

# BLANDFORD & DISTRICT u3a

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

## WINTER 2023

**WELCOME TO THE WINTER NEWSLETTER** and a chance to catch up with news and events around B&D u3a. So, let's start with the latest news from Rob Clarke (B&D Chair) and the committee.

### MEANDERINGS FROM THE CHAIR!

It has been a busy, mild and somewhat wet Autumn, but at last the trees are beginning to change colour and lose their leaves.

We ran our first "Day at the Races" event in October which was enjoyed by a number of members. Most of us made small profits (and some losses!), but one or two made huge gains - sadly only with "Bank of u3a" money . . . which for some reason neither Tesco nor Sunseekers accept as legal tender!! Your u3a committee have been busy ~~plotting~~ planning further entertainments for 2023 & 2024 to brighten up the winter evenings. These include:

- Skittles evening (hopefully the first of many) - Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023.
- "What's My Quaff". Imagine if you will, a cross between Call My Bluff and wine tasting . . . three descriptions for each wine tasted – but which one is correct? Parish Centre in Blandford, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024 (*see more details below*)
- Quiz evening + Fish & Chip supper. A fun evening also at the Parish Centre in Blandford, in February 2024.

Look out for emails with full details of up-and-coming events.

B&D u3a membership is still down in numbers when compared to the pre-

covid level but we have plans to recruit additional members. We have produced a "Recruitment"/"New Members" folder containing information on who we are,

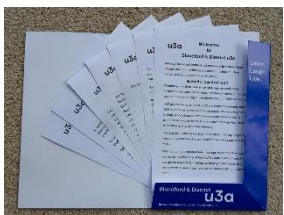
our range of groups, cost of membership, etc. If you've ever looked at the

Community table in the Blandford Practice Surgery, you will know that you are met with a sea of white leaflets – we think our new, smart blue folders will make us stand out and hopefully help our recruitment drive. There will also be some available at the quarterly meetings, so, why not take one for a friend or neighbour?

Take time to enjoy the beauty that is Autumn and don't forget the pre-Christmas meeting at Durweston Village Hall, 2:00pm on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November.

If we don't meet before, have a great Christmas!

Rob Clarke



*I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six.*

*Mother took me to see him in a department store and he asked for my autograph.*

*Shirley Temple*



**RIP:** Sally Woodlock, one of the founder members of B&D u3a and a past committee member, passed away on 18 October. Sally was a staunch supporter of the u3a and took part in many of its activities, as well as being an enthusiastic Blandford history and archaeology exponent: she'll be sorely missed.

Left: Sally photographed at the B&D u3a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in June 2022

## PRE-CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER

*Durweston Village Hall*  
*Friday 24 November 2023*  
2.00pm: Greeting & Seating  
2.30pm: Entertainment



*Wassailing with Bonny Sartin*  
*(Dorset folk singer)*

*Followed by festive tea and cake*  
*(£1.50pp) and lots of chat!*

## JANUARY OPEN MEETING

*Durweston Village Hall*  
*Friday 26 January 2024*  
2.00pm: Greeting & Seating  
2.30pm: Speaker



*Madagascar: The Eighth Continent*  
*with Rob Clarke*

*Followed by tea and cake (£1.50pp)*

## WINE TASTING

We are planning a u3a members' wine tasting for Friday 19 January. This will be an evening event, taking place at the Parish Centre opposite the Post Office in Blandford. We will be calling it something like "What's My Quaff" and it will be loosely based on "Call My Bluff". Three descriptions will be given for each wine only one of which is true. It's all just for fun and there will be no prizes for guessing correctly! You will get to taste three reds, three whites, and a rosé. More details to follow soon.

Geoff Poskitt

## GROUP NEWS

### HISTORIC VISITS

We are arranging a visit to the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, on Thursday, 21 March, to see the exhibition "Holbein at the Tudor court". Hans Holbein the Younger was one of the most significant artists of the sixteenth century, and as well as a portraitist, he designed buildings and jewellery.

The cost of entry to this exhibition is £17.10 per person if we can get a party of 15 or more people together and make a group booking. We know, from past experience, that these concessions get taken up quickly, so please can you let Bridget Spiers know if you are interested, as soon as possible.

We'll be travelling by coach, and the return fare will be approximately £30.00 per person: that is, if we can fill the coach. This sum INCLUDES a tip for the driver.

There are a number of elite buildings near the Queen's Gallery: The Royal Mews, Wellington Arch and Apsley House, and you might like to explore these after visiting the Holbein exhibition. All are worth seeing, and group discounts are available for all of them. Apsley House is one of the few 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century aristocratic town houses to survive in London and contains a superb collection of paintings which includes works by Velázquez, and other objects associated with the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington. Both Wellington Arch and Apsley House are English Heritage properties, so those of you who belong to English Heritage will get free admission if you show your membership cards.

NB: Gerald Killingworth wrote an excellent account of the Historic Visits group's excursion to see the excavations at Cerne Abbey, and here is the link: <https://u3asites.org.uk/blandford/page/131243>.

Brigitte Spiers

### GARDEN VISITS

Our 2023 season started in April with a visit to Heale Garden in the Woodford Valley (just north of Salisbury). We enjoyed four seasons in one day, but it was wonderful to see the early buds starting to spring forth and even beautiful blossom against a deep blue sky. May saw us at Compton Acres in Poole where we were treated to a delightful array of spring bulbs and flowering shrubs and plants in the many and varied 'garden' rooms. On our coach trip in June we visited RHS Rossmoor in Devon, where



the roses were stunning on this very hot day with their scent wafting through the air. The whole garden was beautiful, and we even saw a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera* – left) in bloom – what a treat. We were much

nearer to home in July with a visit to Manor Farm, Hampreston, a smaller

garden full of colour enhanced by the surrounding

countryside. We ventured forth to Somerset in August to visit Batcombe House, the home of garden designer, Libby Russell. Set in a secluded village amongst beautiful countryside we were shown around by the Head Gardener and given a talk on the history of the garden. Narrow archways led between the more



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formal smaller gardens and the larger more open area with amphitheatre and large borders. Another warm sunny day where we enjoyed tea/coffee (& cake!) by the pool. Our final visit of the season was to Athelhampton House and Garden where we were able to spend as long as we wished self-guiding ourselves round the house and garden all of which has been revamped and improved in recent times by the new owner and, as always, was a delight to visit. More details and photos can be found on the u3a website <https://u3asites.org.uk/blandford/page/116966>

Lynn Hawkey

## DANCING

We had a fun session in October with a Halloween theme including dancing the Monster Mash! We would welcome new members and beginners: don't think 'Strictly', none of us come close, but we enjoy learning some steps so we can move around to some great music and have a sociable and fun time. Dancing keeps the brain active as well as your joints.

We are also thinking of organising an evening dance in the New Year if enough members are interested – please get in touch via the website. We meet the second Monday of the month at Charlton Marshall Village Hall (plenty of parking).

Pat Luke



## BRIDGE

The Bridge group meet on the first and third Friday of each month in the Woodhouse Pavilion at 2pm. It is warm, bright and comfortable and is in the lovely flower garden beside the Post Office in Blandford Forum. We would welcome new members.

Jean Palmer

## MUSIC APPRECIATION

We at Music Appreciation continue to enjoy a wide and varied programme often with interesting and scenic 'visuals'. A very friendly atmosphere and convivial coffee break await anyone new who would like to join us on the first Friday of each month in the Parish Centre, opposite Blandford Post Office and Library, 10.00am until 12 noon.

Viv Chapman

## MAH JONG

The group continues to meet on the first and third Thursday afternoons of the month. We meet in my home and play to British rules, although we don't take it too seriously. We get very excited when someone goes Mah Jong with a difficult hand, particularly if it results in a high score! We enjoy our tea break in the middle of the afternoon with much chitter chatter and learn what is going on in the world!

Lynn Hawkey

## CRAFT

Our crafty ladies (so far, no men) continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday afternoons in Charlton Marshall Parish Centre - an oasis of calm stitching and chatting in our busy lives. We are also looking



forward to our annual lunchtime outing to The Charlton Inn in January as a reward for completing all our Christmas projects, including a display depicting the carol 'Oh Tannenbaum' in Blandford St Mary Church for their Christmas Carol Festival! Just for a change, at our second meeting in September, Anna McDowell came to give us a demonstration and "hands on" class on Dorset Button making. A fascinating afternoon on this dying art, which is not as easy as it looks! Left is a great illustration of some of Anna's fabulous work.

We have room for more crafters if anyone wants to join us.  
Diana Berridge

## GARDEN GROUP

We usually meet the 4th Tuesday of the month at 10.30am but have decided to have a break during the Winter and will meet again on the fourth Tuesday in March. We take it in turn to host, observing the changing seasons within our gardens and its effects on the visiting wildlife. The last two meetings this year have included watching a video on YouTube on designs for small gardens and maintaining a large border.

Ann Green

## STROLLERS

It is amazing how our walk leaders manage to find such lovely walks in and around the villages close to Blandford. Recently we have been to Chettle, Pimperne (*see below*), Tarrant Monkton and Pamphill - all with a coffee stop at the end. There is a lot of chat along the way and stops to look at flowers and anything else of interest. We have been very lucky with the weather and a walk has never had to be cancelled - we have been caught in a shower only once. So if you would like to join our merry band of Strollers, please contact me through the website.

Pam Rees

***DID YOU KNOW?*** ..... *that the first record of Pimperne is in the Domesday Book in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century as 'Pinpre'? Some parts of the original Norman church (dedicated to St Peter) survived Lord Portman of Bryanston's rebuild in 1872-74 and there's also the bottom part of a preaching cross in the graveyard - the top part was knocked off by Cromwell's men. Pimperne has also been a Royal manor and was granted to Catherine Howard by King Henry VIII, but on her execution, it passed to his eighth wife, Katherine Parr. And there was indeed a busy forge beside the Blandford to Salisbury road, now remembered in name with The Anvil Inn.*

## PLAYREADING

No dressing up, no standing on a stage in front of thousands, just a group of members who all love a good play and spend an enjoyable couple of hours playing some great parts, all from the comfort of an armchair! The group is looking for more members – if interested get in touch via the website.

Anthony Kelly.

## CYCLING

Since May, our plucky bands (varying in size from 3 to 7 members) have made 10 excursions, visiting Sturminster Marshall three times and Sturminster Newton twice, both starting from Blandford. We've also gone 'foreign' on five occasions, which included such 'exotic' locations as Wimborne, Upton, Poole, Stoborough, Wool, Norden, Wytch Farm, Crossways, Moreton and Moors Valley. Unfortunately, 4 rides had to be cancelled due to inclement weather, particularly this autumn. In December, we will enjoy an 'all-dayer' for a traditional festive lunch at a pub (yet to be chosen).



For the record, we cycled 179 miles during this period, averaging 18 miles per ride. The shortest was 14 miles and the longest 22 miles. New members continue to join, but others have fallen by the wayside, so we still have a membership of 15. Why not increase that number? Cycling is fun (and good for you)!

Peter Aldous

## SINGING FOR FUN

After a longer than usual summer break we met on Monday 11th September in the newly refurbished United Reform Church Hall, when there was a good turnout of 15 singers. People were pleased to see each other and sing some familiar and not so familiar pieces. Also we welcomed a new recruit - Hugh Taylor - who is singing bass. More new singers are always welcome. Since then another two sessions have taken place, but not quite so many have attended. With Christmas on the horizon we welcome further opportunities to Keep Singing!!

Rachel Cook

## ITALIAN

The Italian group continues to be a self-help group. Several new members have joined recently, who have spent more time in Italy and are therefore more able to converse with some degree of fluency. This has enabled us to include more conversation in our meetings. We continue to incorporate aspects of grammar and some material relating to Italian culture.

Angela Warsany

*It will be a traditional Christmas, with presents, crackers, door slamming and people bursting into tears, but without the dead thing in the middle. We're vegetarians – Victoria Wood*

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST .....

**AN INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY: how the earthworks, stone circles, burial mounds, bones and artefacts shed light on the lives of our ancestors.**

Thanks to the interest and efforts of Bridget Spiers and other volunteers, some 30 U3A members are enjoying a stimulating course presented by amateur archaeologist John Smith at Charlton Marshall Village Hall. The first two presentations covered the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages up to the Roman conquest in AD43; the 3rd presentation will cover the Roman occupation up to c440; and finally the 4th will cover up to the Norman Conquest in 1066. Members are gaining an insight into how evidence is gathered, and how geology, rock and mineral analysis, bones and various artefacts help support popular theories about lifestyles and customs going back thousands of years. Nevertheless, there is still scope for alternative hypotheses to be explored, especially as new evidence and new scientific techniques are applied. For example, a relatively recent dig found evidence of trade with France, via Poole Harbour, going back 6,000 years!

As someone who is pursuing her interest in history late in life, this course has encouraged me to be more informed about the history that shaped my local landscape. And I look forward to going on the Maiden Castle visit on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024 which will also be led by John Smith.

Becky Underwood

**Don't forget this is your newsletter so, if you have a story to tell or a recommendation of a great place to visit, let me know – you can contact me via the committee page of the website. Thanks**

**Christine Smith**

**WISHING ALL B&D U3A MEMBERS A GREAT FESTIVE SEASON**

**AND A HAPPY & HEALTHY NEW YEAR**

