

## FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



Mull from Cullipool. Photo: Zoe Fleming

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### Chair's Remarks

As the winter retreats and the snowdrops and daffodils start to emerge from the ground, we welcome new hope for the coming year. We also have hope for the continuation of our u3a as a few folk have responded positively to Graham's recent e-mail. However, those of you who were thinking of volunteering, please still do so. Don't worry if you are relatively new to the u3a, we would like to have our committee set up to continue for some time to come with planned succession and to that end, ideally, each post would be shadowed.

Have you recently joined? Are you frustrated at the lack of spaces in existing groups? Please consider setting up a new group similar to an existing group or completely new. Convenors are only responsible for arranging the meetings, everything else is done jointly by all members. Please contact our [Groups Coordinator](#), David H in the first instance.

### Welcome to New Members

This month we welcome Anna, Eileen, Elizabeth, Euan, Lyn, Phil & Ruth.



### **Monthly Member Meeting: John Colston on NATO**

This talk will take a brief look at the history and development of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation since its foundation in 1949, focussing in particular on its relationship with the Soviet Union and subsequently the Russian Federation. It will examine the challenges which NATO faces today, including the Russia/Ukraine conflict, and whether it can remain relevant in the future.

John Colston was the UK defence adviser to NATO from 1996 to 2000,

and subsequently the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy from 2003 to 2007. He retired in 2011, after four years as the Deputy Chief of Defence Intelligence in London, and now lives on Seil. The talk, Tuesday 3rd February at 10.30 for 11 at the Corran Halls, could hardly be more timely.

**Oban u3a Group Reports** (click the Group's name to go to its webpage):

#### [Art visits](#)

no additional information this month

#### [Astronomy](#)

Setting up this group is proving to take a lot of effort and Liz would really like some help! Please contact her if you are interested. Although meetings may not start just yet, Liz is hoping to provide information for potential stargazers to refer to each month.

#### [Bridge Group](#)

Before Christmas, we held an afternoon tea, competed in a quiz and still had time to play a few hands. Thanks to everyone who helped but especially to John. We have nearly completed the beginners' course so we will soon be able to welcome more experienced players along for a game. Alongside this, we hope to start another beginners' group. Please let Sue P know if you are interested.

### [Craft Group](#)

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

### [Creative Writing Group](#)

The group has been revived and will be meeting fortnightly in the café at the Rockfield Centre, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, 2.30 to 4pm. Our main aim is to have fun, so if you enjoy words, whether it be writing prose or poetry, playing word games, reading other member's efforts or generally enjoying imagination, then you'll be very welcome to join us.

On a Wednesday in Rockfield café,  
Meets a group of the town u3a.  
Creative Writing it's named  
And no-one can be blamed  
If you leave at the end in dismay!

### [Discussion Group](#)

The discussion group will be meeting as usual in February on the first and third Thursday of the month i.e. 5.2.26 and 19.2.26 at 2.30 p.m. in the Royal Hotel, Argyll. As usual Trump and his shenanigans have given us plenty to shout about but any other subject is most welcome.

### [Drama](#)

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

### [French Conversation Group](#)

The French Conversation Group meets every Friday afternoon, during school term time, in the Lancaster Hotel dining room. We are a friendly, supportive group, and have a few spaces for new members of intermediate or above French Conversation level. As we are just about to start our new book, 'La Gloire de Mon Père', by Marcel Pagnol, now would be an excellent time to join

us. For more information, please contact Kathy or Anne-Marie, either on the Oban u3a website, or at our monthly coffee mornings.



Galanthus 'Trump' photo D Dahl

### [Gardens and Wildflower Group](#)

Sunday 8th February is Snowdrop Day at Ardchatton Manse. This is being run via the Scotlands Gardens Scheme (SGS). There are 3 sessions, and some of our group are joining the last session at 3 pm. There is to be a talk, a

viewing of the different snowdrop varieties, and refreshments. Booking is done using the SGS website at a cost of £5, 60% of which goes to support the Ardchatton Community Centre. Ardchatton Manse is the first house after the priory and is accessed by a drive. It has a sheltered S facing aspect in the shore of Loch Etive.

### Geology Group

We have two meetings planned for February, both at 1.45-3.45 pm in the Studio Theatre, Corran Halls

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, Geology of Scotland:** Now we have the Lewisian basement to the north west of Scotland, what happens next – to be precise, in the next two billion years! The Lewisian terrain is still there, but it seems to be a lone wanderer next to the enormous supercontinent of Laurentia, from which it possibly broke away, though Greenland is nearby as well. It survived those two billion years, leaving some evidence of interesting events until we arrive at Torridonian times. Then so much else starts to happen that it will take this session and part of the next to cover it all.



*The events of two billion years encapsulated in a dramatic roadside exposure at Laxford Bridge in Sutherland*

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February:** our long-running story of Life reaches several climaxes in one session on the Cretaceous period. The rise of the mammals, whose ancestors have been keeping quietly in the background from Cambrian times, start to become more prominent, although still in the shadow of those enormous dinosaurs. The latter reach their zenith, but along with many other types of life are almost eliminated by the notorious asteroid impact 65 million years ago – or was that really the sole cause of their demise? In the same long period, flowering plants made their entrance – a colourful change to the landscape of the planet. But not everything was happening on land – as usual the oceans were alive with strange creatures.

For your diaries: future dates planned this season: **Geology of Scotland:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> April. **Life Story:** 31<sup>st</sup> March, 21 April

### **Mahjong Group**

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

### **Out and About Group**

These Mechanisms - Live performance by an octogenarian in the Rockfield Centre on 8th February at 7.30pm.

Live performance of Whisky Galore at the Corran Halls on Friday & Saturday 6th & 7th March at 7.30pm and also Saturday at 2.30pm.

Further information on our [website](#).

### **Pickleball - Competitive**

The group plays in Atlantis from 09:00 to 10:30 on Friday mornings. We now have an active membership of 24 and regularly play on four courts instead of three. Please contact the convenor if interested.

### **Pickleball - Recreational and Pickleball Plus**

Pickleball meets in the Atlantis Centre, Mondays and Wednesdays 11.00-12.00.

Due to the growing popularity of Monday Recreational Pickleball, this extra day has been added on Wednesday to provide additional playing slots. If you would like to join either or both groups, please contact Peter Gray for Wednesdays or Gordon Muir-Jones for Mondays.

We also have in preparation a Pickleball Starter Group. This will allow for an assessment of fitness and skill level for any member wishing to try the sport. Many who join and who already possess the necessary skill but lack the rules of the game, will move on quickly to join the Recreational or Competitive Pickleball groups once the fundamentals have been grasped. When there is sufficient number of members wishing to remain within the Starter group as beginners, a day and date for regular court sessions will be decided. The Starter group looks forward to welcoming anyone who would like to try Pickleball!

### **Jane Austen Short Course**

We'll be arranging our next meeting shortly, featuring her last and unfinished novel, 'Sanditon'. Contact the convenor, Rosemary Power, for more information.

### Poetry Reading Group

The next **Poetry Reading** Meeting is at 2.00 p.m. on Tuesday 3rd February. The theme is Trade.

Please send poems for printing to read at the meeting to Joy and let her know if you're coming.

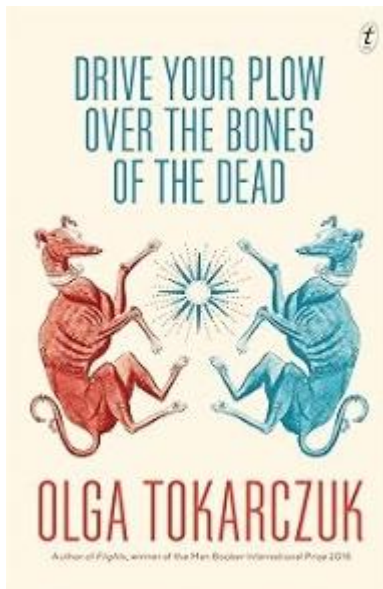
Please send all poems for inclusion in the Anthology to Maurice.

We look forward to seeing you and hearing or reading your selections.

### Reading Group 1 - General

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

### Reading Group 2 - Partners in Crime



We discussed 'Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead' by Olga Tokarczuk. Although not an easy book to get into, everyone agreed it was worth the effort and enjoyed the eccentric characters and their sense of community, if a little subversive at times. It is set in a small community in Poland.

We agreed to cancel the January meeting and read 'No way out' by Cara Hunter, a procedural crime novel investigating a fire. As it has been a two month period some of us are also reading 'The House of Burning Bones' by Stuart Macbride as a second book for discussion, comparison.

The next meeting will be on Thursday 12th February at 5pm in The Falls of Lora Lounge, Connel.

### Reading Group 3 - Fact and Fiction

'Raising Hare' by Chloe Dalton.

Everyone loved this book and found it uplifting.. This little wild animal put so much faith in the human who raised her. The writing was beautifully crafted, capturing the relationship between Chloe and the hare without sentimentality. Throughout, Dalton emphasises her determination to distinguish between this wild animal and pets. Indeed, she has since become active in campaigns for changes in the treatment of wild animals.

The author's self-awareness increases through observing the hare and her young. Her attitude to her work and its priority in her life changes through witnessing, and accommodating, the tiny creature's habits and its protectiveness of its young.

The group discussed the link between the treatment of hares and that of women over the centuries. We also had a lively chat about the author's efforts not to anthropomorphise the hare.

February's choice is 'The Land in Winter' by Andrew Miller.

#### [Reading Group 4](#)

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.



#### [Science and Technology Group](#)

This month we will be discussing the 2025 Nobel prizes with a series of presentations by group members. The prizes are widely regarded as the most prestigious awards for scientific research, rewarding *“those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind.”*

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February** at 2:15pm in the Studio Theatre, Corran Halls.  
'The Nobel Prizes for Chemistry and Physiology' by Alastair Fleming and Bob Batty.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February** at 2:15pm in the Studio Theatre, Corran Halls  
'The Nobel Prizes for Physics and Economics' by Richard Bosworth

Please note that all our meetings are aimed at a mixed audience with content accessible to all. So, you really do not need to have any prior scientific knowledge or experience to join us.

#### [Scottish History Group](#)

From grisly goings-on in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, we move back to the middle ages and filthy figures found on churches. What are sheela-na-gigs, the 'exhibitionist female figures' widespread in Ireland, known in England and rare in Scotland, that have caused much modern interest? We'll be looking at our

Scottish ones, including two that are local, their history, their purposes, and in the case of one of them at Taynuilt, how it started out as a very different figure. Venue is Oban Library at 2-30 pm on Tuesday 11 February.

### [El Grupo Español](#)

Recientemente unos socios del grupo Espanol aisitieron una reunion en el Hawthorn Studio de la Rockfield Centre en Oban para charlar un rato con otras personas con un interes en el castellano. La proxima reunion estara el domingo, 22 de febrero a las 2.30 hasta 3.30. Quizas te gustaria a probarla.

A pesar de tiempo de invierno hemos mantenido niveles buenos de asistencia en nuestras reuniones semanales en el hotel Lancaster. Muchisimas gracias, he disfrutado su compania mucho.

### [Table Tennis Group](#)

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

### [Ukulele Fun and Sing-a-Long Group](#)

How about joining us as we sing and play our ukuleles?

We would like new members and hope you'll come along and be part of our friendly and welcoming group. We plan to meet throughout the year. No ukulele? Members have kindly offered to bring along ukuleles to get you started and tuition is at hand.

Be good to see you - Tuesday evenings, 7 till 9 at the Congregational Church, Tweedale Street, Oban.

(Just up from Chalmers shop. Enter street level, middle door.)

### [Walk and Lunch Group](#)

There's no update this month. Please see details of meetings on the website.

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Edited by David Alcock - comments welcome to [obanu3anews@gmail.com](mailto:obanu3anews@gmail.com)