban Fire Station. Our three professional panelists handled our questions very well with knowledge and good humour.

Time was limited, and we didn't make plans for the coming growing season, but it is hoped to bring together a group that will take things forward shortly.

Meantime, we can all enjoy the unfolding wonder of Spring in local gardens, woodlands and heathlands.



*Photo Courtesy of Maurice Wilkins*

### Geology Group

We have two meetings in April to complete this season's round of meetings, and will then meet again some time in September or October. All meetings as usual in the Studio Theatre, Corran Halls, 1.45-3.45 pm

**Tuesday 8th April, Life Story: Life in the Permian – on the Slow Road to Disaster.**

Maybe it is appropriate to end this winter's series at a major turning point for life on Earth, but what a turning point. We will have to wait until the Autumn to see how life did recover from the greatest disaster of all time, and led to a very different world as evolution took its opportunity to bring on 'the new'.

**Tuesday 29th April, Introduction to Geology series: Glaciation and Ice Ages.**

A change to the intended order, as Tectonic Processes really needs two consecutive sessions. Instead, after two sessions on volcanoes, we will consider the other major contributor to the landscapes of Scotland, ICE!



*A visual impression of an Ice Age landscape generated by AI (Courtesy of Freepik). The ice sheets could be up to 2 km thick or more, with mountain peaks peeping through.*

### German Group

The German Group's composition has fluctuated. Now we have six regulars and a couple of "resting" members who are keeping their options open. We hope to see them again. We have the advantage of a native speaker, who corrects our more obvious blunders. Some members have lived in German speaking countries,

others have family living in Germany, and some have studied German or are just interested. Our meetings open with a chat on a prearranged theme, following which we are currently reading from a hilarious book – “How to be a German in Fifty Easy Steps.” We then watch and discuss an “Easy German” video, often diverting into general chat, usually with much irreverent banter. We meet at Graham’s house in central Oban at 10:30 on Thursdays. Do get in touch if you are interested.

### Mahjong Group

We meet every Monday afternoon at the Royal Hotel 2pm. We don’t take ourselves too seriously and it is very easy to learn the basics.



### Jane Austen – short course

We have laughed our way through *Pride and Prejudice* and now move on to the darker ironic humour of *Mansfield Park*. Probably our earliest novel in English that is based on the inner, psychological, life and growth of an individual, in this case the withdrawn poor relation Fanny, this is perhaps the most difficult of Austen's novels. It mirrors her own experience, as a quiet, observant, poor relation herself. But Fanny is a very different character. For those who prefer to view an adaptation first, the BBC 1983

series starring Sylvestra le Touzel, is recommended.

All are welcome to join us on Wednesday 23rd April, at 4pm in the home of Joy Sullivan. A group for men as well as women!

### Out and About Group

The out and about group are going to see the National Theatre of Scotland's production of 'Through the Shortbread Tin' at the Corran Halls in April which is now sold out.

The group has no regular meeting dates or times but goes to events in Oban and the West of Scotland.

Members of the group are contacted by email to inform them of events.

### Pickleball Group

and

### Pickleball Beginners Group

The growth of interest in pickleball over the last few months has been amazing. We now have 30 players in the main group, in addition to a small number in the beginners' group.

The convenors of both groups (Chris, Caroline, Margo and John), together with our Pickleball Scotland Ambassador (Ronnie), have been considering how best to cope with the increase in numbers. They have come up with a proposal which involves splitting the main group into two - "Reds" and "Blues", each with its own convenor. The Reds would be (on average) players of a higher standard than the Blues, and there would be a mechanism for regular promotion and relegation based on game outcomes. The beginners group would be renamed "Induction, Training and Technique

Improvement", and would offer training and practice opportunities for both Reds and Blues, supported by u3a members of Oban Pickleball Team, which plays in the Pickleball Scotland leagues.

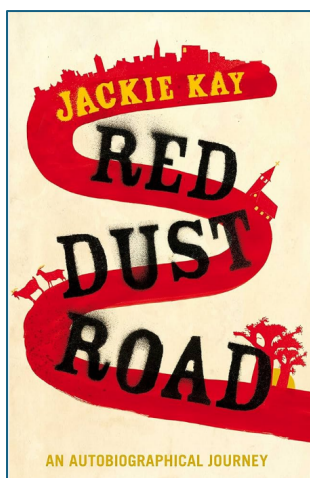
These proposals have been put to members for comment, and the feedback (so far) has been very encouraging. The next few months look set to bring positive changes to Oban u3a pickleball.

### Poetry Reading

We shared our chosen poems on the theme of **Gardens** this month. Please get in touch if you'd like to receive the Anthology of Gardens poems. Others are available on the Oban u3a website. The next meeting is on Tuesday 1st April at 2.00. Our theme, appropriately, is Fools, Folly and Fantasy. Please let Joy know if you can come to the meeting and send poems for duplication; also please send poems to Maurice, who compiles the Anthologies.

### Reading Group 1 – General

We are meeting on the 31st March to discuss 'The Red Dust Road' by Jackie Kay. In April we are meeting on the 28th to discuss 'Prophet Song' by Paul Lynch.



### Reading Group 2 – Crime

Thursday 10th April, 5 pm, The Falls of Lora Hotel

The book for April is 'The Dogs of Riga' by Henning Mankell.

### Reading Group 3 - Fact & Fiction

**Love in the Time of Cholera by Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1985)**

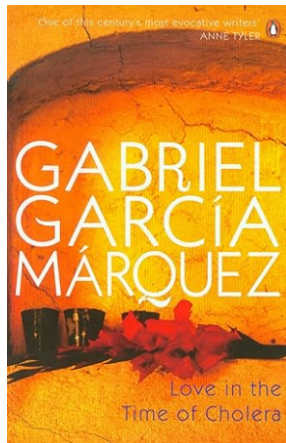
We had a great discussion about this classic, throwing up all sorts of issues and hot topics. There was a general consensus that the subject matter - a study of 'Love' or let's call it 'sex, desire, passion and obsession' - first published in English in 1988, comes across completely differently at our current age and in this current time 2025. Subject matter that we accepted so readily 30 - 40 years ago is less acceptable today. Are we more critical? cynical? unforgiving? Or just more worldly wise?

We agreed that the author was a hugely successful and distinguished writer with a unique style. He remains an Icon of 20th century literature. His ability to create atmosphere, mood, visual imagery, place and time is sumptuous, fantastic and unforgettable. However, the content of this novel is about the personal relationships of the three main characters - a love triangle - over a fifty year period in time. The focus is on their 'love' but more specifically the sexual proclivities of the central protagonist Florentino Ariza. We concurred that Florentino had strong, obsessive, all-consuming feelings for Fermina Daza, lasting throughout his life. They begin and end this 'love story'. However, the 'love' between Dr Juvenal Urbino and Fermina Daza, his wife of fifty years, is also key to the narrative.

Marquez' skills as a writer are phenomenal and leave us with many questions. The biggest bone of

contention for us, in this particular reading group, was the horrendous behaviour of Florentino Ariza who over a fifty year period 'bedded' a vast number of women and girls, regardless of their age, for his own sexual gratification, raping one, de-flowering another, using many others and causing damage including death and suicide. In this Politically Correct time of Me Too and Equality Florentino Ariza's behaviour is viewed as abhorrent.

Notwithstanding our criticisms regarding certain aspects of this story we agreed that it was well-worth reading and it generated a great discussion!



**Reading Group 4**

At our last meeting we discussed our choice of “Wifedom” which had proved to be both enlightening and thought-provoking. Our choice this time is “Orbital” by Samantha Harvey. This is something completely different and is a recent winner of the Booker Prize. We will hopefully have a stimulating discussion this month.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, 27th March at 2pm at the Convenor’s home. The house is accessible. We still have a few places for new members, but we are growing quickly. Come and join us

if you are interested in a lively but relaxing afternoon.

**Science and Technology**

Our next meeting and the last until September, will be on 2nd April at 2:15 in the Studio Theatre, Corran Halls.

Richard Bosworth will be giving a talk on the life cycle of stars, with particular focus on the extremely large stars that are destined to become Black Holes. The talk will move on to the problems presented to Science by Black Holes and one solution to these issues recently published in New Scientist.



*The supermassive black hole inside the core of the supergiant elliptical galaxy Messier 87 in the constellation Virgo.*

*By Event Horizon Telescope*

*- <https://www.eso.org/public/images/eso1907a/>; JPG saved from full size TIFF and converted with maximum quality level 12 in Photoshop 2019., CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77916527>*

**Scottish History**

Following last month's engagement with science and faith in the Scottish Enlightenment, we move back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with 'Fantastic islands off Scotland, and where to find them'. Maps as you were never taught in school will be projected by Powerpoint

and the imagination. Join us in the library at 2.30 pm on Tuesday 8th April, for our usual second-Tuesday-of-the month group.

Later sessions this year will include the Declaration of Arbroath, and, to retreat back to an earlier time, how saints are made. This will include Brigid of the Gaelic-speaking world, Maol Rubha of Applecross (and Kilmelford), Margaret of Scotland, Magnús of Orkney, and a few more.

### **El Grupo Español**

El grupo Espanol: noticias

Muchisimas gracias a Joan por mantener los reuniones durante mis vacaciones en Malaga. Bien hecho.

He notado que la mayoría de miembros siempre traen ejemplares para compartir con el resto del grupo. Otra vez, gracias.

El primer martes en Abril yo hablare de mis observaciones i experiencias en bici en Espana. Espero que puedan asistir en los Corran Halls a las once.

Salud,

Tony

### **Table Tennis Group**

The Table Tennis group meets at Atlantis at 2.00 on Monday afternoons and is looking for new players. It is a lot of fun - competitive with much banter! (Please note, it will be closed during the school holidays, 7th to 18th April for children's sports camps).

### **Ukulele Fun & Sing-a-Long**

The recently formed Ukulele Group warmly welcomes new members of all levels of expertise, including beginners.

We were sorry to lose our excellent and popular leaders, Annette and Steve Tedder, who had to return to England, but members have stepped up and we're having fun singing and playing.

Help is at hand for beginners. Actually, we just help one another get along.

It would be good if you'd join us on a – Tuesday evening, 7 till 9 at the Congregational Church, Tweeddale Street, Oban. (Just up from Chalmers shop. Enter street level, middle door.)

Hope to see you there.

Helen Anderson



### **Walk & Lunch Group**

On Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> March we went to a stunning walk near Castle Stalker.

Destinations for April are under review and group members will be emailed details when available.



*Photo Courtesy of Joy Sullivan*