

BLANDFORD & DISTRICT u3a

Charity no: 1092984 - Website: <https://u3asites.org.uk/blandford/home>

SPRING 2024

WELCOME TO THE SPRING NEWSLETTER and a chance to catch up with news and events around B&D u3a – don't forget to also check the website for additional event news and group information.

MEANDERINGS FROM THE CHAIR!

We're well past the shortest day of the year and the daylight is beginning to stretch into the evenings. Trees are breaking into bud and, if it ever stops raining, we have the promise of a beautiful spring. We held a wine tasting event in January . . . thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. There is a more detailed report on the evening later in this newsletter. Suffice it to say there was much fun & laughter throughout the evening and our thanks must go to Geoff Poskitt for organizing such a successful event. The main question at the end of the evening: "When can we organize another one"? Watch this space! We hope to organize further "Social" events during the year – these are all intended as fun get-togethers rather than serious learning/sporting activities.

Have you ever thought "I wish u3a ran a" group ? It may be Tai Chi, photography or something else that you've always wanted to try. It could even be a "one off" activity; perhaps an afternoon orienteering or beach combing. Do let a member of the committee know – no promises but we'll see what we can do. Please try to steer clear of Bungy Jumping, Wing Walking and any other extreme sports !!!

Enjoy springtime and, hopefully, some warmer weather.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the next quarterly meeting & AGM on Friday 22nd March at Durweston Village Hall.

Rob Clarke, Chair.

OPEN MEETINGS 2024

The dates for Open Meetings during the rest of 2024 are as follows - please put the dates in your diary so you don't miss out on these or other events taking place!

Fri 22nd March - Speaker: Gary Biltcliffe, 'Ley lines and sacred sites' - also our AGM

Fri 28th June - Speaker: Lilian Ladle, 'The rise & decline of Druce Farm Roman Villa c.65-c.650 AD'

Friday 27th September - Speaker: Dawn Lawrence – Two Steps Behind (on the endangered wildlife of the world)

Fri 29th November – Members' Christmas Meeting

Open meetings are held at Durweston Village Hall (free parking) from 2pm with speaker, followed by chat, tea and cake – refreshments: £1.50 per person. The afternoon finishes at about 4pm. Further details on these and other events can be found on our website <https://u3asites.org.uk/blandford/events> - do please check the website from time to time in case of changes to venues, dates or times.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF THE BLANDFORD & DISTRICT U3A

2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on Friday 22nd March 2024 at 2.15 pm in Durweston Village Hall, Durweston

AGENDA FOR AGM

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting and Adoption thereof
3. Chairman's Report
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Financial Accounts
6. Appointment of Tellers (if voting is required)
7. Election of General Committee

Chairman

Hon. Secretary

Vice-Chairman

Membership Secretary

Hon. Treasurer

Five Committee Members

The names of those currently occupying these positions are shown in the Spring 2024

News sheet

8. Any Other Business previously notified in writing to the committee, c/o Hon. Secretary Lynne Rogers (address below) by Thursday 7th March 2024.

If you wish to nominate a member (or yourself) to the committee, either send the slip included with the AGM notice recently sent to members by email or write, by Thursday 7th March 2024, to the Hon. Secretary, Lynne Rogers, 1 Boyte Road, Pimperne, Blandford Forum, DT11 8UY with the name of the nominee, proposer and seconder. NB: proposers, seconders and nominees must be paid-up members of Blandford & District u3a. **Each nominated person must sign his/her consent to be nominated for the position.**

General Committee 2023-2024:

Officers:

Robin Clarke – Chair

Annie Love – Vice Chair

Lynne Rogers - Hon Secretary

Jack Shonfield - Hon Treasurer

June Lane – Membership Secretary

Members:

Gerald Badgley

Lesley Badgley

Gerald Killingworth

Bridget Spiers

Geoff Poskitt

Lynn Hawkey

THE FEBRUARY QUIZ NIGHT unfortunately had to be postponed, but this ever-popular event will be re-arranged in due course and once a new date has been confirmed everyone will be advised.

IF YOU DIDN'T MAKE THE JANUARY OPEN MEETING, JUST LOOK WHAT YOU MISSED!

Our January Open Meeting at Durweston Village Hall brought a bumper double bill of talks!

We started off with Dorset police giving us a talk on fraud and scams. Damian from the Dorset Police Fraud Protection Unit explained how people are too ready to believe and follow directions of those in authority, especially if they are wearing a uniform. He gave a sobering example of a sociological experiment where officials in uniform ordered volunteer members of the public to electrocute people with ever increasing voltages if they got certain questions wrong. The volunteers did not know that both the officials and the victims were actors and there were no



shocks involved. The message was that people are more likely to fall for scams if the scammers present themselves as being from the bank or police. After the talk there was a lively discussion on current scams, and we all felt more forewarned by the end. Damian provided a few copies of "The Little Book of Big Scams" published by the Regional Organised Crime Unit. This is a mine of information on how scammers/fraudsters work and how to take defensive action. For those who did not pick up a booklet or were unable to attend, this invaluable document is available online as a pdf download:

<https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/central/advice/fraud/met/the-little-book-of-big-scams.pdf> Perhaps his most important advice was this; If you think someone is trying to trick you into handing over money or personal details - **stop, hang up and call 159** to speak directly to your bank. 159 works in the same way as 101 for the police or 111 for the NHS. It's the number you can trust to get you through to your bank safely and securely, every time.

After we'd been persuaded that we should not believe anything anyone told us, it was possible Robin Clarke would have an uphill struggle convincing us that his superb photos of the flora and fauna of Madagascar were actually real! (Only joking!) Rob began by explaining why the flora and fauna of Madagascar, an island country lying off the southeastern coast of Africa, was unique and showed how the movement and isolation of the continents over hundreds of millions of years had created the special environment of the island. Madagascar is also a very poor country and Rob emphasised how impressed he was by the humble yet generous attitude of the locals to him and other visitors. He told the tale of a young boy who had never seen a white person or a camera before and how he was amazed to see pictures displayed on Rob's camera screen. Rob described how the flora is dominated by a wide variety of orchids, but the real fascination of Madagascar is the fauna. We saw amazing pictures of lemurs, chameleons, frogs, and spiders, not to mention the really creepy and not very attractive Aye-Ayes and wondered how long Rob had sat or stood with his finger hovering over the shutter before capturing his shots. There was an especially interesting video of dancing lemurs which can only walk by jumping sideways. Rob concluded with a short video highlighting his best shots, all overlaid with the ear-piercing howl and moaning of an Indri, the largest of the lemurs. Geoff Poskitt



Rob's photos, left to right: Ruffed lemur, Crowned lemur, Verreaux's sifaka

WHO MISSED “WHAT’S MY QUAFF”?

On a cold winter's evening we made our way to the Parish Centre in Blandford to enjoy an evening of fun and hilarity, testing our wine tasting skills. We were greeted on arrival by Ian Henesey of Q & A wines with a welcome glass of non-alcoholic sparkling wine. We then settled down to an evening of tasting three white, one rosé, and three red wines.

Our panel of experts (alias fibbers!), Ian, Rob Clarke and Gerald Killingworth described each wine to us in turn focusing on type, area, smell and flavours, after which we, the audience, marked which of the panellists we thought was telling the truth (a skit on Call my bluff!).

We complemented the wines with nibbles of cheese, biscuits, grapes and, of course, water! before writing down which of the panellists we believed, not easy with the yarns they were spinning! Most of us were totally confused about the WHITE Malbec, although there were some who guessed correctly! At the end of the evening our joint winners were Jeff Rogers and Lyn Brown who went home with boxes of chocolates to clear their palates!

Huge thanks must go to Geoff Poskitt for instigating and organising this event along with Ian Henesey our 'outside man', our panellists, and all those who helped to set the evening up, provided refreshments, and cleared away afterwards.

A very successful evening which ended with cries of 'when's the next one'!



What's your quaff?



Cheers!

GROUP NEWS

POSSIBLE NEW GROUPS – Lesley and Rex Badgley, Group Liaison

We are delighted to be bringing you news of three new groups which, it is hoped, will be getting off the ground in the next few weeks and months.

DOG WALKING: an opportunity (as the name suggests) for dog owners to walk together and socialise. We are also looking for a leader to run this group.

POTTERY: to be run/co-ordinated by Lesley and Rex. Group will meet in a workshop in Stalbridge, initially for three weeks, but this can be extended if demand arises. Cost will be in region of £20 per person per session (each session to be limited to a maximum of six people). Suggestion is to car share; Stalbridge is approximately 25 minutes away from Blandford. Anyone interested should contact Rex and Lesley and further information will be provided. This is NOT going to be classical throwing and turning on a wheel, but intended to be an introduction to ceramic hand building for beginners and improvers, with an opportunity to make pots suitable for the garden, etc. If successful we will look at further courses on glazing etc as a follow on.

HISTORICAL NOVELS: Bridget Spiers is contemplating starting an 'Historical Novels' group, which she'll kick off in early March after her holiday. This is not intended as a 'book group' but rather a chance to hear about other folks' favourite historical novels/authors, such as Bernard Cornwall, Alison Weir and the like, and discussing and recommending new ones. If you're interested, please contact Bridget via the Blandford u3a website page for further information.

ART APPRECIATION

The group continues to meet monthly, with usually between seven and twelve members. The two most recent meetings have involved an in-depth presentation by one of our members, Dennis Wardleworth, on Jan van Eyck's Ghent Altarpiece; and looking at two videos on Holbein and the Tudor Court, particularly timely as many members are planning to attend the current Holbein exhibition at the Queen's Gallery. At our next meeting we will be looking at Georges Seurat, the 19th century French pointillist painter, and in particular his masterpiece 'A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte'. We have space for further members.

Jack Shonfield

HISTORIC VISITS

The Historic Visits group has arranged the first three excursions for 2024: 21 March to the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, to see the exhibition "Holbein at the Tudor court"; 11 April – a tour of Maiden Castle escorted by the archaeologist John Smith; and May to the British Museum to see the exhibition "Life in the Roman army". We have not decided on a date for the May visit, but it will be on a Monday instead of our usual third Thursday of the month, for the BM offers a discount for Senior Citizens on Monday afternoons. For more information, please contact Bridget Spiers.

GARDEN VISITS

Our season re-starts in April, and we are currently putting the final touches to our programme of visits for 2024. We hope to arrange two coach trips this year, both to Devon, along with more local visits to

Fonthill House, Wycombe Park, Broomhill and Saddlestones. I hope to send full details to group members in early February. The group is pretty much full, but it is sometimes possible to take non-members if space allows, so do please contact me if interested. Please see our website page for further details <https://u3asites.org.uk/blandford/page/116966>

Lynn Hawkey

WALKING

Sadly our last walk of 2023 had to be cancelled due to bad weather, although five of us did turn up at the start but the consensus of opinion was to go home, very sensible I think.

Our walk programme for the first half of 2024 is complete as is much of the second half of the year and amazing how time flies as we have just completed our second walk of the year.

Graham and I decided this year we would do some of our favourite walks again as we have not done some of them since before Covid. We hope this time we will be able to find the bunker system used by the Creech Barrow Seven in WW2 – maybe it'll be third time lucky.

Phil Brown has again kindly offered to do a walk from Sandbanks and again we are being environmentally friendly and using public transport where possible, so this will be a full day walk not our usual half day. Both Graham and I have realised how difficult it is to find new walks within a reasonable distance of Blandford that can accommodate our large group (we are generally between 17 and 22 in number), but saying that we do still find new areas, mainly due to the group car sharing when necessary. We do push car sharing very hard as it is an opportunity to get to know each other better and gives us more scope to do walks further afield which would not generally be possible.

If my memory is correct, we have had six new members and one more to come in the last 12 months. Many of our members are confident enough to organise some of our walks, which takes some of the pressure off Graham and me, as most of our walks need to be pre-walked to recognise any hazards.

Phil Allen

MUSIC APPRECIATION

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART was born in 1756 in Salzburg and baptised Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus Mozart. Amadeus comes from the fourth of his long line of middle names, Theophilus, a Greek name meaning 'lover of God' or 'loved by God'. In its German form, it translates as 'Gottlieb', while in Latin, it becomes 'Amadeus'.

With his father Leopold's encouragement, at the age of three young Mozart could already play the piano but had a less happy experience with the trumpet. He had written a miniature allegro (k.1b) by the age of five and aged six he was touring Europe playing concerts with his sister. Whilst he composed exquisite music, Mozart also wrote rather crude baffling letters, full of toilet humour, to his family. This suggested to some that he had Tourette's Syndrome but there is little evidence. Margaret Thatcher didn't believe it. She gave director, Peter Hall, a "severe wiggling" for depicting him as a scatological imp in "Amadeus". He died in Vienna, aged only 35, but not before he had written over 600 pieces of music; concertos, operas, oratorios, quartets,



symphonies and chamber vocal and choral music.

We shall be considering Mozart's musical rather than his literary works at our Music Appreciation meeting Friday April 5th at 10.00am, Blandford Parish Room so, to find out more, do join us.

Viv Chapman

FRENCH

At the time of writing there is room for one or two more members to join our French group. This group is not suitable for beginners. If you would like to brush up the 'O' Level you did many years ago, why not come and join us? Any inquiries to Richard Pearson via the group's website page.

The best view in Paris is the one from the Eiffel Tower, because it is the only place in Paris from which you can't see the damn thing.

William Morris

DANCING



Forget strutting the light fantastic, how about a spot of swing jive, strolls, ballroom or getting on down with some brilliant Northern Soul or Motown? Dancing is a great way to free up the mind (and body) and Pat and Jim will introduce you to some simple steps to set you on the way to having fun by just moving your feet! Join them at Charlton Marshall Village Hall on the 2nd Monday of the month – full details on the website.

I understand Jim made Pat's lovely dress! Talented man! - Editor

BADMINTON

The Badminton group is at full strength with 20 members and a small waiting list. Meeting on Friday mornings in Pimperne, less experienced players play from 9am to 11am and more experienced players from 11am to 1pm, with some overlap in the middle. We are currently looking at stating a second session to accommodate those who want to play more and those on the waiting list. David Shepherd

PLAY READING GROUP has had its last night.

I regret to have to report that because of lack of interest in the group I have no choice but to end the group. I must thank those people who were able to attend play reading meetings for both their interest and time, which I appreciated and enjoyed.

Anthony Kelly

LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

David Shepherd writes: A small group of seven continues to try to piece together the jigsaw of the nature of existence in the first part of our meetings with topical discussion group type format in the second half. A recent highlight was a guest speaker – a Buddhist monk – contributing to ideas on life and death, and life and death, and

We are living in a world today where lemonade is made from artificial flavours and furniture polish is made from real lemons.

Alfred Newman

STROLLERS

We had a very good 2023 with no cancellations due to bad weather and finished the year with an excellent lunch at Ashley Wood Golf Club.

Our first walk for 2024 was along the Trailway at Spetisbury where it is good to see that volunteers have made such a splendid job of bringing some of the old station to life. Seats gave strollers a chance to sit and contemplate what life would have been like when the Somerset & Dorset trains were running. Our walk finished across the not too wet meadows to have coffee at The Shack.

As our group name suggests, we have a gentle stroll of about 3 miles through our beautiful Dorset countryside with plenty of chat along the way and maybe a coffee at the end. So please come and join us on the 4th Friday of the month.

Pam Rees

CYCLING

Unsurprisingly, the inclement weather this winter has had a significant effect on the number and range of our outings. Two rides were cancelled due to rain and three curtailed because of floods. Nevertheless, we enjoyed our journeys, completing seven rides and 125 miles up to the end of January. All rides were local, but we plan to resume 'going-foreign' in February.



(left: flooding at White Mill)

We continue to learn about the Dorset countryside, including how to avoid potholes! Fortunately, punctures have been a rarity. Of particular interest have been roe deer, a hare and increasing numbers of red kites. It was encouraging on 31 January to be greeted by a

plethora of snowdrops and hazel catkins, also a few daffodils and primroses; harbingers of the oncoming Spring. Our average turnout per ride is six, though we have 18 members. There is always room for more!

Peter Aldous



Above: Christmas lunch at The Red Lion

INTERNET SCREEN READING TECHNOLOGY

For those of us without the best of eyesight you may be interested to know, if you don't already, that you can have a screen reader aid on your computer. This will read selected text on web pages including our own Blandford & District website along with pdf files, particularly useful if the text is small, when reading a long document or when the eyes are tired or sore. My system will also read incoming emails but as far as I know it doesn't read outgoing ones! It's a bit like a Sat Nav talking to you! This RNIB site may be a good starting point if you are interested - don't be alarmed by the site, it caters for all abilities - mine is just a basic reader/aid. <https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/assistive-aids-and-technology/tech-support-and-information/computers/screen-reading-software/> Lynn Hawkey

CITIZENS ADVICE CENTRAL DORSET – an approach to u3a members by Tracy McGregor, Chair of the People Sub-committee, Central Dorset

“Citizens Advice Central Dorset is looking for new trustees to join its charity trustee board. Our organisation is focussed on providing information and advice to people in local communities to help solve the problems they face in these challenging times. We are in the frontline of supporting people with the cost of living crisis and more people than ever need our support.

We work across the central Dorset area covering Gillingham, Sherborne, Blandford, Dorchester and Weymouth and Portland. We are a local charity but with the benefit of being part of the influential national organisation, Citizens Advice.

Working with our Chief Officer and other staff, our trustees shape strategy and give direction. Our board of trustees come from a variety of backgrounds who all have the passion and dedication to make a positive difference for people, who need help and advice on a wide range of matters, in our community. Current opportunities within the Trustee board are:

- * Chair
- * Treasurer
- * Lead for Information Technology development
- * Lead for Marketing and Communications

We welcome people from all backgrounds with a range of skills and experience as training will be provided. Trustee roles are voluntary, unpaid appointments, although reasonable travel expenses will be paid. Each role provides you with a great deal of experience and satisfaction, the opportunity to develop your skills and use your expertise and knowledge.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a trustee for Citizens Advice Central Dorset, please visit our website <https://centraldorsetca.org.uk/become-a-trustee> “

Schoolreaders

improving literacy • increasing life chances



Could you volunteer
to listen to children
read in school?

Play your part in helping
children catch up on lost
education by becoming a

Schoolreader

We provide volunteers to give free one-to-one reading practice to children in primary schools. Our service is more in demand than ever after months of school closures.

In a normal year, one in four children leaves primary school unable to read well. More children than ever will have fallen behind recently because of the covid pandemic. Estimates suggest that the most disadvantaged pupils are now 7 months behind their peers. Children who struggle with reading are more likely to live in poverty and to be unemployed as adults.

We need more volunteers in your local area to support children's reading. If you want to make a difference to a child's life, why not apply to become a Schoolreader? No qualifications are needed, just a love of reading, some spare time each week and a willingness to go where the children need you most. The joining process takes a few weeks, so please apply now!

**Join us and help children catch up on lost education.
You'll be making a real difference to their life chances.**

Visit www.schoolreaders.org for information and to apply