

IN TOUCH

MAY

2026

Dear All

Spring is firmly with us as we welcome the May edition of our u3a In Touch, a time when both our garden and our curiosity are in full bloom. This month's programme reflects the energy of the season, with a rich variety of group activities, and opportunities to learn something new or revisit a long-held interest. I encourage members to explore beyond their usual circles—trying a different group can be both refreshing and rewarding. Our continued strength lies in the willingness of members to share their knowledge and time, and I would like to thank all our volunteers who make this possible. As we look ahead to summer events, your ideas and participation remain as important as ever in shaping what we offer. I hope you enjoy this issue and find plenty within it to inspire, inform, and connect.

Libby Hague-Holmes
Chairman

u3a

Shaftesbury and Gillingham

Forthcoming Events

TALKS AT THE
CHARLTON
REMEMBRANCE HALL

7th May
Christopher Lunn
Why Stop and Look at a Statue?

4th June
Paul Barwick
WPC Yvonne Fletcher
And the Search for Justice

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<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.

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.

Paul Barwick

WPC Yvonne Fletcher and the Search for Justice

In this tragic tale we recall the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher, a young Police Constable from Semley who was killed by agents of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi as she stood on duty outside the Libyan Peoples Bureau in April 1984. We remember the events and the aftermath that reverberated around the world. We try to uncover the failure of British Intelligence that led to this terrible tragedy.

Paul is a retired Police officer after 34 years service with a career background in the national intelligence and security arena. He is a registered public speaker and is also a London Tour guide.

Peter Smith
Sarah Ward



Group News

Music Appreciation



Instead of playing our music indoors, nine of us went on an outing to Poole to take part in another of our favourite things, eating and chatting. The view from the clubhouse was outstanding; boats, beaches and Brownsea island in Poole harbour. We were very lucky with the weather, drivers and transport were outstanding. Simon and William did a superb job navigating and arriving right outside the door so I didn't have to be pushed too far in my 'buggy'.

Although we love our music, these trips go in our memory box because we learn something else about our fellow group members, getting to know each other in different ways. I must mention that the food was superb, and a glass of wine more enjoyable - much better than a cup of tea and a biscuit.

Someone thought we ought to do this every month, but perhaps this wouldn't count as educational! But we might go again before Christmas.

Unfortunately, the group is full at present, but there is a waiting list.

Eileen Haddleton

Chess

Do you enjoy playing chess? I've had an enquiry and wonder whether there is sufficient interest to form a Chess Group. Of course the frequency, time and place would depend on its leader, but please let me know if this is something you would be interested in.



Barbara Hurst

barbara@pbhurst.com

Shared Interests

Are you on your own, and missing out on things you'd like to do because it's not much fun doing them alone? Or perhaps, like me, you have a partner who doesn't share your interests. Either way, this group is for you. Whatever you want to do, and it could be anything—festivals, sporting events, tourist attractions, exhibitions, concerts, theatre—there are bound to be people in the group who would love to join you.

How it works is that you let me know the details and the date (or the possible dates you could go) and I'll put the word out among group members. Then I'll put you in touch with others who would like to go so that you can make arrangements about transport. Even if you have no immediate plans, why not join the group so that you will be notified whenever someone is looking for company for an outing?

Barbara Hurst

barbara@pbhurst.com

Poetry & Play Reading

This year we have read *Arcadia*, in homage to Tom Stoppard who died in January. He was a local resident and attended a performance of *Albert's Bridge* with music at Shaftesbury School some years ago. *Arcadia* is a challenging play, with the action taking place both in 1809 and the present day, seamlessly. Its young female protagonist is, like Ada Lovelace, a mathematical genius. The Royal Institution, in 2006, said it was one of the best science-related works ever written. We enjoyed reading the play and the discussion around it.

After that we chose as a theme for our poetry reading, Fools and Follies, with a nod to April Fools Day. I doubted that we would find anything but our members came up with some wonderful examples for us to delight in.

Our next Playreading will be *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. Some of the group appeared in this play when we took it to Shaftesbury's twin town, Lindlar, in Germany, a long time ago. We are looking forward to re-visiting the play.

Our group continues as strong as ever with a couple of new members replacing those who have left.

Janet Botterill

Spanish Conversation





We are delighted to welcome back Maya Reyes with her Spanish group which focuses on conversation, dialogue practice and short stories. The next session will be at 10.30am on the 19th May. This is not for beginners, as no tuition will be given, but if you want to polish up your Spanish, please contact Maya: mayadeyes@gmail.com.

Garden Interest



We had 20 people attend the plant swap in early April. There was a large variety of plants and we enjoyed a very sociable meeting.

Barbara Watkinson

Theatre Visits



For our first theatre trip on April 15th, 35 members went to Salisbury to see *Morse: A House of Ghosts*, a lively drama based on the Inspector Morse series.

The next outing will be to Salisbury again to see an adaptation of Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana*. It will be the matinee performance on July 15th; the usual pickups are in Gillingham & Shaftesbury. The cost of the coach has increased, so the total cost will be around £50 per person, this will reduce if we get more than 35 people on the coach. Please contact me if you are interested in this trip.



I am also hoping to go to Southampton on Oct 8th to see the musical *Moulin Rouge*, again for the matinee performance.

Roger Laidler

roger46laidler@talktalk.net



Café y galletas

Café y galletas meets weekly on a Tuesday morning at a home in Donhead St Andrew. This is not a teaching forum but is run by all those who attend and contribute. It gives an opportunity for like-minded people who have a love of the Spanish language to meet and practice speaking.



The use of social media such as You Tube Audible, Kindle and phones allow us to work as a group to understand the rules of the Spanish language. This, along with group reading of Spanish short stories hopefully adds to our existing knowledge.

The atmosphere is one of being relaxed with friends with a cup of coffee and perhaps a biscuit or two!

Anita Adams

anitaaliceadams@gmail.com

BSO Concerts

The group has now come to the end of our 2025/26 concert visits. Our second year has grown in appreciation of the Wonderful BSO based in Poole; we attended seven concerts, all very varied and very enjoyable. Last week the concert was entitled *Organ Symphony* and included the very well known Saint-Saens *Symphony No 3*, which is usually just an organ recital. Chloe Van Soeterstede, the conductor's, interpretation of this piece for full orchestra along with the organ was simply out of this world. But that is not all, Cedric Tiberghien, the solo pianist, played us the exuberant Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No 1, then, afterwards, calmly brought us peacefully back with a serene piano piece by Bach. Many concert goers returned to the coach, parked right outside the Theatre door, saying the best concert of the season,



(actually many say this after each concert). Live music has so much to offer both musicians and less knowledgeable participants like myself.

This is the end of our second season and there will be a third – if you would like to join the group send me an email via the website. You don't have to attend all the concerts just the ones you prefer. The discount that we can get on the tickets goes a long way towards paying the coach fare, two pickups in

Gillingham and two in Shaftesbury, so there will be one near you.

Jennifer Day

International History

The international History group continues to cover a wide range of topics. Since last summer we have devoted four sessions to American history (looking at the Marshall Plan, McCarthyism, foreign policy failures since 1945, and, most recently, the American break away from Britain two hundred and fifty years ago); two to German history (on the nineteenth-century unification and the post-unification period); and two to the Industrial Revolution (examining why it happened first in Britain and the recently renewed controversy over the importance of slavery as a cause). We have also considered the development of British hegemony in India, and we have, at one member's suggestion, ventured as far as the steppes of Asia to find out something of the history of the Uyghurs. As can be seen, we take international history to include not just relations between states but also the history of other countries, and we are prepared to extend our coverage even further if members wish. So our next meeting will focus on tariff controversies in British history.

Sadly, our extensive examination of the history of the Middle East in past years has not encouraged us to be optimistic about the current situation.

Richard Sims

Photography

With Spring busting out all over our members have been out and about capturing this all too short



season which we reviewed at our April meeting. We enjoyed some interesting discussions on the merits of 'to drop or not to crop' as well as the benefits of including people in location shots where practical. The group continues to grow - hopefully we will be up to 10 by May which is very encouraging. Included are a few shots from the Signs of Spring.



Robin Collins

Shaftesbury Arts Centre

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Viva Italia!

A fun celebration of Italian language and culture

Brush up your Italian with an evening of film, music, conversation and games. Suitable for all levels from beginners to fluent speakers.

Free glass of prosecco and nibbles.

In the **Phoenix Room**

Box Office: 01747 854321

Mon-Sat 10.00am-12.30pm

11-13 Bell St, Shaftesbury, SP7 8AR

www.shaftesburyartscentre.org.uk



Event

May 8th

7:30

Tickets from £5.50



Gillingham Singers Spring Concert

"Music, all powerful"

Saturday

16th May 2026

7:30 pm

Join us for an evening where music lifts
the heart and stirs the soul.

Rutter's Requiem and other choral
works performed in the sacred beauty of
St Michael's Church, Mere



Please contact Carole on 07572 786416

Tickets on sale: **NOVIA**, High St, Gillingham
and **SPROUT AND FLOWER**, Mere

Refreshments included

Ticket price: £10 in advance £12 on the door

gillingham-singers.org
Charity Number: 1164535

The Gillingham Singers prepare for their Spring Concert in May



The Gillingham Singers 2025 Spring Concert

The Gillingham Singers Spring Concert will take place at St. Michael's Church, Mere on Saturday May 16th, starting at 7:30. Particularly notable is that the choir will be giving the UK première of *Hallelujah*, by the Ukrainian composer and teacher, Evgenia Marchuk. Evgenia herself describes the music as embodying “*faith, hope, and aspiration.*”

Following the choir's première of *Stars* last November, we will once again feature a new work written especially for us by the Blandford-based composer, Stephen Deutsch. *Whoever Seeks* is a catchy, secular work for SATB and piano and we are excited to be giving the piece its first ever performance.

We have included a number of 19th century works in our programme, *Departure* by Mendelssohn as well as a Amy Beach's, *Peace I leave with you*, are delightful to sing. *Nobody Knows*, a modern setting by our own Steve Hale (bass), will also feature.

John Rutter is possibly best known for his carols that have become for some, part of their Christmas celebrations. His *Requiem*, written in the mid 1980s, takes us down a very different musical path and will be our focus for the second half, with soloists coming from the choir itself.

We are very grateful to the vicar and the Friend's of St Michael's who accommodated us at quite short notice and The Friend's of St Michael's host Ensemble Hesperis, an award winning Quartet from London, on May 3rd – more information can be found at: <https://friendsofstmichaels.org/>

Gillingham Singers Tickets:

Tickets purchased in advance are £10. A glass of wine or soft drink is included. Please contact Carole on 07572 786416 or via email carole.brooks049@gmail.com to reserve tickets.

Tickets are also available from:

Novia Stationery, High St, Gillingham SP8 4QT and The Sprout and Flower, The Square, Mere BA12 6DJ

Richard Nye – MD of The Gillingham Singers

CURRENT GROUPS

Group	Date	Leader
Art Appreciation	Monday 2-3.30pm – week 2	Gil Watkinson
BSO Concerts	To be arranged	Jennifer Day
Café y galletas	Tuesday mornings weekly	Anita Adams
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
Spanish Intermediate	Fortnightly, currently flexible	Maya Reyes
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
Theatre Visits	Matinees, 3-4 times per year	Roger Laidler
Writing for Pleasure	Mon 10.30am Weeks 2 & 4 via	Peter Rolfe