

IN TOUCH

APRIL

2026

Dear All

This is a request to you all as we are currently looking for volunteers to join our committee and help support the running of our activities.

Several of our committee members have served their full time in the next year and it would give the new members a chance to shadow. Please contact any of us if you're interested in getting more involved, your time and ideas would be greatly appreciated.

We also need someone to assist with setting up the sound system as a back up to Michael Pittman who cannot always be here. This role does not mean joining the committee, and full guidance will be provided.

It's been a successful year so far, with strong participation, great community spirit, and well attended events. Thank you everyone who has contributed their time and energy to make it such a positive start to the year.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter.

Libby Hague-Holmes
Chairman

Next u3a Talks

u3a

Shaftesbury and Gillingham

Forthcoming Events

TALKS AT THE
CHARLTON
REMEMBRANCE HALL

2nd April

Trevor Ryder

The Making of the Dorset Landscape

7th May

Christopher Lunch

Why Stop and Look at a Statue?

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Copies of this newsletter can be

found on our website:

<https://sgu3a.u3asite.uk>

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.

Trevor Ryder-

The Making of the Dorset Landscape

From the point of view of the Geologist, Dorset is included in that part of the British Isles which is often referred to as the Wessex Basin. With the oldest rocks in the county dating from a mere 200 million years ago, it is one of the newer additions to the geological jigsaw which is the British Isles. For most of that 200-million-year period, what is now Dorset lay beneath a warm, tropical sea; what we now call "rocks" were soft layers of sediment. It is only in the last 40 million years that remote tectonic forces lifted Dorset from the seabed, creating the template for the landscape we see today.

Trevor, a graduate in both Geography and Geology, spent his career teaching both subjects in Devon. Following his move to Somerset, he now leads the Somerton U3A Geology group. One of his main interests is the relationship between Geology and scenery which is the theme of this talk.

Christopher Lunn-

Why Stop and Look at a Statue

"From the Arctic to the Great Fire of London to a railway tragedy and an assortment of Kings, Queens, politicians, military men, literary folk and other oddities, I use my research of over 400 outdoor statues in London to argue that every statue is worth looking at. Although I use London statues as my examples, the themes I cover are relevant to all statues."

After a false start at medical school, Christopher Lunn spent most of his working life in the Army, with service in the UK, Northern Ireland, Germany, Norway, Gibraltar, Bosnia and the Czech Republic. He retired from the Army in 2005 and then spent 6 years on a project to develop affordable housing in Cornwall. He is now involved with several local charities and lives on the River Yealm at Newton Ferrers, South Devon.

Caroline Gibson
Geoffrey Harding
Rosemary Harding
Kim Hastings
William Moore
John Phillipson
Sylvia Riddett
Christine Scott
Anne Smith
Elizabeth Snow



Group News

New Ballet Group?

One of the earliest groups to be formed in Shaftesbury & Gillingham u3a was a Ballet Group. How would they do that on a limited budget? "Easy," said the leader, who lived in a small one-bedroomed flat. "I have a collection of videos of various ballets. We watch one, and then discuss it over tea and biscuits." And that is exactly how the group continued for many years.

Maybe now, with our much broader membership, there is someone who enjoys and knows about ballet, and has a modern television, who can access recordings of performances and would be willing to get together and form a new Ballet Group. If that's something you would be interested in, please get in touch with Barbara Hurst: barbara@pbhurst.com or 01747 825646

Lesley Frost

Rummy

Do you fancy playing Rummykub? We can arrange a time to suit you and there will be tea and cake, so if you're looking for a lovely social activity, please get in touch.

Jean Wilkinson

Jeanwilko1937@gmail.com

Literature

We've come to the end of our gloomy look into the future with 'Brave New World' and 'Island'. Now for a Shakespeare relish, with 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' and 'The Tempest' plus lots of stuff on the playhouses, the player groups, the audiences and all things theatre-related in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

Peter Rolfe

Petanque

I currently captain and organise the Town Twinning Players and we play through the summer on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings at The Youth Club in Coppice Street, Shaftesbury, when we don't have away matches.



area.

If it is of interest to u3a members, you would be welcome to come along to one of our sessions and have a go. If you were interested enough to form a team, I am sure you would be welcome to enter the league.

We field two teams in the local Nadder Stour Petanque League, which is a local social league involving various clubs and pubs in the



I am happy to discuss and advise with any interested players, but alas not in a position to form a separate u3a group at the moment.

William Moore
07888639476

Garden Interest

On 9 March 33 members of the Garden Interest Group enjoyed an afternoon at Sherborne Garden Centre. Louise Burks, one of the founders of the garden centre, gave us an interesting and informative talk about how the garden centre plant up their hanging baskets and how they sow seeds in vast numbers to sell to the public. The talk was followed by a free cup of tea. We were then free to browse the nursery and shop with the benefit of a 25% discount on all purchases. The Garden Interest Group belongs to the garden centre's Gold Club and the afternoon was a benefit of this membership.



The next meeting of the group is a plant/seedling/cuttings swap and will take place on Monday 13th April at 10.30 at the New Remembrance Hall in Charlton. If you are interested in joining the group me.



Barbara Watkinson
bwatkinson1@sky.com.

BSO Concerts

The concert on 18th March began with Haydn's lovely *Cello Concerto in D*, under the baton of Karl-Heinz Steffens and featuring a stunning virtuoso performance by German cellist Julian Steckel.



Haydn composed his second Cello Concerto in 1783 for Antonín Kraft, a cellist in the Esterházy court orchestra, and it was thought to be the work of Kraft until an autographed manuscript came to light in 1954. Julian's performance demonstrated the full range of this beautiful instrument, and especially its capacity for lyrical expression. It was absolutely spell-binding.

The journey from death to life, from tragedy to triumph, lies at the heart of Mahler's *Fifth Symphony*, which followed the intermission. Composed in 1901-1902, this is a monumental work by any standards. Its most distinctive features are the trumpet solo that opens the work and the horn solos in the third movement.

It's fair to say that opinion was divided on this work, with some members absolutely delighted and others finding it difficult. But nobody could fault the performance itself. At 70 minutes and with so many demands on the orchestra, it was incredibly powerful, and left both performers and audience alike, absolutely breathless.

Barbara Hurst

Photography

March's meeting was our first at our new home at The Walnut Tree Inn and as a location it is an absolute joy.

We were a bit down on numbers for various reasons, nevertheless we had a number of interesting and far reaching discussions. From the selection of 'Daily Chore' pics we found ourselves investigating the make up of fluff in a tumble dryer, what a freshly sharpened kitchen knife looks like really close up (and why you should wash it after sharpening!), admiring bathroom fittings, wondering at motion blur in ironing and checking out the galvanised tinwork in a stable.

As we had a bit of time to spare we also had a look at some interesting AI fakes of 1940s New York City scenes, seeing how they didn't quite 'fit' as well as a few excellent pictures from the lens of Vivian Maier.

We're back at the Walnut Tree on Thursday 16th April when we will be reviewing 'Signs of Spring' - of which we have quite a lot recently at last.

Robin Collins

Spanish

Regrettably, the Spanish group has been closed down due to the leader's ill-health. I'm sure you all join me in wishing Maya a speedy and full recovery. I will notify you when the group resumes.

Barbara Hurst

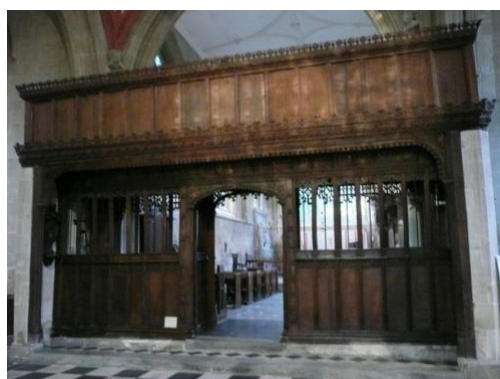
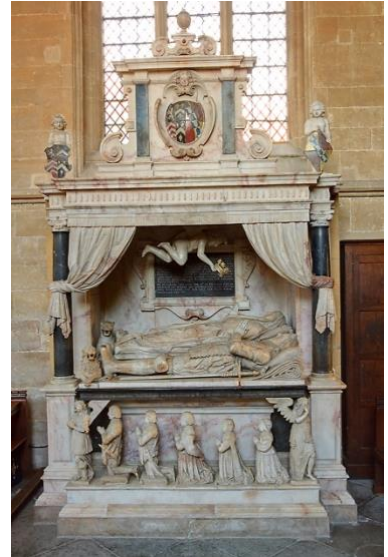
Church Visits

On a glorious Spring Day, a dozen of us made our way to Edington to visit the Priory Church of St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints, and what a wonderful visit was in store for us. We were greeted with refreshments, before church warden Sheila told us a little of the church's history then took us on a guided tour.



This splendid, Grade 1 listed, church began life as a chantry established in 1351 by local lad William, who had risen to become Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor of England. This foundation developed as a house for Augustine Canons (known as Bonshommes) was built next to the church, which led to the

enlargement of the church into the large mini-cathedral we see today. As the parish church, it miraculously survived the dissolution of the monasteries intact, leaving us a wealth of 17th century



treasures to discover. Highlights are the painted ceiling, the beautiful mosaic surrounding the font, the elaborately carved screen, the stunning Columian altar cloth (kept covered to protect it) and the alabaster and marble Lewis Monument, which depicts all the members of the Lewis family. What was remarkable about everything we saw was the extraordinary quality of the workmanship; it is a church well worth a visit.

Our lunch at The Three Daggers, nearby, rounded off a wonderful day out, with excellent company.

Barbara Hurst

Canasta 3

Canasta has been running for over a year now with everyone enjoying learning and playing the game together. We have, however, lost a few members due to them moving away from the area and would welcome any new people, beginners or experienced players to join our friendly sessions on the second and fourth Thursday mornings each month.

Pam Hooker

Really Useful Group

This is a group of incredibly useful people who allow us to contact them whenever we need a hand with running our u3a. Some have specific tasks that they carry out on an occasional basis, while others are willing to chip in whenever needed. If you would be willing to help out from time to time, I'd be delighted to add you to the group: barbara@pbhurst.com

As you will have seen in Libby's message, we currently need additional stewards for our monthly meetings. Stewards ensure everything is set up appropriately and closed down securely afterwards. There is a rota and each steward could expect to help perhaps twice a year.

We also need someone to help set up the sound system for our monthly meetings, as back-up for Michael Pittman. Training is provided, and Peter Hurst is always on hand if needed. If you would like more information, please contact Peter: peter@pbhurst.com

Barbara Hurst

Community News

Trading Standards

Illegal Tobacco/Vape Shops

In 1948 more than 8 in 10 men, and 4 in 10 women, smoked tobacco in some form. By 2011 smoking prevalence had reduced to less than 2 in 10 people. Last year this figure reduced to around 1 in 10 people.

This is due to many factors including public health campaigns, the indoor smoking ban of 2007, standardised tobacco packaging, increasing taxation and improved assistance to stop smoking. The Government's aspiration is to reduce smoking to 1 in 20 people.

A small number of traders run shops on the high street selling illegal tobacco and vapes. Typically, these shops sell a mixture of smuggled non-duty paid tobacco, cigarettes that are not labelled for sale in the UK and counterfeit tobacco designed to look like popular brands. They also usually sell types of vapes not approved for sale in the UK, and which again are not properly labelled. These illegal products are often sold at less than half of their normal retail price, and they are often illegally sold to children who are clearly under 18 years old.

Dorset Council Trading Standards, in partnership with Dorset Police, have been taking robust action against these shops. This includes making test purchases to prove the sale, searching shops and seizing any illegal tobacco or vapes that they find. Trading Standards have also obtained closure orders for some premises, and more are planned. Currently the law only allows a shop to be closed for 3 months, although Government is considering increasing this.

If you believe that such a shop is operating in your local area, or any shop is selling tobacco, vapes or alcohol to children, then please report this to Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.

If you need help to stop smoking visit www.livewelldorset.co.uk/stop-smoking

Come and find out more about

Moldram's Ground Nature Reserve



Tea and home-made cakes available

Saturday 18 April
2.30pm till 5.00pm
at Pen Selwood Village Hall



Come & learn about the history of Moldram's Ground and what you can find there. Find out what has been achieved in the last year by volunteers and Somerset Council rangers.

Contribute to our fund-raising efforts by: Enjoying tea and cake, trying our Cryptic Quiz plus buying pre-owned books about the natural world.

Discover how to volunteer and help improve our Nature Reserve for all.

Today's proceeds will go towards improving accessibility, enhancing facilities and information available at the Ground.



URGENT

Norddis Disability Services urgently needs a new treasurer if they are to keep their shop in Gillingham open. Many u3a members have benefitted from this service over the years and know how vital it is to meet the needs of the disabled, elderly and frail in the community. If you think you might be able to help, or would like more information, please contact Pam Hooker, who is a volunteer there: daveandpam6@sky.com



An Invitation to A Book Launch by Paul Hooley MBE

'GOERING'S SUICIDE'

Tuesday 15th April – 1030am

Gillingham Probus member Paul Hooley, is a British Author, lecturer and former Mayor of Bedford, known for researching and writing on 20th century military history. Much of his work is focused around Wolfe Frank, the Chief Interpreter at the Nuremberg Trials who lived in Mere for three years before his death.

Paul's first book – 'Nuremberg's Voice of Doom' - gave a behind the scenes account of the Nuremberg Trials, while his second book – 'The Undercover Nazi Hunter' - described the life of Wolfe Frank tracking down SS General Karl Wolff.

Paul's latest book, to be published in May this year, is an explosive account of how Herman Goering escaped the hangman and was able to take his own life by swallowing a cyanide capsule somehow smuggled to him in his cell.

You are warmly invited to join Paul at one of Probus' fortnightly meeting at The North Dorset Rugby Club on Tuesday 15th April, where Paul will be giving us a talk about his latest novel – 'Goering's Suicide'.

Current Groups

Group	Date	Leader
Art Appreciation	Monday 2-3.30pm – week 2	Gil Watkinson
BSO Concerts	To be arranged	Jennifer Day
Canasta I	Monday pm – weeks 1 & 3	Hazel Baker
Canasta II	Wed p.m. – weeks 2 & 4	Barbara Watkinson
Canasta III	Thursday am – weeks 2 & 4	Pam Hooker
Churches/Places of Worship	To be Arranged 4 visits/year	Barbara Hurst
Embroidery	Wednesday – pm week 3	Lesley Frost
French for Fun 1	Tuesday/fortnightly - 10am	Ron Beard
French for Fun 2	Wednesday /fortnightly-pm	Chris Stotesbury
Garden Interest	Monday – am - week 2	Barbara Watkinson
Genealogy	Monday – pm – week 4	Liz Greenway Valerie Hencken
German Conversation	Wednesday - fortnightly-pm	Robert Light
International History	Wednesday–am week 3	Richard Sims
Italian Advanced Conversation	Tues 3.15-4.15	Alison Rigby
Italian Complete Beginners	Tues 10am–11am weekly	Alison Rigby
Italian Intermediate	Tues 2-3 weekly	Alison Rigby
Italian Intermediate Plus	Tues 11.15am–12.15am weekly	Alison Rigby
Literature	Mon-am on Zoom Weeks 1 & 3	Peter Rolfe
Lunch Club	Friday – week 4	Michael Pittman
Mahjong	Friday – 2pm weeks 2 & 4	Marion Pace
Medieval World	Monday 10.15am – week 4	Denise Sims
Music for Pleasure	Thursday – pm – weeks 2 & 4	Eileen Haddleton
Natural History	Wed - 10-12.30pm – week 2	Janet Fenton
Photography	Thursday 10.00-12.00 week 3	Robin Collins
Philosophy	By arrangement	Chris Spencer
Poetry & Play Reading	Thursday – pm – week 1	Janet Botterill
Reading Group	Friday 11-12pm – week 1	Colin & Anne Marsh
Really Useful Group	Anyone who would like to help	Barbara Hurst
Rummy	By arrangement	Jean Wilkinson
Scrabble	Friday – am - weekly	Jill Page
Shared Interests	Varied	Barbara Hurst
Spite & Malice	Thursday – 2.00pm – Week 3	Sue Walker
Table Tennis	Thursday 2.00pm - weekly	Elizabeth Lewer Chris Stotesbury
The Quizzers	By arrangement	Bill McIntyre
Writing for Pleasure	Mon 10.30am Weeks 2 & 4 via	Peter Rolfe

For availability and further information, contact the group leaders via the website:

<https://sgu3a.u3asite.uk/groups/>