



**Befrienders**  
**HIGHLAND**



# **The Wee Blether**

**Spring 2023**

**30**  
**Years**

**1993 ~ 2023**

Improving lives throughout the Highlands for  
the last 30 years, through the  
power of friendship...



## **Message from Susan White, Executive Director**

Sadly, I have had to make the difficult decision to retire from Befrienders Highland at the end of March, so this will be my final message to you as Executive Director. My parents live in the south of England, and, as both are now in their 90s, they are needing more care and support, so that will be my priority going forward. However, I will remain as a volunteer and member of the Fundraising Sub Group, so hopefully you will still see me around and about at events and suchlike. Alison and Carol will be taking on aspects of my role, with the support of Keith, and I have every confidence that they will do a great job.

Whilst we have managed to secure some additional grant funding for 2022-23, there remains a big budget deficit, which means that our efforts at fundraising are vitally important to restore some of our organisational reserves. Thank you so much to those people who have joined in our **30FOR30 campaign**, raising money through crafting, cold water swimming/dips, baking and selling shortbread, running, and training for more endurance/athletic events like the marathon and Loch Ness Etape.

In January, we had the support of a professional film maker, Chris Dixon from Studio Firth, who has helped us to create a promotional film, to illustrate to funders and donors the value of the work that Befrienders Highland does every day of the year. Chris loaned us all the equipment and donated his time and expertise freely as a volunteer, and we are so grateful to him for doing this. The final editing process is still ongoing, but a massive thanks to Chris and all the friends and volunteers who came forward to participate in the filming.



So to sign off, I'd like to say a sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone at Befrienders Highland, who has supported me, guided me, and kept me smiling throughout the past 5 years. It has been a pleasure to get to know you all, and this is not goodbye, but farewell, until our paths cross again.

*Susan*

Write to us at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT  
Or call us on 01463 712 791



## Memory and Carer Update Spring 2023

Things have been steady on the Memory and Carers service and Carol and Allana have been busy with referrals and making new matches as well. It is lovely being able to get out and about and meet people again and both Carol and Allana are looking forward to hopefully getting the chance to meet with more Friends and Carers over the coming months too.

There was great excitement at the end of February on the Memory and Carer service when Carol became a Grandma to grand-daughter Sadie. Mum, Dad and baby Sadie are all doing well.



Sadie has also become the youngest person to 'sign-up' for the **30FOR30 campaign** which will see her Mum, Dad or Grandma walking every day with Sadie in her pram for 30 days!

We are sure Sadie will bring some joy to people she meets on her travels, but she will also be raising much needed funds for Befrienders Highland at the same time. Why not join Sadie and raise some funds for Befrienders highland with your own **30FOR30 Challenge?**

For more information on how you can be involved, please visit <https://www.befriendershighland.org.uk/fundraising/30-for-30k> or email: [margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk)

## Fundraising News



Hello everyone!

It's Spring already and lots of new opportunities to get involved with fundraising at Befrienders Highland...!



### 30km for 30 Event April 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

We would love for you to join us on our new exciting charity challenge coming up soon! Help us raise vital funds by taking on our 30km walk, jog or run around stunning Inverness. There is the option to enter solo for the whole distance or in teams of 3 (3 x 10k each), we also have a junior 5km challenge!

The event will start and finish at An Talla, Dochgarroch with the Junior Challenge starting at Torvean and finishing at An Talla. The route follows the canal right to the end to the sea lock with the scenic views over the Beauly Firth, heading back into Inverness for a loop around the river then making your way back along the canal for your medal. The official route can be found here <https://www.komoot.com/tour/987871302?ref=wtd>

**To take part** you can simply pay an entry fee to any of our races, or opt to not pay an entry fee and fundraise to the minimum amount of the entry fee but we would love it if you could raise as much as you possibly can. There is also the option to do both!

Entry fees are 30km Solo Entry £30, 30km Team Entry £60, Junior 5km £12. For the 30km Solo and Team Races entrants must be over 16.

To enter go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/30km-for-30k-with-befrienders-highland-tickets-479792160267>

**We also still have 2023 places for the Baxters Marathon on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.** Contact me to find out more.

If you would like to get involved in fundraising in our 30<sup>th</sup> year I would love to hear from you!

Margaret

[margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:margaretgrant@befriendershighland.org.uk)



### Are you free on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April?

We're looking for volunteers for our **30km for £30k** Event!

If you'd prefer not to fundraise but would still like to get involved, we'd love to have you along to help on the day.

If you are free for an hour or more, and have any questions please get in touch, we would love to hear from you!

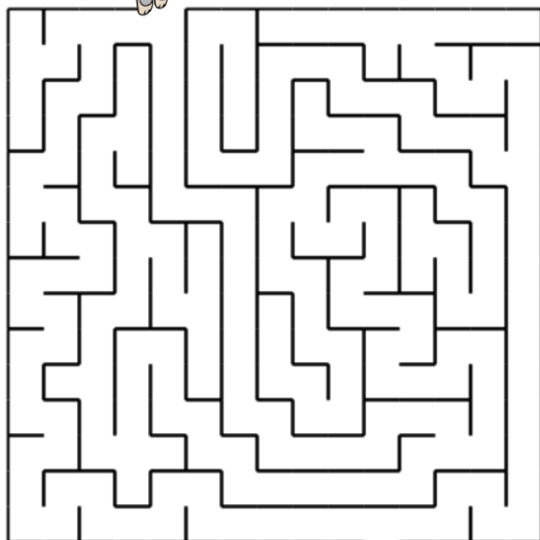
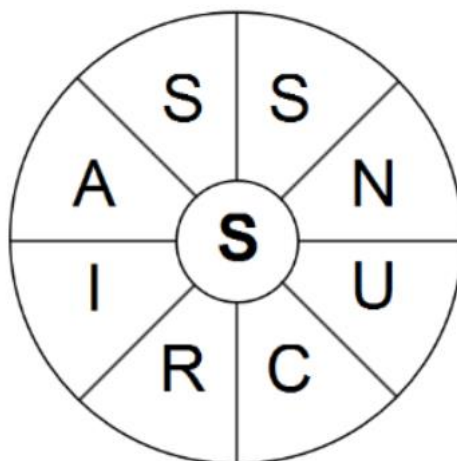
Please contact [jopage@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:jopage@befriendershighland.org.uk) or speak to your coordinator. Thank you!



# PUZZLE CORNER

nsseu hin \_\_\_\_\_  
 iarpl \_\_\_\_\_  
 aseert \_\_\_\_\_  
 brbiat \_\_\_\_\_  
 adlifodf \_\_\_\_\_  
 bnoir \_\_\_\_\_  
 bawniro \_\_\_\_\_  
 oslboms \_\_\_\_\_  
 ipcinc \_\_\_\_\_  
 usbb l \_\_\_\_\_

**NARCISSUS.** Try and make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter **S**.



The Easter Bunny needs to find his way to the carrots – can you help?!

Fill in the grid with the letters F, L, O, W, E, R, B, U and D, making sure no letter is repeated in every row, every column and within each mini grid.

r	l		o		e	f
			u			w
b			w		l	
		e	u	b		l
o	b		l	f	e	
	l	d	e			b
l			o		f	
			r			e
e	d		b		l	u

(You'll find all the answers on the last page!)



## Message from Keith Walker, Convener

As I write, we're experiencing what I hope is the last cold blast of winter. The sunny days are wonderful, but the sub-zero temperatures limit our enjoyment of it! By the time you're reading this, I hope we're able to enjoy the first breaths of spring air and all the promise of lengthening days that come with it.

Excitement is building for another reason too, as we'll soon be attending the Highland Heroes awards, at which Befrienders Highland is one of three finalists for Charity of the Year and our volunteer Bill Whyte is a finalist for Volunteer of the Year. Whether we win or not (and that news will be elsewhere in this issue of the Wee Blether), it's a great honour to have been nominated amongst other wonderful charities and volunteers.

On a more challenging note, the charity sector has been facing an increasingly difficult funding climate. The economic problems the whole country is living with both increases the need for all charities and limits the money that's available to us all. At



Befrienders Highland we're not immune to the effects of that, and we'll be working hard to make the most of the funds that we are able to attract. All of that makes our own fundraising activities more important than ever, and our **30km for £30k** run/walk/jog event on 30<sup>th</sup> April promises to be a wonderful focal point for that.



On the theme of our **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary** this year, we'll be hosting a celebratory Civic Reception at the Town House in Inverness. You can let us know if you'd like to join us on the evening. However, please note that places are limited and, if over-subscribed, we will have to draw names, in the essence of fairness. I'll hope to see many of you there!

Finally, and sadly for us, our Executive Director Susan will be retiring at the end of March. It's been a privilege to have worked with her and to have benefitted from her inspiring leadership. Thank you Susan. I know you won't be a stranger and will remain with us as a volunteer. Enjoy your retirement!

Keith



SAVE THE DATE!

IN CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF  
BEFRIENDERS HIGHLAND...!

JOIN US FOR A CIVIC RECEPTION AT  
THE TOWN HOUSE, INVERNESS

If you would like to attend, please email  
[admin@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:admin@befriendershighland.org.uk) or  
speak to your Coordinator





## **Exciting update from Befrienders Highland, Caithness!**

Thanks to a micro grant from Tannach & District Community Council (local Caithness Fund), we have been able to provide additional group activities for our friends and volunteers.

### **Sushi making masterclass**

Nibis, one of our volunteers, kindly offered to take on the role of volunteer tutor and she demonstrated the art of sushi making. This was an opportunity for everyone to get “hands-on” experience and create their own version of sushi from a range of ingredients. A total of 14 people took part in the classes including Catherine, the Mental Health Coordinator based in Caithness.

Everyone enjoyed the chance to have a chat and a cuppa whilst learning a new skill which was both interesting and educational – and delicious!

### **Fundraising**

We have also been chosen as one of the charities in the Tesco Community Grant scheme (Wick store) and are looking for members of the public to support us by dropping their blue tokens into the Befrienders Highland in-store collection point from 1st April. This much appreciated funding will enable us to organize further group activities or a bus trip for friends and volunteers in the coming months.



*Head chef and volunteer tutor, Nibis, showing everyone how it's done!*



*Volunteers and friends busy having fun making their own sushi under the eagle-eye of Chef Nibis!*



*The finished product... delicious!*

**Write to us at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT  
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## Other news....

### Easter online Quiz

Everyone is welcome to join the next online Quiz!!!



Since 2020 we have been regularly hosting a short online quiz which has proved popular with some dedicated attendees. These are hosted in early evening to accommodate the needs of most people. All you need to do is download the free zoom app and have a pen and paper. This is an opportunity to socialize from the comfort of your own home safe in the knowledge that you are meeting others in a safe, confidential and informal manner. Join us on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April at 6.45pm**,

Contact [catherinepatterson@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:catherinepatterson@befriendershighland.org.uk) (or your coordinator) and a secure zoom link will be sent to you. You don't need to be a quiz expert, just the willingness to get involved and have some fun!



### April is Stress Awareness month...

If you sometimes feel overwhelmed, make sure you take some time out to look after your own mental health.

There's lots of information and advice available online at [www.stress.org.uk/national-stress-awareness-month/](http://www.stress.org.uk/national-stress-awareness-month/)



**If the spring weather hasn't quite reached us yet and you're stuck indoors, why not try a colouring challenge...**

### Laughter is the best medicine...

Why is the letter 'A' like a flower?  
Because a 'B' comes after it!

Does February March?  
No, but April May!



Why are waterbeds so bouncy?  
Because they're filled with spring water!

What can you find in the middle of April and March but not at the beginning or end of either?  
The letter 'R'





Over the 30 years of Befrienders Highland, there have been many changes along the way; some big, some small. The last big change was moving to a Recovery model of Befriending, and that has been really successful. This year, we are likely to see more changes ahead, as we are looking at different ways of doing things in the future because our present costs are unsustainable in the current funding climate. We need to look at ways to support as many people as possible through Befriending, to reduce the number of people on our waiting lists, and to cope with the increased demands we have for our service following on from the pandemic.

Some suggestions we are thinking about include putting a time limit on befriending matches, creating a Befrienders Highland supporters group so that people can stay involved in the organisation even if they don't need a match any more, asking people who have long term friendships to think about moving to an unsupported friendship, or even thinking about having group supervision sessions for our volunteers, so that they can get ideas and support from each other, as well as from their coordinator. New volunteers are also being asked to do a survey about their experience of our training, so we can see if we need to make any further changes.

Maybe you have some bright ideas or suggestions that we haven't thought of though? Sometimes the best solutions come from the people who use the service, rather than those of us who are caught up in the delivery and day to day busy-ness!

If you have any suggestions, we would love to hear from you! Please email them to [info@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:info@befriendershighland.org.uk) or contact your coordinator, who can pass on your ideas for discussion. The deadline for ideas is the end of April 2023. We would like to have a Conversation Café to discuss any ideas and changes that are proposed, and a date will be set after the deadline if you would like to be involved in the discussions.

Write to us at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Academy House, 42 Academy Street, Inverness, IV1 1JT  
Or call us on 01463 712 791

## Fundraising Update from Malcolm

In the last Wee Blether, I told you about my new goal which was to participate in the [Loch Ness Etape](#), an iconic 66-mile bike race around Loch Ness, to raise funds for Befrienders Highland.

As a biking newbie, I thought I'd better get some training in, so I managed to get hold of an exercise bike for those wintry days that I felt were a bit too risky to be out on the road. Sitting on an exercise bike in my shed doesn't inspire me much so I thought I would challenge myself to do 30km for 30 days on it to give me the motivation I needed to get the training done.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, I started my **30x30** challenge. The first few days seemed to go pretty well, after a couple of weeks I was feeling it a bit, but I persevered. I made it to Day 30 and felt pretty good about the whole thing. It seemed almost habitual by the end of the challenge.

If I hadn't given myself that challenge, I know I wouldn't have gotten out there every day; it was the goal that gave me the motivation. There were definitely days/evenings that I didn't want to be there, but I had made the commitment to do it, so I ignored that protesting voice and just got on with it.



I seemed to have formed a bit of a biking habit now. I've been out every day, either on the exercise bike or the gravel bike since the start of January. This has made me feel more confident about the Etape now. I've found the **30x30** challenge a great way to improve fitness and increase confidence in something I wasn't great at doing.

If anyone wants to sponsor me then please donate to the **30FOR30** fundraising page. <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/BHL30for30>

If you feel you would like to see some progress in your life, please take up a 30-day challenge. It doesn't have to be a physical activity; it can be anything. Over the 30 days you will experience change and seeing the progress will have a positive impact on your life.

Many thanks, Malcolm – Befrienders Highland Co-ordinator



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## Mental Health Update

Spring has sprung! Despite the snow we've had, it is heartening to see the flowers pushing their way through – it is always amazing that every year they have the strength to keep coming back. It's something we could all take some strength from, that there can be better times ahead with the right environment and support.

Here at Befrienders, we provide support, encouragement and, most importantly, friendship, and with these attributes, along with people's willingness to engage with us and set themselves achievable goals, we help people to live their lives better and flourish just like the crocus, snowdrop and, at some point, the daffodil.

The Mental Health Team continues to be inundated with referrals, which shows us our service is still very much in demand almost 30 years on from its inception. The staff are continuing to work hard to process people and match people as quickly as possible but, as has been the case over the last few years, our list is lengthy and we can only apologise for keeping people waiting longer than we would like. We have not forgotten about you, but if you are worried about the length of time you've been waiting please contact our office and we'll be happy to reassure you regarding your referral.

We hope you are enjoying the longer daylight hours and getting out and about on the better days for some fresh air and exercise – hopefully the warmer days are not too far away!

*"I wandered lonely as a cloud  
that floats on high o'er vales  
and hills, when all at once I  
saw a crowd, a host, of golden  
daffodils; beside the lake,  
beneath the trees, fluttering  
and dancing in the breeze."*

- WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



### **Would you like to join any of our new Befrienders Highland Groups..?**

Befrienders Highland has a couple of new groups starting up, weekly on a **Wednesday morning at our Inverness office.**

**10am – 11am Craft Group: crystal art, colouring, card making**

**11am – 12pm Recovery Group: Decider Skills, goal setting, stress management**

Everybody is welcome! Join us for the groups, or just drop in for a brew and a blether!

If you fancy coming along, or if you have any questions regarding the groups, please contact Malcolm on 07917 793 131 or [malcolm@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:malcolm@befriendershighland.org.uk), or contact the office 01463 712 791 and leave a message.

We'll look forward to seeing you 😊

# Write On

**Befrienders Highland creative writing group** Issue 3 Spring 2023

## Introduction

Hello all, please enjoy issue 3 from our creative writers at Write On. Our member Graeme recently had the opportunity to be a contestant on BBC Radio 2 show Popmaster. He was inspired by his experience to write a poem. Please see below.

And our member Susan came across some handy writing tips Stephen King wrote for all aspiring writers. We hope you find them useful and inspiring!



## Poetry

**THE DAY I WAS ON POPMASTER**  
by Graeme

Resting in bed trying to manage my health  
When I should be challenging myself  
So, the email I wrote to Radio 2  
In the hope someone will take a view  
The phone calls arrive, the questions done  
On Monday morning my time will come

Sleepless night as anxiety bites  
Just wanting to get the answers right  
The people so lovely, Ken says hell  
It will be soon my time to go

The first question I know, away we go  
Thanks to Ken, I feel more relaxed!  
No longer feeling full of angst  
27 points my final score  
So shocked and delighted I could roar

Not good enough to win  
But my opponent so good  
Losing not feeling as bad as it could

I can wear my one year out t shirt with pride

Thanks to the wonderful team my anxieties subside  
So lovely and helpful it is true  
No longer am I speaking faster  
The day I was on Popmaster





# Write On



## Tips from Stephen King on writing selected by Susan

1. If you want to be a writer. You must do two things above all others. Read a lot and write a lot.
2. Stories consist of three parts. Narration, which moves the story from point A to point B. Description, which creates a sensory reality for the reader. Dialogue, which brings characters to life through their speech.
3. The situation comes first. The characters - always flat and unfeatured to begin with - comes next.
4. Whether a vignette on a single page or an epic trilogy like The Lord of the Rings, the work is always accomplished one word at a time.
5. The most interesting situations can usually be expressed as a what - if question.
6. The best stories always end up being about the people rather than the event.
7. With a passive verb, something is being done to the subject of the sentence. The subject is just letting it happen. You should avoid the passive tense.
8. Talk, whether ugly or beautiful, is an index of character.
9. Description begins in the writer's imagination but should end in the readers.
10. The road to hell is paved with adverbs 'Loudly.....Nastily....Slowly...Kindly... ...'
11. Never use 'Emolument' when you mean 'tip.'
12. Set a daily writing goal. As with physical exercise, it would be best to set this goal low at first.

To submit your poetry, reviews, short stories, nonfiction, and any other creative writing you would like to share, please send to: [alanduncan@befriendershighland.org.uk](mailto:alanduncan@befriendershighland.org.uk) or Befrienders Highland, Write On, Academy House, Academy Street. IV1 1JT





# Time to cook...



## Pasta and Peas

### You'll need...

- 450g peas, fresh or frozen
- 220g pasta (shells or twirls)
- 50g grated parmesan cheese, plus more to serve
- 500ml vegetable broth or water, plus more if needed
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 tbsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- salt & pepper, to taste



### This is how you make it...

1. Warm the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the diced onion and cook until the onion has softened (about 5 minutes).
2. Add the peas and cook, stirring frequently, for about 1 minute.
3. Then add vegetable broth (or water), raise the heat, bring to a boil and stir in pasta and salt (approx. 1 tsp and then I adjust the seasoning at the end).
4. Reduce the heat, cover with a lid, and cook your pasta in the starchy water. During the cooking time, you need to stir often until the water is absorbed, otherwise, it will stick to the bottom. The water should barely cover the pasta (add extra water gradually only if needed).
5. Cook until ready but still firm to the bite. Turn off the heat and stir in freshly grated parmesan cheese. Adjust the seasoning if needed.
6. Serve immediately with a drizzle of olive oil, black pepper, and extra parmesan cheese (optional). Enjoy!

## Spring Minestrone Soup

### You'll need...

- 2 leeks (white & pale-green parts only)
- 2 carrots (diced)
- 2-3 medium potatoes (diced)
- 1.5l vegetable broth
- 1 bunch asparagus (sliced)
- 140g frozen peas
- 400g can cannellini beans
- 2-3 tbsp fresh dill
- 1 tbsp white miso



### This is how you make it...

1. Prepare leeks: cut in half lengthwise, rinse well and slice.
2. In a large stockpot over medium-high heat, sauté leeks and carrots for 5-6 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, dice potatoes.
4. When leeks are softened, add potatoes and broth to stockpot. Bring to a boil then reduce heat, cover, and simmer for approx. 8-10 minutes.
5. Slice asparagus into approx. 3cm pieces and roughly chop dill.
6. When potatoes are just tender, add asparagus, peas, beans (rinsed and drained), and fresh dill. Stir and return to a light boil. Simmer for 3 minutes or until asparagus is tender.
7. In a small bowl, whisk miso with approx. 50ml of warm water to thin and remove clumps. Add to pot and stir.
8. Add salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy!

*Bon Appetit!*



## **‘Spring Strength’**

Alison Campbell, March 2023

Snow has fallen this week and it's cold  
Then out comes the sun and then we're told,  
‘The days are stretching, isn't it great?,  
Summer is coming, not long to wait’.

Brighter days they may be for most,  
But for some the darkness is not lost.  
These are the flowers who struggle to shine,  
Who need extra love, attention, and time.

So just like the snowdrop and the crocus,  
BHL folk offer friendship and focus  
To those not wanting a longer day,  
But want to move forward in some sort of way.

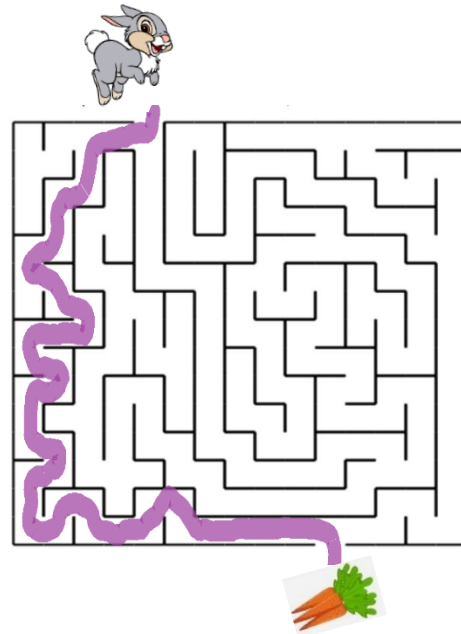
They help them to grow and thrive as a person,  
Deserving of hope, of love and affection.  
Enabling achievement, strength and courage  
To break through their soil, their life then to  
manage.

Strength is sourced from many places,  
The sun for the flowers, kindness from strangers  
The power of friendship is hard to beat  
So grab it when offered, it's never too late!



## PUZZLE CORNER ANSWERS

nsseuhin	Sunshine
iarpl	April
aseert	Easter
brbiat	Rabbit
adlifodf	Daffodil
bnoir	Robin
bawniro	Rainbow
oslboms	Blossom
ipcinc	Picnic
usbbl	Bulbs



r	l	w	o	d	b	e	u	f
f	e	o	r	u	l	b	d	w
b	u	d	f	w	e	r	l	o
d	w	e	u	b	o	f	r	l
o	r	b	w	l	f	u	e	d
u	f	l	d	e	r	o	w	b
l	b	u	e	o	d	w	f	r
w	o	f	l	r	u	d	b	e
e	d	r	b	f	w	l	o	u