



## Cupar & District u3a

Monthly Open meetings: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Speaker: John Fletcher, Reediehill Deer Farm, Auchtermuchty

Subject: A Life with Deer

Our speaker, John Fletcher described his talk as “taking stock”. John’s doctoral research was carried out on Rum observing red deer. He described how the annual growth of antlers and the reproductive behaviour of the deer is synchronised with the growth of grass resources. The result is that deer, with little or no inputs, can be as productive as sheep, whereas the farming of the latter requires a considerable subsidy.

John and his wife had bought the small hill-side farm of Reediehill, above Auchtermuchty. They had brought over a few young deer from Rum and accustomed the deer to the field environment. At Reediehill the Fletchers planted hedges and copses of trees and raised a commercial herd. They exported live-deer, they marketed cuts of venison, and they opened the Scottish Deer Centre. For setting up deer farming in Japan John received the Queen’s Award for Export in 1990. The advent of Brexit however closed the export of deer into Europe and with that the viability of deer-farming in the UK.

John is increasingly concerned about the ongoing loss of biodiversity driven by climate change. At Reediehill Farm he is allowing natural bio-diversity processes to flourish. He is mindful that “The trees, and grassland will bring diversity and above all beauty. From all that comes contentment and great riches.”

16<sup>th</sup> May 2026