

Minutes of Banbridge and District u3a Meeting
Tuesday 14th November 2023
Bannside Presbyterian Church Hall

1. Present

There were 55 members in attendance plus three visitors.

2. Apologies

Valerie Alcorn, Helen Amuarridin, Anne Lavery,
Sean Lavery, Alison Livingston, and Aileen Sheridan.

3. Welcome from the Chair

Veronica welcomed everyone to the meeting, she extended a warm welcome to our speaker Gary McDonald, Business Editor of the Irish News.

4. Business

Veronica encouraged members to consider volunteering for the Committee, this is an important role within the organisation. To promote inclusivity, we particularly welcome men to come forward. Please speak to Veronica or any committee member for further information.

5. October Speaker

We are delighted to welcome a local man born and bred, Gary McDonald. Gary has been business editor of the Irish News since January 2000, having previously spent nearly four years as editor of Ulster Business magazine.

He began his career in journalism straight from school as a trainee reporter with the Banbridge Chronicle in 1979, before moving to the Ulster Star in Lisburn in 1986. He went on to serve as editor of the Mid-Ulster Mail in Cookstown between 1989 and 1996, after which he became editor of Ulster Business magazine. Following a brief spell in Public Relations Gary had a period as Ireland sub-editor of the Press Association before moving to the Irish News.

As for hobbies, he has played the Highland bagpipes competitively since the age of 14 and Gary along with family members play with the McDonald Pipe Band. This was founded in 1977 in memory of the late David McDonald (Gary's grandfather) who played at the Battle of the Somme.

Aside from his role at the Irish News, Gary currently edits the Ulster-Scots newspaper, which is published 10 times a year and has a circulation of 38,000.

The Irish News was founded in August 1891, it was originally a Broadsheet paper, it became Berliner and then in 2005 followed the trend and became compact size. Gary enthralled us with how the print industry had changed over the years and while hard copies of newspapers are in decline, there is a new focus on digital news. He presented us with circulation figures and anecdotes from the world of journalism.

Veronica thanked Gary for his very enlightening and entertaining presentation.

6. Interest Groups

Interest Group information is detailed in the Newsletter, Veronica reminded us of the history trip on Friday 17th November to Benburb Priory. There will be a guided tour of the priory and castle. The cost is £7 per person and as usual travel will be by car share, please meet at Tesco's small car park at 10:00am. For further information about the History Group contact Margaret Murphy.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be the Christmas Party on Tuesday 12th December 2023. There will be food, fun and a Table Quiz so come along and enjoy the festive spirit!