

# BLANDFORD & DISTRICT u3a

Charity no: 1092984 - Website: <https://blandford.u3asite.uk>

## SUMMER 2026

**WELCOME** ..... to our Summer 2026 B&D u3a Newsletter. So what do we have in store for you? How about getting out and about up Melbury Down with directions from the Walking Group or try a delicious recipe for Damson Ice Cream? – yum! Plus, part two of Angela Warsany’s memories of holidays in Tuscany to whet your whistle .... and talking of whistles, how about learning the recorder? Music Appreciation has ideas for different and novel musical pieces and if you are looking for a new summer read, our very own Gerald Killingworth might just have the answer.

So, put the kettle on and settle back with a cuppa to see what fellow members get up to in their spare time. *Christine Smith, Editor*

*“How beautiful it is to do nothing and then to rest afterwards.”*

*Spanish proverb*

## COMMITTEE

(as of 27.03.26)

Chair – position vacant

Vice-Chair – Rex Badgley

Hon. Secretary – Lisa Kearney

Treasurer – Anthony Kelly

Membership Secretary – Bev Lee

Group Liaison – Lesley and Rex Badgley

Website Editor - Lynn Hawkey

Website & Beacon Admin – Karen Burden

Speaker Secretary – Bridget Spiers

Gerald Killingworth      Claire Smith

## SUMMER/AUTUMN OPEN MEETINGS

### DURWESTON VILLAGE HALL

2.00pm – Doors Open

2.15pm – Welcome & Notices

2.30pm – Speaker

Followed by the best homemade cake and a cup of tea this side of Blandford for just £1.50 – and lots of chat!

--ooOoo--

**Friday 26 June**

Anthony Kelly: Evolution – where has it got us?

**Friday 25 September**

Bob Seymour – The History of Tarrant Rushton Airfield

**Christmas Meeting**

**Friday 27 November**

*Call My Bluff* – an interactive and fun afternoon

More info on these events on pages  
5 & 6

## WELCOME AND FAREWELL

A big welcome to Lisa Kearney and Karen Burden on joining the Committee but as you can see, we are in need of a Chairperson following the retirement of Rob Clarke, who will soon be moving away from Dorset with

his wife Chris – thanks Rob for holding the reins for the last few years.

If you have led a team in a past life and could bring some fresh life experience to the role, you may be just the person we need to chair committee and group leader meetings, represent B&D at local u3a meetings and help shape our thriving u3a into the future. Contact Rex or Lisa for more information on how you can help.

### **LYNNE ROGERS - Retiring Hon Sec.**

#### **A personal 'thank you'**

Before taking on the B&D Newsletter, I held the post of chairman for a number of years and was delighted to welcome Lynne to the role of Hon Sec. This is an important position within the committee and she really was my 'right-hand woman'. She is an ardent u3a devotee and has a busy home and village life serving her church community, but I could always rely on her steady and reliable support - she served on the committee during the tenure of three chairpersons; no easy task working with such different personalities in such a relatively short time.

I send Lynne my sincere thanks for her time and support of B&D u3a and me personally and wish her a more relaxing time during the coming weeks and months, but knowing Lynne, I very much doubt this will actually happen!

Christine Smith

*It was one of those perfect summer days – the sun was shining, a gentle breeze was blowing, the birds were singing and the lawnmower was broken.*

*James Dent*

## **GROUP NEWS**

A quick round-up of the latest news from the Groups:

The new **History** group is going very well, is well attended and has already had several interesting talks – enquiries to Jon Choppin

The **Garden Visit** group has been resurrected under Rosie Pearson and had its first visit in April to Minterne Gardens

**Breakfast Club** has kicked off and is being organised by Annie Love

The **Pétanque** group is looking forward to restarting in May

You can keep up to date with the Groups via the B&D website:

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

## **WALKING**

The group is going very well. We have 39 on our waiting list and have been getting between 12 and 21 on the walks this year to date. All our walkers are very friendly and a pleasure to walk with: we have new members coming all the time and try to keep the walks between 5 and 6 miles and up to 2 ½ hours.



We have done some very nice walks over the last 12 months and one I led last spring I think was

exceptionally good - I hope you get the chance to give it a go in the coming weeks.

Taking the top Shaftesbury road, we parked at the viewpoint opposite Compton Abbas

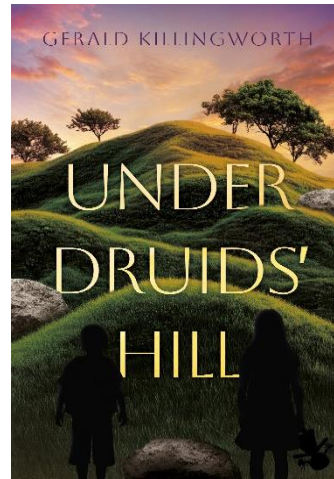
Airfield near Melbury Hill and started by going down the track from the right-hand corner of the car park towards Compton Abbas. A short way down the track we head right up some wooden steps, over a stile and skirt around the hill with superb views over Dorset. Then to the top of Melbury Hill (a bit of a steep slog) - after a rest it's back down to the saddle and off right and down to three gates along the track to Compton Abbas. Turn right at the road and walk through the village until you come to a stream and track next to it. Through a gate across the field and then a slog up onto the ridge - follow the ridge for a good kilometre back to the car park - 4.8 miles, 2 ¼ hours and quite strenuous but well worth it for the views and the interesting church in the village.

Phil Allen

*(Don't forget to take an OS map with you, #118 in the Explorer series, plus drinks and snacks! - Christine)*

### GERALD'S LATEST TALE

Blandford u3a committee member Gerald Killingworth has just published his fifth novel *Under Druids' Hill*. Most of the book is set in North Wales and Gerald says that he first had the idea for the story while on an intensive driving course on Anglesey quite a while ago. Unfortunately, he didn't pass the subsequent driving test, but he did come away with plenty of local colour in the form of the Welsh names of the boats in the harbour and details of the countryside where he stayed.



The central character in the book returns to a place where he spent an idyllic summer as an 8 year-old, but, in doing so, he makes a shattering discovery. He now has a mystery to solve.

A reviewer has said, 'An Alan Garner landscape meets aspects of Dennis Potter or the darker side of Alan Bennett.' Sounds intriguing. Copies of *Under Druids' Hill* may be obtained from Gerald himself (signed), from any good bookshop (including Blandford's Dorset Bookshop) or from Amazon, who also have the ebook.

### ITALIAN – *Angela Warsany's travels in Tuscany Part II*

Viterbo is one of the five provinces of Lazio, the walled medieval city of Viterbo being the capital of the province. The medieval quarter, San Pellegrino, is one of the best preserved in Europe and is a delight to explore. The Palazzo dei Papi was the seat of the popes in the 13th century. The city also hosts the National Etruscan Museum. For relaxation you can visit the thermal springs, first used by the popes in the 15th century. Not far from Viterbo, and accessible by the local train, is the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, with its 16th century palace with Italian Mannerist gardens and park with many fountains. Slightly further away is the Civita di Bagnoregio, now only accessible by a one kilometre elevated walkway from the main town of Bagnoregio. It was founded by the

Etruscans 2500 years ago, but now has only 16 inhabitants.

Another *spettacolare* place nearby is the monster park, Bosco Sacro, at Bomarzo. It is a garden, commissioned in the 15th century, and endowed with sculptures depicting animals from a fantasy world and mythological creatures and small edifices immersed in the vegetation, all carved out of the natural rock. There is also a small, very crooked two storey house, which is very disorientating to explore!



Near to Bagnaia is the wonderful peony garden, Centro Botanico Moutan, Vitorchiano; today it contains the rarest and largest collection of tree and

herbaceous peonies in the world, but is only open during the peony flowering season, April and May.

The mainline station at Orte is just 45 minutes from Roma Termini so it's easy to take a day trip to or from Rome.

Angela Warsany

## RECORDER ENSEMBLE

“All was going well at school until he brought home a recorder.” For many people, that sentence sums up their first encounter with this small but memorable instrument. Often linked with squeaky classroom performances, the recorder has a reputation that hardly reflects its true character. Listen more closely, however, and you discover an instrument with a rich history and a beautiful, expressive sound.

The recorder can take us back six or seven centuries to the early days of written music.

Remarkably, one of the earliest recorder-like instruments discovered was carved from a vulture's wing bone around 40,000 years ago! This simple instrument has clearly stood the test of time.

Our u3a Recorder Ensemble began about ten years ago. Four or five of us meet every two weeks to enjoy a relaxed and friendly morning of consort playing ... not to mention the lovely coffee and biscuits provided by our host, Auguste Shepherd! We mainly explore early music, from Medieval to Baroque, though we sometimes include folk tunes and occasionally, more modern pieces. Playing together - descant, alto, tenor and bass, one person for each part - keeps us on our toes and creates a wonderfully balanced sound.

Many of us first learned the recorder at school and have rediscovered it later in life. There is tutoring available online, and also a huge range of suitable sheet music, making it easy to find something enjoyable to play. Perhaps you even have a recorder tucked away in the attic?

It is said that learning an instrument is an excellent, stimulating activity in retirement. Recorder playing certainly helps to keep arthritic fingers moving and it becomes even more enjoyable when shared with others, offering companionship as well as musical challenge.

Jean Jones.

## MUSIC APPRECIATION

When asked about the music we listen to in our Music Appreciation meetings I usually say we enjoy a variety of music, mainly classical but also including folk, jazz and contemporary. I thought elaborating on our last two programmes would give a better idea.

Peter's programme "I must go down to the sea again....." began with "Interludes" from Benjamin Brittain's opera, "*Peter Grimes*". It was followed by folk singer Ewan MacColl's "*The Shoals of Herring*" and then



Mendelssohn's Concert Overture "*Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*" gave us a quieter

time. Cyril Tawney's "*Sally Free and Easy*" sung and played on guitar by Davy Graham reminded us that, although sailors have a reputation for breaking girls' hearts, sometimes it is the other way round. The traditional Shanty "*South Australia*" invited us to "Haul away, you rollin' king, heave away, haul away." Debussy's "*La Cathédrale engloutie*", is based on the legend of a sunken cathedral which rises out of the water on a clear morning. Sounds can be heard of priests chanting, bells chiming, and the organ playing from across the sea. A peaceful way to end our morning.

Dennis who is English and Janet who is American decided to give us an Anglo-American Programme, with each choosing works not from their homeland. Copeland's "*Appalachian Spring*" was very apposite for the time of year and felt very fresh. The 7<sup>th</sup> Movement will be well known to many people as it is based on a Shaker Hymn "*The Lord of the Dance*". Gershwin's "*Rhapsody in Blue*" was played by electrically dexterous pianist Khatia Buniatishvili. Philip Glass is a modern American composer and his "*Metamorphosis*" is beautifully repetitive. Janet's first choice "*A Mother's Lament*", a music hall song about a baby disappearing down the plug hole, sung by

Cream (a 1960s rock super group) was a surprise, which we all enjoyed. The grandeur of Vaughan Williams "*Passacaglia*" from Symphony No.5 brought to mind for her the grandeur of London streets. Flanders and Swann "*Slow Train*" with the line "No more will I go to Blandford Forum" needs no explanation. The fitting finale for Good Friday was Benjamin Britten's "*For I will Consider my Cat Jeffery (for he is the servant of the living God)*" sung by soprano Helen Semple. These pieces of music were accompanied by relevant video images which added to the visual as well as the aural enjoyment. We also enjoy DVDs of ballet and operas.

Viv Chapman

## AND TO CLOSE .....

Here's some more info on the upcoming Open Meetings this summer/autumn:

**Friday 26 June Evolution – where has it got us?** B&D u3a Treasurer, Anthony Kelly, will talk about the implications of our human evolution on Earth. Has it, for example, made space travel a fantasy? Expect to hear plenty of thought provoking ideas with a dash of humour and plenty of interesting pictures.

**Friday 25 September The History of Tarrant Rushton Airfield.** Bob Seymour, Secretary of the Friends of Tarrant Rushton Airfield Memorial, will give a short history of the aerodrome. How many people know that in the shadow of Badbury Rings lie the remains of a wartime airfield that provided a starting point for one of the greatest feats of flying in WWII? And yes, a wooden glider really did carry a seven-ton tank into battle!

## Christmas celebration Friday 27 November

We are looking forward to a return visit of the Call My Bluff team with a brand new selection of historical, and often hysterical, objects from Dorset's past to bemuse and amuse us. Festive refreshments too!

### **BLANDFORD EVENTS:**

The monthly **Wellbeing Support Walk-In** events run by The Blandford Group Practice will continue on the last Tuesday of each month in the newly renovated Corn Exchange, Help and advice on the Practice's Online services, blood pressure checks and information on local health & fitness services.

<https://theblandfordgrouppractice.co.uk>

Other events in **The Corn Exchange** can be found on the Blandford Town Council website, including Fleetwood Bac (Fleetwood Mac Tribute Band on Friday 7 August) or maybe the Capitol Motown and Soul Band is more to your taste on Friday 19 June. Plus craft fairs, talks and meditation events – look out for posters around town.

<https://blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk>

**Blandford Literary Festival** – Saturday 14 November

<https://blandfordliteraryfestival.co.uk>

Also, lots of information and pamphlets to be had at the **Blandford Information Centre**.

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

I hope you've all enjoyed reading our Summer Newsletter and if you've got a tale to tell about a holiday or visit, please share it with us for the Winter Newsletter. Have a great time.

Christine

Email: [christineu3a@btinternet.com](mailto:christineu3a@btinternet.com)

## **RECIPE CORNER**

### **DAMSON ICE CREAM**

1 lb damsons  
3 oz granulated sugar  
2 eggs  
2 oz caster sugar  
1 small can evaporated milk, well chilled

1. Place the damsons in a pan with the granulated sugar and cook gently until soft (about 15 minutes). Sieve and leave until quite cold.
2. Separate the eggs. Place the yolks in a small bowl and blend with a fork.
3. Put the whites in a large bowl and whisk until stiff, then whisk in the caster sugar a spoonful at a time.
4. Slowly whisk the egg yolks into the whites.
5. Whisk the evaporated milk in a bowl until thick and fold into the egg mixture with the cold damson puree.
6. Turn into a 2 litre ice cream box and leave to freeze until set.

Works well with an apple and blackberry mix too – Lynne Rogers

*Who discovered we could get milk from cows, and what did he think he was doing at the time?*  
Billy Connolly