

IN TOUCH SEPTEMBER 2026

Dear All

It is lovely to welcome everyone back to u3a after the summer break, and also to welcome our new members. I do hope you have enjoyed the very hot sunshine, (there was no need to go abroad in search of good weather!), and had some relaxation and time with your family and friends.

As we begin a new season, there are plenty of interesting activities, groups and opportunities to look forward to and I hope you will join in, catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Let's make the coming months an enjoyable and rewarding time for everyone.

Libby Hague-Holmes
Chairman



Shaftesbury and Gillingham

Forthcoming Events

TALKS AT THE CHARLTON REMEMBRANCE HALL

3rd September

David Boag
Nature's Garden

1st October

Dr Peter Guest, FSA MCIfA
The Hinton St Mary Mosaic

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& Gillingham u3a

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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.

David Boag Nature's Garden

Nature owns everything, even your garden! Leave your garden unattended for a couple of months and very quickly you discover nature is taking over. Even in a well cared for garden, wildlife abounds. My camera explores every area of the garden from the garden shed to the little pond and finds so much colourful, unexpected and sometimes unwanted wildlife. Surprises wait in the shed where birds may nest and spiders hide – tiny flowers we call weeds are so beautiful when looked at in close-up. Of course at night the garden becomes a secret playground for nature; badgers, bats, owls and hedgehogs -- So who's garden is it? It could be yours.

David is a wildlife photographer and author, teaches photography to both degree and wildlife illustration students. He has led African wildlife safari trips and been a speaker on cruise ships, as well as having spoken at major conferences for organisations such as the National Trust, the RSPB, British Trust for Ornithology and the Royal Photographic Society.

Dr Peter Guest, FSA MCIfA The Hinton St Mary Mosaic: new insights into an early Christian community in Roman Britain

The unique Hinton St Mary mosaic, on display in The British Museum since 1965 consists of an 8m by 5m high-status tessellated floor with a central roundel showing a man wearing a tunic and cloak in front of the Christogram (Chi-Rho). Scholars have suggested the figure is one of the earliest representations of Jesus Christ from the ancient world, and probably the first to be found on a mosaic. It is one of the icons of Roman Britain and has an important story to tell about the earliest Christian communities in the British Isles. Despite the obvious significance of the mosaic, however, very little is actually known about the buildings to which it belonged, or the people who commissioned it and lived with it. A new collaborative research project led by The British Museum aims to answer the many questions that remain about the mosaic, and to provide a better understanding of its wider context in the history of late Roman Britain. This talk will present some of the ground-breaking results of the recent archaeological excavations at the site that suggests the mosaic adorned the floor of the earliest purpose-built 'church' in Britain.

Dr Peter Guest is an archaeologist and numismatist with over 30 year's experience as a finds specialist, excavator, researcher, teacher and curator. He specialises in the Roman period and is particularly interested in Britannia and the north western provinces, the Roman army and frontiers, as well as Roman coinage and the economy. Author of over 60 publications, Peter has also contributed to various TV and radio broadcasts, including *Time Team*, *Digging for Britain*, *The Story of Wales*, and was historical consultant for Channel 4's *Britain's Most Historic Towns* series.



Ali Adams
Edwin Cox
John Dukes
Derek Gardiner
Joanna Gardiner
Jackie Hart
Elizabeth Ingham
Trish Lever
Scott Maxwell
James Monteith
Jenny Rawlins
Peter White

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO NOTE

The entry fee for our monthly meetings will increase from £2 to £3 from October. Please ensure you bring sufficient money to avoid embarrassment.

We regret that the charge for hard copies of *In Touch* is £6 effective immediately, due to increased costs.

Annual membership remains £12, which represents excellent value.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Obviously, we hope that all our members stay safe and well during their activities with u3a, but in case something happens that necessitates reaching someone to make them aware, it would be a good idea to carry next-of-kin/in case of emergency details in your purse or wallet, and also in your car if you go out on visits. In my case this includes the fact that I have pets at home, which could be crucial during hot weather. I encourage all group leaders to reinforce this message.

Barbara Hurst

HALL STEWARDS

We need a few more stewards at our monthly meetings. The more we have, the less often we will need to call on you, perhaps twice a year. If you attend the meetings regularly and could help with setting up and ensuring the hall is left as we found it, please get in touch with our chairman Libby Hague-Holmes: e.h-h@hotmail.co.uk

ARE YOU A TRAINED FIRST-AIDER?

The committee feels it would be useful to maintain a list of qualified first-aiders, to call on when needed. It would be particularly helpful if we had someone who attends the monthly meetings regularly who could confidently deal with any emergency, especially if resuscitation is necessary. Have you had recent training, or would you be prepared to undergo training if we provided it? We would love to hear from you.

For your information, there is a defibrillator at the nearby football hut.

Barbara Hurst
barbara@pbhurst.com

Group News

NEW GROUPS COORDINATOR

Thank you all for the tremendous support that I have received since taking on the Groups Coordinator role from Barbara. It is exciting that new groups are emerging and you will find some suggestions elsewhere in the newsletter. With the winter months fast approaching, I am wondering

if there would be enough interest in starting a craft group? The embroidery group has recently folded but, I suppose, I am thinking crafts more generally from knitting, crochet, embroidery, patchwork, painting and any other skills, that members can work on together, meeting socially and sharing their knowledge in a warm friendly atmosphere. Of course, someone would have to be prepared to lead and co-ordinate the group.

The u3a does offer financial assistance in the first instance if a venue needs to be hired, but ultimately groups need to be self-funding. This is just an idea, so let me know if it something that you may be interested in.

Jennifer Day
jennifer@farmadmin.co.uk
07970 113467

Group Holidays

We have received this message from a company called Great Days Holidays and wonder whether we might offer group holidays:

My name is Claire, I am the account manager for private groups looking after all the u3a clubs around the country to arrange short breaks and holidays. I wanted to pass on my details to any leaders who arrange tours for your members and to let you know our 2027 Group Travel Guide is now out. We also advertise in the u3a Matters magazine, the latest issue Summer 2026 is on page 20: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/u3a-matters>

Please look at their advertisement, in the section headed Read a Sample Online, and let me know if you think this is something that you would be interested in. We would of course need a leader to organise these trips, so please give that some thought, too.

Jennifer Day

BSO Group

The concert season is upon us again. I have already circulated the information for the first concert on 28th October, *Eastern Odyssey*; the closing date for this concert is probably before the magazine is circulated, but early in September there will be an opportunity to book and join us for the concert on 18th November, *Imperial Majesty*, which was the most popular requested concert when I sent out the voting forms last Spring. Our final concert is on 6th December, *Winter Warmers*, a lovely selection for that time of the year. If this is a group that may interest you contact me via the website.

Jennifer Day

Cups & Conversation

Audrey Cross has suggested forming a new group for people who would like to get together informally to chat over a drink. It would be a great way to meet new people, find out about the area and discuss local or national news, so especially valuable for anyone who recently moved here or whose circumstances have suddenly changed. At this point, we would just like to know whether there is sufficient interest, so please let us know if this is something that you might consider joining, particularly if you could be the group's leader.



Jennifer Day

Church Visits

14 of us headed to Maiden Bradley on 13th August to visit All Saints Church, deliciously cool on a very hot day. Mainly dating from 1385, the oldest parts of the church date from c. 1175 and include what are believed to be the earliest pointed arches in the country. It is mainly known as the burial place of the Seymour family, whose descendents still live in Bradley House, next door, and the Dukes of Somerset.

The most impressive memorial is in the south aisle, a white marble monument by the well-



known Flemish sculptor, Michael Rysbrack, in memory of Edward, 4th Baronet Seymour (1633–1708), though it was not the fine quality of the carving that drew us to it but the hilarious description of the baronet's many attributes, given that he was known to be a truly obnoxious character. Other points of interest are the fine oak box pews and pulpit, both dating from the early 17th century, a beautiful stained glass window, *Sower and Reaper*, by Veronical Whall, and the movement of the turret clock attributed



to the noted clock maker William Monk.

Until 2014 we would also have seen the lead-lined sarcophagus of a Roman woman displayed in the church. This was found in the gardens of Bradley House in 1965 and she was clearly a high status individual, though no grave goods were with her. A plaque marks where she was reburied because the incumbent vicar at that time thought her presence in the church inappropriate.

Following our tour, some of us enjoyed an excellent lunch at The Bath Arms on the Longleat Estate at Horningsham, the perfect end to a lovely day out.

Barbara Hurst

Literature

We had a break in August. Now we're looking forward to finishing our *Shakespearefest* with an overview of the great man's middle and late career, looking too at the way the playhouses developed and changed. Before we move on to other things, we'll share a viewing of *The Tempest*, followed by our usual discussions. It has been suggested that we look next at the work of selected *poets laureate*, starting perhaps with Dryden and coming right up to date. Or perhaps a classic novel like *Jane Eyre*, with an overview of the Brontës. We shall see!

Peter Rolfe

Italian

After a busy year working hard on their Italian, quite a number of members from all three Italian groups got together for a bring and share end of term lunch on 7th July. Thank you to Rosemary for hosting us in her beautiful garden. This was a fantastic way to catch up with everyone, to talk about our progress in learning Italian and our forthcoming summer holiday plans. Many members have attended the more informal Drop-In sessions which have run throughout the summer at Shaftesbury Arts Centre. These take place on a Friday afternoon from 2-3.30pm each week and they will continue in term time. We look forward to starting up the regular u3a groups again in September and either meeting the language for the first time or moving on with our Italian learning journey!



*Ciao e a presto,
Alison Rigby.*

Garden Interest

In July the Garden Interest Group did something a bit different. We visited the gardens of two of our Gillingham members. Over 30 members of the group enjoyed the gardens of Lois and David Wardle and Jenny Jackson.

David and Lois designed their beautiful garden over 30 years ago and it is full of interesting shrubs and plants, vegetables, and ponds, and has sublime views over the countryside. Lois even produced a little quiz for us to spot various plants as we enjoyed the garden.

We then went on to Jenny Jackson's garden. Jenny and her husband moved into their home three years ago and they have completely redesigned their lovely garden in this short time. Everyone really appreciated the work that went into preparing the gardens for the visit. Jenny produced refreshments, including home made cakes and biscuits. I thank them all very much for the privilege of allowing us into their gardens.

Barbara Watkinson

Shared Interests

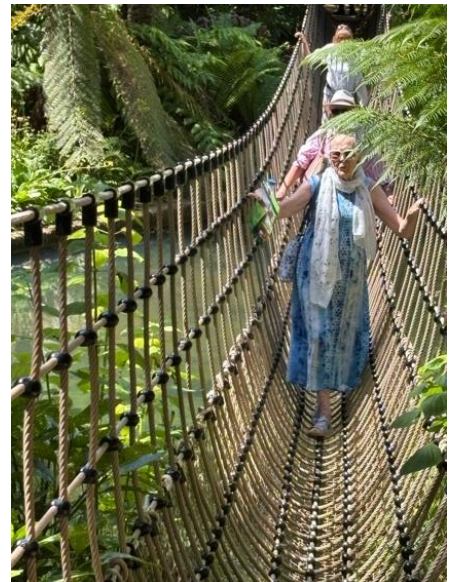
Undeterred by the hot weather predicted that day, a group of us made our way to Abbotsbury to visit the famous Sub-tropical Gardens on 7th July. As it happened, the sea breezes and plentiful shade kept us very comfortable and we had a thoroughly enjoyable day out.



Having fortified ourselves with refreshments at the café upon arrival, we took a circular route round half of the 30 acres before lunch, taking in the Victorian Garden, West Lawn, Sin-Himalyan Glade and much else, including the dubious pleasure of crossing a lake on a rope bridge. At one point, we broke out of our loop to climb the steep slope to the viewpoint which offers spectacular vistas along Chesil Beach to Portland in one direction and Bridport in the other. Well worth the climb.

The climate and topography make this a plantsman's paradise, with beautiful water features to enjoy. But we were confused to find acid-loving hydrangias, in this nationally important collection, living right alongside alkali-loving ones. A very helpful gardener provided the answer. He told us that the site is at a junction between clay and greensand, with pockets of soil that allow plants to flourish in unexpected places.

After lunch, which was frankly disappointing, we tackled the other half of the garden, beginning with a cage of kookaburras and a workman's bothy, then on to the lily ponds, the Mediterranean Bank, the Arid Border, the Australasian Garden, the South American Garden and the Old Orchard. The variety is marvellous and there's plenty of seating along the way.



I enjoyed the garden so much that I returned with visitors a few weeks later. On that occasion, we took a picnic, which I would recommend in view of the poor fare on offer for lunch. The café is good for coffee and cakes, however, so don't let that put you off. This is a must-see destination for any garden lover.

Barbara Hurst

Photography

In the run up to our August meeting our members were out and about snapping Bridges and Arches in all sorts of locations from just round the corner to sunny Italy. The result was a very varied interpretation ranging from the Leaning Tower of Pisa to a caterpillar. The current group is now full and a waiting list is building to create a second group, so if you are interested please make contact via the web site. While you are there you can browse the on-line albums of some of our recent topics.



Promoting u3a

Our splendid team of volunteers from the Really Useful Group had a very productive time at the Gillingham Rising event held on the Town Meadow on 11th July. Throughout the morning we had a steady stream of visitors to our stall, including Simon Hoare MP, left. I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who helped, turning out on a very hot day when I'm sure they would rather have been indoors.



This was the first event for the newly-formed Gillingham Rising, whose aim is to revitalise the town centre. I will be watching for further opportunities for us to promote the benefits of u3a at their events.

Also, plans are being drawn up already for the re-introduction of the biennial fete that used to take place on Town Meadow until recently, with the first due in July 2027. You can be sure that u3a will be there.

If you would be willing to let us call on you whenever we need a little extra help, do let me know and I'll add you to the RUG.

Barbara Hurst
barbara@pbhurst.com

Community News

Can You Help? A Critical Gillingham Community Service Needs More Volunteer Drivers

Every week, Gillingham Area Car Link helps people across the SP8 postcode area who have no transport of their own to attend essential medical appointments. Our volunteer drivers provide a lifeline, taking residents to GP surgeries, hospitals, dentists, opticians and other healthcare appointments in Gillingham and further afield.

Demand for our service has never been greater. Sadly, for the first time in our history, we are having to turn people away because we simply don't have enough volunteer drivers to meet the need.

Could you spare a few hours to help? Even if you can't volunteer yourself, perhaps you know someone who would enjoy making a real difference to people's lives.

Volunteering with Gillingham Area Car Link is completely flexible. You decide how often you're available, how far you're happy to travel and which journeys you accept. Whether you prefer short local journeys or longer distances, you can offer one or two days a week, or just a few regular days each month, every journey you make helps someone get to an important medical appointment. Volunteer drivers receive a tax-free mileage allowance of 60p per mile to help cover their costs.

Our volunteer drivers often tell us that they get just as much from the experience as the people they help:

"Just a few hours of my time each week makes a real difference to so many people."

"The people I drive are always so friendly and appreciative. For many of them, this service really is a lifeline."

"With public transport so limited in many of our villages, this service is invaluable."

If you enjoy driving, meeting people and making a real difference in your local community, we'd love to hear from you.

To find out more about becoming a volunteer driver, visit www.gillinghamcarlink.org.uk, email walkerphilsu@gmail.com or call 01747 824645.

Just a few hours of your time could help someone get the care they need.

Gillingham Walking Festival

29th August -
5th September 2026

– A Week of FREE Walks –



gillwalkersarewelcome.chessck.co.uk/WalkingFestival



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& GOOD VIBES

SUNDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
10AM - 3PM THE TOWN MEADOW
HELLO@GILLINGHAMRISING.CO.UK



HOVER THROUGH PANTOMIME

**A magical Christmas
adventure at The Hovercraft
Museum**

9 November – 13 December 2026

THIS CHRISTMAS, DISCOVER THE HOVERCRAFT MUSEUM TRANSFORMED INTO A WORLD OF PANTOMIME MAGIC. JOURNEY THROUGH THE MUSEUM AS ICONIC FAIRY TALES AND MUCH-LOVED PANTOMIME STORIES COME TO LIFE WITH SPECTACULAR THEMED DISPLAYS, BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED CHRISTMAS TREES AND PLENTY OF FESTIVE PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES.

EXPLORE BRITAIN'S INCREDIBLE HOVERCRAFT HERITAGE WHILE ENJOYING A FESTIVE EXPERIENCE UNLIKE ANY OTHER. PERFECT FOR FAMILIES, CHRISTMAS OUTINGS AND ANYONE WHO LOVES A LITTLE FESTIVE MAGIC.

**Included with normal
museum admission**
Hovercraft Museum, Lee-
on-the-Solent, PO13 9NS
9 November – 13
December 2026

STEP ABOARD... AND
LET THE STORY
BEGIN.

APPLAUSE

OH YES
IT IS!



CURRENT GROUPS

Contact group leaders via the website: <https://sgu3a.u3asite.uk>

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
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
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
Scrabble	Friday – am - weekly	Jill Page
Shared Interests	Varied	Barbara Hurst
Spanish Intermediate	Fortnightly, currently flexible	Maya Deyes
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