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1. Message from our Chairman

On Saturday 3rd January my wife and I drove up from Wiltshire to Birkenhead and not a single snowflake did we encounter. All looked set fair for the first Bu3a meeting of 2026 until we drove off the ferry in Belfast when we discovered that mother nature had chosen to intervene. The M2 and the A26 were both down to single lanes and our journey to Ballymoney took twice as long as normal. The snow looked as if it was going to lie for some time, so I decided after consultation with some members of the Committee that we had no alternative but to cancel the meeting scheduled for the 6th. An email was duly sent out but, lo and behold, come Tuesday morning there was barely a trace of snow anywhere to be seen! I apologise for what turned out to be an unnecessary cancellation, but we were not prepared to put our members safety at risk. And as it turned out, the speaker had already decided not to undertake the journey to Ballymoney.

The snow having disappeared, the rest of our scheduled activities, including the newest ones, were able to carry on as normal so Bu3a got off to a good start in 2026 after all. I would once again like to thank the members of the Committee for all their hard work in putting together an interesting programme and scheduling all the locations where the activities are to take place.

On the topic of making Bu3a work I would yet again appeal to our members to consider taking a more active part in the organisation. A number of our Officers and Committee members are standing down at our AGM in May and unless people come forward to fill those gaps there is a very real danger that the organisation that we all enjoy and

appreciate so much may have to “shut up shop.” I would also appeal to members to come forward to share their various skills and experiences. We all have them. Self-education is something we are actually obliged to do under our constitution, not just rely on outside speakers. Please give this some very serious consideration.

John W D Pinkerton

Chairman, Bu3a

2. December Event – 10th Anniversary Christmas Lunch

Ballymoney u3a's 10th Anniversary celebrations concluded with a Christmas Lunch at the Royal Court Hotel, Portrush on Tuesday 2nd December. Around 135 members and guests assembled in the Atlantic Suite which had been beautifully decorated by the staff. Mac Pollock as Master of Ceremonies introduced our Chairman John Pinkerton who welcomed all members and guests and encouraged members to become more involved in the organisation. Mac then introduced our guest speaker Anne Marie McAleese who had presented the BBC Radio Ulster programme Your Place and Mine for around thirty-five years. Anne-Marie gave an amusing talk about her life in broadcasting and ended with a rendition of Joan Gaffney's poem My Friend Kate (Never Got a Man) which had us all in stitches. We then settled down to enjoy a delicious three course Christmas Lunch. After lunch floral presentations were made to our speaker Anne-Marie, our Treasurer Elaine Wilson, our Minutes Secretary and star organiser Eileen Richmond, founder member and 10th Anniversary organiser Marie Hegarty. Secretary Sue Pinkerton thanked all those who had worked so hard to put this event together.

The day concluded with a short concert by Ukes at the Port who played a selection of old favourites which had many of us clapping and singing along. All in all, an enjoyable and most successful time.



Members at the Royal Court



Guest of Honour Anne Marie McAleese



Anne Marie, Sue and Eileen



Marie and Sue



Anne Marie, Pat and Sue

3. Bu3a Volunteer's Outing

Visit to Moore Lodge Estate

On Friday, 16 January, some 40 Bu3a volunteers arrived at Moore Lodge Estate on the Vow Road, Ballymoney. The recently opened venue was once in wreck and ruin, and proprietor John Armstrong spent four years refurbishing the main house, rescuing the artifacts, building holiday cottages, and improving the surrounding grounds. This is the 2nd "Celebrating Volunteers Event", held at Moore Lodge, supported by the National Lottery. Grateful thanks to Treasurer Elaine Wilson for her expertise and dedication ensuring that our funds are managed efficiently and creatively resulting in a very successful Events Programme.

Historical Presentation

We were treated to a historical presentation by John, which dated back to the 1500s. Impressively, the house is older than Dunluce Castle. Following the talk, we embarked on a tour of the house, exploring its rich history and beautifully restored features. A fabulous place to stay on holiday.

Lunch and Leisure Activities

A much-welcomed "light lunch" followed. Towards the end of the afternoon, and after lots of engaging conversations, some ventured outdoors to explore the river view - decking, hot tub, and sauna—all available to "staying guests"

Special Treat

The estate offers a specialty "Afternoon Tea" for £35. This could be the perfect solution for anyone looking to indulge in a "treat". I requested some brochures for the group - no brochures available. A victim of this modern trend of "accessing everything online". A fabulous afternoon celebrating our volunteers, the backbone of Bu3a. Their dedication and

hard work ensure that our organization continues to thrive and support the local community.



Bu3a volunteers on their day out to Moore Lodge Estate

4. Around the Groups

Anything but Bridge

Richard's passion for board games is infectious, and his expertise ensures that each session is not only fun but also educational. Games on offer include Backgammon, Chess, Cribbage: Shove Ha'penny, Scrabble, Monopoly, Skipbo and more. Date and location to be confirmed.

Leader: Richard

BOCCIA

The idea of the game is simple. It is like bowls but participants remain seated while throwing on a court similar in size to a badminton court. Players are positioned at one end in “throwing boxes” and can throw the jack anywhere on court over the ‘V’ line. The aim is to get the ball closer to the 'jack', than your opponent. Points are awarded. Players remain seated, while “throwing”. Improves eye to hand coordination. A 6-week session starts on Wednesday 18th February at 11:00 am in Balnamore Community Hall. All welcome!

Leaders: Noeleen and Marie

Chair Yoga

Chair Yoga is on Thursdays weekly from 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm in The British Legion.

Do you want to improve flexibility, strength, and balance? Chair Yoga is a modified form of yoga that involves poses done while sitting on a chair or using a chair for support. This makes it ideal for both able-bodied and those with more limited mobility. The exercises are gentle and can help reduce joint pain, improve mobility and enhance balance and coordination. Shauna is happy to adapt the programme to suit group members. Just come along and give it a try.

Leader: Shauna



Chair Yoga members being put through their paces by Shauna (middle)

Coffee Catch-Up

Coffee Catch Up has just started up again with Leader Carmen. We had a wonderful Coffee morning at The Lodge Hotel Coleraine on Friday 29 January with some 30 members in attendance.

As a new member and Leader, I enjoyed welcoming so many people, the majority of whom I have never met. It will take a while to get to know everyone, so please be patient.

The next Coffee-Catch-Up takes place at The Lodge Hotel on Friday 27th February from 10.30 am to 12:00 noon. I will send an email nearer the time to get an idea of numbers. (photo from last year at Nicos).

Leader: Carmen



Drew, Sally, Elizabeth and Jim enjoying coffee and chat

Crafts

Twelve of our members met on 20th January 2026 for our first class of the New Year. We also welcomed Susan, a potential new member, who joined us for a taster session, making our total up to thirteen.

As we had just celebrated Christmas, our aim was to make something useful out of our old used Christmas cards. The used cards can be made into beautiful bookmarks or gift tags of different sizes and shapes,

saving money as well as being creative. We used the cards to make pretty gift boxes, that make a little bar of soap or a few sweets into a thoughtful gift.

We had a lovely afternoon enjoying the fellowship as well as folding and sticking our little creations. Here are some pictures of the finished products!





Leader: Sally Administrator: Flo

Creative Writing

U3A Creative Writers finished off 2025 with an informal meet up for coffee in Nico's where John Pinkerton and Mary entertained us with some poetry and Anne gave an update on sales of our second publication, Frae the Toon volume 2, the proceeds of which will be donated to RNLI.

January's meeting was a lively reunion where there was both animated discussion and interesting writing from a prompt about A diary for January given by Sharon. An observational task was set for written work for the February meeting.

The group welcomes newcomers with the reassurance that contributions are received in a friendly, supportive environment and sometime can be spent just listening until confidence is built up.



Creative Writers group at Nico's for Christmas coffee

Dancercise with Anne

Just to remind everyone, Dancercise is on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 12:00 noon to 1:00pm in The British Legion. This is an excellent way to exercise with lively music. Dance fitness is designed to uplift your spirits while keeping fit. We have a skilled instructor who brings excitement to every class.

Benefits are improved cardiovascular health, increase flexibility, enhanced coordination and balance. Why not give it a try, you can contact me or simply go along on Thursday, to British Legion at 12 noon when you can enrol and be given all the details of cost etc.

Leader: Anne

Administrator: Sandra



Tutor Anne leading the Dancercise Class which meets at The British Legion Hall Ballymoney

Dander Football

Dander Football commences on Mondays weekly from 10:00 am to 11:00 am in The Joey Dunlop Centre.

If you have played football, in the past, or followed a favourite team, why not have a go at Dander Football. A slower pace, but the competitive edge may still be there!

Leader: Sean

Contact No.: 07973682319.

Family and Local History

We had our first meeting of the new year on Tuesday 20th January 2026 at Connect Centre. The speaker was Robert Corbett, local historian and previous archivist at PRONI and Belfast City Hall. The title for Robert's talk was "Rev Robert Trail's Survey of Ballintoy 1814".

Rev Robert Trail, born in 1754, a native of North Antrim, graduated from St Andrews University and was installed as Rector of Ballintoy Parish from 1777 – 1832. His brother William pioneered a hydro-electric tramway which carried passengers from Portrush to the Giants Causeway.

The first survey by Rev Robert Trail of Ballintoy in 1803 was mainly an agricultural survey listing all farms and inhabitants. His main survey in 1814 of Ballintoy was part of Shaw Mason's Parochial Survey of Ireland. Local clergies were identified as the 'most fit persons' to conduct this survey which detailed notable buildings, populations, educational premises, notable illnesses, and other details. The only notable buildings were the Rectory (Mount Druid House built 1798 at a cost of £913) and Ballintoy Parish Church (built in 1813 for £1324 under the auspices of Rev Trail). The survey listed 3,593 inhabitants, 701 families, the Parish was predominantly Church of Ireland rather than Presbyterian, farm rentals ranged from 10 shillings to 3 Guineas, average farm size was 25 acres, and kelp was used to fertilise the land. The main epidemic was Smallpox, and the Rector was personally expected to carry out inoculations with Cowpox! Ballintoy School was mentioned but came in for some criticism. The "swinging bridge of Carrick-a-Rede" was noted to be present 100 years before the survey.

Robert Corbett was duly thanked for his most interesting, illustrated talk.

The next meeting will be at 10:30am on Tuesday 17th February 2026 at

Connect Centre. The speaker will be Keith Beattie, and his subject will be “Famous People of Ballymoney”

Leader: John Administrator: Alison

Gardening Group

A small group of our Gardening members who braved the wintery very cold day to visit Pam Traill’s garden saw lots of snowdrops, single and double varieties. We met at beginning of February; because of inclement cold January the snowdrops were a bit slow popping their heads up. We went to Pam Traill’s garden last Thursday to see the snowdrops and there were plenty together with Aconites, Scilla and some beautiful coloured Hellebores. The attached photos will illustrate their beauty and delight. We were meant to visit James Burnside next month, but Storm Goretti played havoc with his garden. Not good gardening weather but, nevertheless the daffodils will soon be open. Spring is such an exciting time for flowers appearing whatever the weather.





IT/Computer

“Staying Safe on-line” x 5 weeks. – Available if sufficient demand.

Apple iPad (for those who have an iPad or Apple iPhone) x 4 weeks.

“How to use email effectively” – iPad/PC/Laptop users x 2 weeks.

Leader: Michael

Out For Lunch

The next Out to Lunch event will be held on Friday 20th February 2026 in The Royal Court Hotel, Portrush - 12:30 for 1:00 pm.

If you are interested in attending, can you please let me know, together with your choices from the attached menu by Monday 16th February 2026 on email address helpeventsbu3a@gmail.com

Cost - Main Course Carvery plus tea/coffee - £20.00

Two Courses plus tea/coffee - £26.00

Three Courses plus tea/coffee - £32.00

Leader: Eileen

Playalong-Singalong with” Mervyn and Friends”.

Do you like to sing? “Mervyn and Friends” are hosting sessions in the Ullans Centre, Main Street, each Monday from 2.30 pm to 4 pm. An opportunity for folks to get together for a “session” and enjoy the craic! No qualifications or experience required.

Leader: Mervyn

Contact No.: 07763047701

Storytelling

Storytelling with Mary has resumed on the 2nd Monday of the month from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon in The Hub.

Storytelling is the act of telling or writing stories, which are narratives that typically have a beginning, middle, and end. It is a universal human experience that transcends cultures and has been practiced since ancient times. Come along and share your stories!

Tai Chi

Tai Chi resumes on Mondays weekly from 11.30am to 12.30 pm in The Holmes Memorial Hall.

Chang Hai is a highly respected instructor in the world of Tai Chi. He is an 8th Dan. This Chinese martial art combines flowing movements, meditation, and deep breathing. Health benefits include improved balance, mobility and coordination.

Leader: Chang Hai

Walking Rugby

Walking Rugby takes place every 2nd and 4th Wednesday from 10:00 am to 11:00 am in St Patrick's Parish Centre.

Walking rugby is a non-contact, slower-paced version of Rugby Union, designed to be inclusive and accessible to people of all ages. Players must walk while carrying the ball, with a two-handed touch to the upper torso replacing the tackle. In other words, having fun!

Leaders: Uel and Heaney

Tel: 07763047701

5. For Your Information

Cruise - Norway and the Fjords – June 2027

Next Meeting will be held in March 2026. (20 travelling). Interested in joining us? Contact Marie at newsbu3a@gmail.com

Libraries NI – What's on in March 2026

Ballycastle Library Heritage Festival, 9th – 14th March

Ballycastle Library invites you to come along and join us for a week of amazing events as part of our 'Ballycastle Library Heritage Festival'. With events including Storytelling with Stephen O'Hara, a talk by Margaret Ward and events delivered by Causeway Museum Services, there is sure to be something Heritage for all the family to enjoy. Telephone 028 2076 2566 for more details.

Heritage Week 'Local Heritage Heroes' Tea Party Event, 10th March.

Cushendall Library invites you to come along for a special 'Local Heritage Heros' Tea Party. Join our friendly Library Staff over tea and cake, as we browse through old photographs and newspapers and

reminiscence about some of Cushendall's local heroes. Everyone Welcome. 6:00pm - 7:30pm. Telephone 028 2177 1297 for more details.

“Seachtain Na Gaeilge “Cúpla Focal & Cupán Tae”, 13th March.

As part of the festival of Irish language " Seachtain na Gaeilge", join our Irish Conversation group at Portstewart Library for cúpla focal and share memories of Irish songs from school and beyond! Everyone Welcome. 10:30am -11:30am. Telephone 028 7083 2712 for more details.

Heritage Week 'Kilrea's Reminiscence Scrapbook Afternoon', 14th March.

To celebrate Heritage Week, Kilrea Library would like to welcome all adults to our Reminiscence Scrapbook Afternoon. Enjoy a cuppa and a biscuit as you explore memory lane with our collection of scrap books comprised of Kilrea's local history. Everyone Welcome. 2:30pm - 4:00pm. Telephone 028 2954 0630 for more details.

“Seachtain na Gaeilge 'Irish Myths and Legends' Storytime and Crafts”, 21st March.

As part of our Seachtain na Gaeilge and St Patrick's Day celebrations, Dungiven Library invites children aged 4-11 years to come along and join us for a morning of 'Irish Myths and Legends' Storytime and fun themed crafts, using our selection of craft resources available. 11:00am - 12:30 Noon. Telephone 028 7774 1475 for more details.

‘Youth Art Month’ Picture This: Self Portrait, 28th March.

To celebrate Youth Art Month, Garvagh Library invites all budding Picassos aged 4-10 to join us for this picture-perfect Self Portrait craft. Using our array of craft resources, we encourage you to get creative with how you represent yourself in portraiture. 11:30am – 12:30 Noon. Telephone 028 2955 8500 for more details.