

# IN TOUCH NOVEMBER 2025

Dear all

Welcome to November edition of In Touch, my last as your Chairman.

This month we will be having our AGM at the start of the November meeting, which will be followed by our speaker. We are having to make a few changes in the way we run our u3a to comply with the requirements of our parent body the Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission. The main changes involve making assurances that all groups, meetings and activities are carried out safely, and considerate of all the members' well being.

The committee does know that these principles have always been followed by all members and group leaders in the many years that sgu3a has been in operation. However we all now have to demonstrate that this is the case; I do realise that many may find this just a paper creating exercise, but unfortunately we do need to comply with the regulations.

There is also a need to update the Constitution, which will then need the approval of the membership. This was planned for our forthcoming AGM, but approval from the Charity Commission has not arrived in time, so we will be seeking approval from the membership for the new Constitution early in the New Year.

I do apologise for sounding too serious on this matter, as the committees which I have been part of over many years have always wanted all members to really enjoy all the activities they participate in, and as such maintain the u3a theme of "learn, laugh, live".

Best wishes

*Roger Laidler*  
*Chairman*

# u3a

**Shaftesbury  
and  
Gillingham**

## **Forthcoming Events**

**TALKS AT THE  
CHARLTON  
REMEMBRANCE HALL**

**6<sup>th</sup> November  
Justine Salkeld  
"The Work of the Dog's Trust"**

**4th December  
Alan Jenkins  
"The Royal Visit that went Wrong  
(and it wasn't my fault!)"**

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Copies of this newsletter can be  
found on our website:  
<https://sgu3a.u3asite.uk>

## Next u3a Talks

Monthly open meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at The New Remembrance Hall, Charlton, Shaftesbury, Dorset, SP7 0PL - opening at 10.00am for 10.30am start. A small charge of £2 per person is made, to cover the cost of speakers and refreshments.

Open meetings provide an opportunity to have a coffee, socialise and to enjoy presentations from invited speakers. Non-members are welcome to attend one open meeting, free of charge, to sample what is on offer.

Details of speakers for the coming year can be found on our website; the next two are shown below.

### **6th November—Justine Salkeld—The Work of the Dog's Trust**

Dog's Trust is the UK's largest canine welfare charity, known prior to 2023 as the National Canine Defence League. This talk will share the world of Dogs Trust, covering topics like key moments in our history, an insight into rehoming with Dogs Trust and your local Rehoming Centre, our free services, our campaigns and outreach projects, as well as information on the variety of ways you can support us.

Justine is the local Supporter Relations Officer for Dogs Trust, based out of the Salisbury Rehoming Centre. Her role within the Dogs Trust is focussed on the amazing supporters, providing a point of contact for anyone with queries about the charity, the work we do, and how we help both our two and four legged friends.

### **4th December—Alan Jenkins—The Royal Visit that went Wrong (and it wasn't my fault!)**

Alan will give an informative and amusing talk on the complex Police planning that goes behind a Royal Visit. He will then discuss a Royal visit he both planned and commanded - where everything that could go wrong did!"

Alan completed 32 years Police service in both Merseyside and Dorset Forces. He was involved in the Toxeth Riots, Miner's Strike and countless football disorders. He served at various stages in: Public Order, Dog Section Training, Counter Terrorism, the 2012 Olympics and of course Royal Visits!"

Barbara Burns  
Mark Carter  
Valerie Cockell  
Robin Collins  
Nigel Grugeon  
Annette Leat

David Matten  
Paula Matten  
Angela Mattingly  
Ian Repper  
Sandra Repper  
Rosalind Wardell



## Group News

### Church Visits

*sgu3a Churches/Places of Worship Group*

*Visit to St Micheals Church Mere,  
November 13<sup>th</sup> 2025, 10.30am*



Parts of this church building date from the 11th century, and it attracts many visitors because of its interesting architectural and historical features. Renovations in 2024 included re-gilding of tower pennants and clocks, as well as stone work repairs.

We will start the visit at 10.30am with tea/coffee and cake and then one of the church wardens will provide a guide to the history of the church and its life within the Mere community. As with all our visits no charge will be made for coffee & cake but donations to the church will be welcome.

As parking can be a problem in Mere, I suggest you park in the cemetery car park (Post code BA12 6DH). At the clock tower (by the co-op) turn down the road by the Angel Cafe, sign posted cemetery. The car park is about 100yds on the rhs. Follow the footpath by the glebe field to the church.

Please let me know if you wish to come on this visit.

*Roger Laidler*

roger46laidler@talktalk.net

### Natural History

Gutch Pool Farm is a 140 acre farm in the north east of Dorset with a regenerative approach to



farming, working with nature to raise their flock of Dorset Down sheep which are 100% grass fed, restoring the landscape and increasing biodiversity. We had an informative tour by farmer/owner Rachel Hall.



We started our walk crossing a bridge over the River Loddon, a tributary of the River Stour where otters have been seen



previously, and passed through a field of chicory. We saw agroforestry, a plantation of trees including elm, oak, elder, hornbeam, birch and willow. The flock of sheep will be grazing here.

A wetland corridor has been created restoring the landscape, slowing down the water off the farm and creating a habitat for wildlife such as deer, voles, great crested newts, frogs, toads and herons.



Wessex Water have set up a flume to measure the water and analyse nitrates and phosphates.

There is absolutely no chemical input on the farm.



We walked through ancient woodland and saw a medieval burial mound, a kestrel, red kite and deer.



Hedges have been laid in the traditional way by Paul Lamb, and hay bales will provide grazing for a neighbouring farmer's cows. We crossed a field overlooking the surrounding counties with a natural pond at the bottom. Sloes grow in the hedgerow.

Back to the barn for delicious refreshments and a visit to the farm shop, selling what is produced on the farm including apple juice, preserves, 'Pasture For life' certified meats, organically tanned sheepskins, wool throws and knitting wools.

A good time was had by all.

*Jenny Page*

## **Ballroom and Latin Dancing**

I have reluctantly decided to close down the Ballroom/Latin Dancing group. The evening before our October session, I received a message from our instructors to say that they had been called to Paris to represent Great Britain in a competition. This was the second time they had let us down, and at extremely short notice, and that sort of unreliability simply isn't acceptable. Nor did we have sufficient numbers to make the group financially viable, so I was planning to review at the end of the year and close at that time if things hadn't improved. I'm very sorry to have disappointed those who had enjoyed their sessions.

*Barbara Hurst*

## Shared Interests

I have arranged a guided tour of the Ancient Technology Centre in Cranborne on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, beginning at 11.00am. This is an extraordinary site where six full-size reproductions of historical buildings have been constructed. It is primarily an educational centre but has occasional open days and accommodates groups such as u3a when volunteers are available. Therefore, this is a rare opportunity for those with an interest in history to visit this fascinating place and hear the story of how it came about. The charge is £5 per person. If that sounds like something you might be interested



in, take a look at their website: <https://ancienttechnologycentre.com/the-site> and let me know immediately if you would like to come. As ever, I encourage ride-sharing, and some of us will be having lunch afterwards at the Cranborne Garden Centre if you'd like to join us.

*Barbara Hurst*

barbara@pbhurst.com

01747 825646

## Walking Group

On a slightly overcast morning, eleven people turned up for our October walk. After crossing the road into the field opposite Gillingham library, we headed off towards the railway arch. Then, when we reached a grassy farm track, this was the start of the crooked mile, with hedgerows either side and there were a number of birds flying about. The clouds broke up, and the sun appeared. Further on, to the walkers' delight, a number of walnuts were found in the road.



Passing Eccliffe Mill we went on to Withywood, where Paul had arranged for one of the rangers, Kevin, to give the group some information about the wood, and what had been found there, including water vole and evidence of beaver activity.



Our next walk on 4th November has been kindly planned by Claire Watson and Claire McKinney.

Meet at the White Horse, Stourpaine, DT11 8TA, at 10.15 a.m. Lunch is booked for 1.15pm.

Distance: 5.11 miles. No stiles but some gates. Walking trainers or boots recommended.

We will walk towards Durweston, past a weir, up the Jubilee Trail and through Blandford Forest, back down again and back along the trailway. There is an option of a much shorter walk if some want to go back down (along Norton Lane) but you'll get to the pub a lot earlier. The ascent up the Jubilee Trail is gradual, with lovely views of undulating hills and through beech, ash & oak woods. There will be a very nice view of the Stour as we approach the trailway.

If this appeals to you and you are not a member of our friendly group, please message me via the web site.

*Ian Watson*

## **Possible new French Group**

Jenny Jackson is looking into the possibility of setting up another French group but is concerned about the level that members might be expecting. She has suggested an informal get together from 10.30am on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November, at her home, so that anyone interested, no matter what their French is like, can come along for a chat about how this could work. If you would like to attend, please contact Jenny for the address or for further information: [jenny46jackson@gmail.com](mailto:jenny46jackson@gmail.com) or 07714 810141.

## **Photography**

One of our newer members is considering setting up a Photography Group and we would like to know whether there is enough interest. The Digital Photography group that had existed for many years closed down recently but there could be scope for a fresh start. If that is something you might like to pursue, can you please let me know.



*Barbara Hurst*

[barbara@pbhurst.com](mailto:barbara@pbhurst.com)

01747 825646

## **A Quiz Group for sgu3a?**

Here's a message from Lesley Frost:

Many moons ago, Shaftesbury U3A (Gillingham was not in our title then, although many of our members did come from there) we were urged to enter a team in the then annual quiz run by Michael and Mildred Nunan to raise money for Cancer Research UK. We entered a team, and won! The following year we entered two teams -and won! Then someone had the brilliant idea of forming a new group for U3A – and the Quiz Group was formed.

The Group was very ably run by Mary Belcher. Whenever we heard of a group fundraising for charity, be it the local Village Hall, or a well known national charity wanting to raise funds Mary would get in touch with the local organiser to find out the details such as: the name of the charity, venue for the quiz and parking facilities, date and time, cost of the ticket per person and what refreshments would be provided (nibbles, bring your own drink, a cooked meal, fish and chips etc).

She would then circulate the group membership with the details, and to ask if they would like to take part in, or would not attend, that particular quiz. Once she had the details she made up the teams and confirmed the arrangements with all concerned, - including the quiz organisers!

Venues for the quizzes were all within the sgu3a 'catchment' area, and many members shared transport. All enjoyed the evenings – or they wouldn't have joined in! And there's no doubt that over the years the Group made a substantial contribution to charitable causes. If only Mary, an accountant, would you believe, had made a record of our offerings. Alas she didn't.

Unfortunately the Group came to an end as we entered the Covid era. But! – Would anyone like to revive it? If so, let Barbara Hurst know: [barbara@pbhurst.com](mailto:barbara@pbhurst.com) 01747 825646

## Note from The Treasurer – SGU3A payments

Starting in November Lloyds Bank are introducing charges for their previously free Charity bank accounts. The impact on us will not be too significant but processing cheques will be quite expensive. It would be helpful if payments to us for subscriptions, trips and events could be made via bank transfer rather than by cheque if possible. Our bank details are: -

Account name – Shaftesbury and Gillingham U3A

Sort code – 30-99-08

Account Number – 22925860

We will explore other ways of taking payments for those of you not comfortable with online banking.

*Peter Hurst*



## Gillingham Community Christmas Lunch



If you, or someone you know, will be alone on Christmas Day, or could do with a bit of festive cheer, North Dorset Rugby Football Club will be the place to be. We can promise a warm welcome, a full traditional Christmas dinner, entertainment and even a gift to take home, all for free! Transport can be provided for anyone who lives in the SP8 area. Booking is essential and you can either pick up a booking form at Gillingham library, Gillingham Town Hall, St Mary's Church, Gillingham Foodbank and Coffee & Canines, or you can download the form from:

[https://threeriversgillingham.org/?page\\_id=321](https://threeriversgillingham.org/?page_id=321)

Please help us reach out to anyone you know who might like to join us.

*Barbara Hurst*

# The Probus Club of Gillingham



## What Exactly is Probus?

This is a question I posed some 12 years ago myself, shortly after moving to Gillingham from Essex. It was only on retirement from teaching that I came across this organisation and put simply, it is an international organisation, open to retired **PRO**fessional and /or **BUS**iness people. Although an international organisation, each club operates entirely independently from one another, as best suits the needs of the members. **Gillingham Probus is a men's club, as were the original clubs dating from the mid 1960s, but there are many of the thousands of Probus clubs throughout the world which offer mixed or ladies-only membership.**

We knew nobody from the area when we arrived in Gillingham, but 12 years on I am fortunate to be this year's Chairman of Gillingham Probus. For me, and many other 'incomers' to the area, this club has proved to an invaluable means of getting to know the people of Gillingham and its surrounding environs. After 12 years, I am pleased to say that I still have many of the same friends I made back in 2013.

Our constitution states that we provide social contact in a non-political and non-sectarian nature through meetings, lectures and outings. We meet fortnightly on a Tuesday at the North Dorset Rugby Club. We share a coffee and biscuits before a talk given by a professional speaker, covering a wide variety of subjects. Further discussion often takes place at the bar following the talk! We organise monthly meals at various local pubs and hotels, as well as an interesting array of visits. Another popular and recent development is a weekly meet up at the Old Brewery on Friday mornings. Here we have lively discussions on wide ranging topics along with stories from our various past histories.

Although we are the Probus Club of Gillingham, we attract members from Shaftesbury and all surrounding villages. Sadly, Shaftesbury and Sturminster Newton clubs closed recently, so we always welcome new members. Our excellent website – <https://probus-gillingham-dorset.org.uk> provides ample information about us and how to join. So, if you are looking for stimulating company and long-lasting friendships, look no further.

**John Owen – Chairman, Gillingham Probus.**



# ***UNDER WINTER STARS***



***A Choral Celebration of Light, Hope, and Wonder***

Join us for an evening of beautiful seasonal choral music and audience carols, including music by **Bob Chilcott** and **Philip Stopford** with a special item featuring the World Premiere of "Stars" by **Stephen Deutsch**

***ST JAMES' CHURCH, SHAFTESBURY,***

***SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2025***

***7.30 P.M. (DOORS OPEN AT 7.00 P.M.)***

Tickets available at the door, £12, or from Novia, High St Gillingham, £10 in advance, Cash Only

Tickets may also be booked from Carole Brooks 07572786416

Glass of wine/soft drink included

Charity Number: 1164535

| Group                      | Date                          | Leader                              | Website                    |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Art Appreciation           | Monday 2-3.30pm – week 2      | Gil Watkinson                       | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| BSO                        | To be arranged                | Jennifer Day                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Canasta I                  | Monday pm – weeks 1 & 3       | Hazel Baker                         | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Canasta II                 | Wed p.m. – weeks 2 & 4        | Barbara Watkinson                   | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Canasta III                | Thursday am – weeks 2 & 4     | Pam Hooker                          | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Churches/Places of Worship | To be Arranged 4 visits/year  | Barbara Hurst                       | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Embroidery                 | Wednesday – pm week 2         | Lesley Frost                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| French for Fun 1           | Tuesday/fortnightly - 10am    | Ron Beard                           | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| French for Fun 2           | Wednesday /fortnightly-pm     | Chris Stotesbury                    | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Garden Interest            | Monday – am - week 2          | Irene Gordon                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Genealogy                  | Monday – pm – week 4          | Liz Greenway<br>Valerie Hencken     | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| German Conversation        | Wednesday - fortnightly-pm    | Robert Light                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| International History      | Wednesday–am week 3           | Richard Sims                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Italian - Beginners        | Tues 10am–11am weekly         | Alison Rigby                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Italian Intermediate       | Tues 2-3 weekly               | Alison Rigby                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Italian Intermediate Plus  | Tues 11.15am–12.15am weekly   | Alison Rigby                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Knitting/Crafts            | Tuesday – pm – week 2         | Irene Gordon                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Literature                 | Mon-am on Zoom<br>Weeks 1 & 3 | Peter Rolfe                         | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Lunch Club                 | Friday – week 4               | Michael Pittman                     | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Mahjong                    | Friday – 2pm weeks 2 & 4      | Marion Pace                         | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Medieval World             | Monday 10.15am – week 4       | Denise Sims                         | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Music for Pleasure         | Thursday – pm – weeks 2 & 4   | Eileen Haddleton                    | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Natural History            | Wed - 10-12.30pm – week 2     | Janet Fenton                        | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Philosophy                 | By arrangement                | Chris Spencer                       | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Poetry & Play Reading      | Thursday – pm – week 1        | Janet Botterill                     | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Reading Group              | Friday 11-12pm – week 1       | Colin & Anne Marsh                  | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Really Useful Group        | Anyone who would like to help | Barbara Hurst                       | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Scrabble                   | Friday – am - weekly          | Jill Page                           | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Shared Interests           | Varied                        | Barbara Hurst                       | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Spite & Malice             | Thursday – 2.00pm – Week 3    | Sue Walker                          | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Table Tennis               | Thursday 2.00pm - weekly      | Elizabeth Lewer<br>Chris Stotesbury | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Walking                    | Tuesday - 10:30am - week 1    | Ian Watson                          | <a href="#">click here</a> |
| Writing for Pleasure       | Mon 10.30am Weeks 2 & 4       | Peter Rolfe                         | <a href="#">click here</a> |