



May 2026

Message from the Chair

Hello everyone

Just a couple of announcements from me this month. Firstly, I'd like to thank those of you who have completed the u3a online survey, which is intended to build a better understanding of who we are, what motivates us as individuals, and how our learning and interests can be better supported. There's still time to complete the survey if you've not yet done so - the deadline is 31st May. By taking part, you'll be helping us to shape the future direction of u3a and promote the benefits of the movement to potential new members.

You can take part by clicking on the link [Inside-u3a-survey](#)

The survey takes around 15 minutes and your responses will be completely confidential. You can enter a free prize draw to win high street shopping vouchers

which can be used in many different retailers; five lucky winners will each win £100! Just leave your contact details at the end of the survey to take part.

Secondly, the incidence of fraud, including on-line scams, is unfortunately on the increase. If you have been affected, or you want to stay safe and secure, then you might be interested in the "Glass Jar - Put a Lid on it" - Gloucestershire Against Scams Joint Agency Response.

The Multi Agency Approach to Fraud (MAAF) Group has been set up to discuss fraud trends, victim care and communication of fraud threats across Gloucestershire. Through collaborative working the main purpose is to raise awareness to minimise and disrupt fraud for all those that work, visit and reside in Gloucestershire. Have a look at their [website](#) to learn how to report fraud, spot a threat and protect yourself, and much more.

Well that's it from me. I hope you enjoy the late May Bank Holiday.

Martin Doidge (Chair)

Monthly Speakers

Our monthly talk on 11^h May was on the subject of "Organic Food & Farming", provided by David Wilson, who was farm manager at the Highgrove estate for 36 years. David subsequently spent three years in the north Cotswolds at Fir Farm and Steve Winwood's Lower Dean Manor Farm, establishing organic regenerative systems on both holdings, and he is now at Bowden Park Farm near Lacock with his youngest son Benj, in a new venture restoring a rundown estate by reintroducing livestock as part of an organic mixed farming system. David shared his passion for organic farming, including the complex links between soil, plant, animal and human health as well as the preservation of rare and heritage food genetics and their role in our future.

Our next monthly talk on "The Mercy Ships" will be provided by Caroline Casterton on Tuesday 16th June 2026 at the Tetbury Goods Shed, GL8 8EY, from 10:30 am to 12 pm. Caroline will talk about the work of this pioneering international health charity. Their hospital ships bring free, life-changing surgeries to women, men and children across sub-Saharan Africa. In partnership with African nations, they train healthcare professionals, build stronger medical services, and fight for the health of everyone.

Now retired from the NHS in Wales and England, Caroline is a speaker and a volunteer from both a medical and administrative perspective for Mercy Ships UK, a non-governmental charitable organisation. There are currently two ships in the fleet, 'Global Mercy' and 'Africa Mercy.'

Refreshments will be available before and afterwards - we hope to see you there. Here's a link to our full 2026 programme tetbury.u3asite.uk/events

By Julia Walter (Speakers Secretary)

Group News

Art Appreciation



We started by looking at Salvador Dalí's (1904 - 1989) "Christ of St John of the Cross" (1951) on display at Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow.

We were more familiar with Dalí's surrealist pictures so although at first sight this appears to be a relatively orthodox painting of the crucifixion, on analysis it conveys a typically unconventional approach to the subject.

Kelvingrove Art Gallery

The painting was inspired by his interest in Nuclear Mysticism fusing the opposite worlds of quantum physics with classic spirituality and specifically by a "cosmic dream". Christ is painted from above - we assume God's viewpoint - with the body very foreshortened, unblemished with no blood, nails nor crown of thorns. This, it is presumed, conveys Christ's triumph over death. The body with outstretched arms forms a triangle - a reference to the Trinity, far beneath is a view of the sea at Port Lligat where Dali lived - with a boat and fisherman. Rather prosaically and in an attempt to portray the "perfect man", Christ was modelled for the artist by a Hollywood stuntman.

After last month's analysis of Constable, this month we looked at the work of Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) his contemporary, who also came from Suffolk. He was a highly successful and prolific painter - he left 1,300 paintings - "I paint portraits to live, landscapes because I love them". He was the son of a weaver and trader in fine fabrics and this is often reflected in the luxurious clothing worn by his subjects. He was a talented painter as a boy and studied art in London from 1740. He later moved to Bath where he attracted a fashionable clientele.

We looked briefly at a range of his work and in more detail at his well known painting "Mr and Mrs Andrews".



The National Gallery

Gainsborough and Robert Andrews went to the same school but whereas Andrews came from a wealthy landowning family, Gainsborough was "from trade". The painting combines landscape and portraiture, he worked very fast using highly diluted oil paints to rapidly sketch in the backgrounds. He would have made sketches of the sitters' faces from life and completed the picture in his studio so the couple were not painted en plein air despite the picture showing their vast estate.

The sumptuous pale blue of Mrs Andrews' dress shows the painter's interest in fabrics but an unpainted area in her lap has puzzled art historians. The couple look less than happy and the sky shows gathering storm clouds - perhaps a reflection of their marriage? They did not feel the portrait to be flattering and it remained unseen until it was put on view in Ipswich in 1927 and bought by the National Gallery in 1960.

By Judy Greeman

Bookclub Monday Evening

This month we read and discussed "Blue Hawk" by Chloe Turner.



Set in 17th century Gloucestershire, "Blue Hawk" tells the story of Joan, and her poverty-stricken family, living in the Chalford Valley outside Stroud. This was a time when wool weaving and dying was an important industry, and the book is divided into three sections: Yellow, Scarlet and Blue.

*Image credit: Cover design by Deividas Jablonskis
Published by Deixis Press, 2024*

We found "Blue Hawk" an easy and informative read. Some of us found it enchanting, whilst others "a little draggy". Intriguingly, whilst some of the group enjoyed the story all the more because it had a local setting, others found this all too familiar, and as a result did not find it interesting. Not everyone enjoys historical fiction but on the whole we appreciated the historical accuracy of the story, with its slow pace of life. With modern eyes, the position of woman in

society at that time, especially for an educated woman, was frustrating, but it was fascinating to read about the plants involved in producing different colours for woollen dyes [yarrow, camomile, woad and madder].

Most of the action is viewed through the eyes of Joan, the central character, which could account for some of us feeling that something was lacking, and that other characters were a little weak, or inconsistent. One of the strong "characters" in the book is the countryside; peaceful and simple. This led us to a comparison with nearby Slad Valley described in Laurie Lee's "Cider with Rosie", which is a book of poetic personal reminiscences, rather than an entire work of historically researched fiction.

And finally the moral of the story is "Never trust any men, or your sister"! We gave the book a star rating of 3.4 out of 5.

By Corinne Hinton

Bookclub Wednesday

We managed to sit outside in sunshine for our April meeting when we discussed "The Sense of Belonging" by Julian Barnes, a new author for all of us. His penultimate book intrigued us all with themes of ageing, memory and regret.

Divided into two sections, the first part is set in the 1960's where Tony Webster and three intellectual, arrogant schoolboys vow to remain friends for life. There's a wonderful description of how they feel as though they are in 'holding pens' summarising their frustration and rush to get on with life, girls and sex!

In the second section the past catches up with Tony, he is divorced and retired when he receives a solicitor's letter telling him of a bequest. This forces him to re-establish contact with his first girlfriend and re-evaluate his memories of the past. A fascinating story that leads to a long discussion on the ending. We did wonder if that was Julian Barnes' intention!

Our next meeting will be on the 27th May when we'll have read "The Interview" by J David Simons.

By Pauline Whittaker

Garden Visits Group

This month we visited [Bowood Woodland Gardens](#)

A separate attraction on the Bowood Estate, the Woodland Garden is only open for a few weeks during the flowering season, and offers breathtaking vistas of colour and beauty. Covering over 30 acres and considered one of the county's most exciting gardens, originally laid out around 1854 by the 3rd Marquess of Lansdowne, it's described as an oasis of bluebells, azaleas, magnolias, and rhododendrons.



We met at the Nosh Box pop up café, and enjoyed refreshments in the sunshine, before walking round the grounds. We were really impressed with the extensive gardens, which included the family mausoleum, one of Robert Adam's most celebrated classical designs, commissioned in 1761 by the widow of the 1st Earl of Shelburne. The azaleas and rhododendrons were looking their best, with some unusual colours too. Definitely one to visit again.



Our next visit will take place on Friday 29th May, to nearby Hookshouse Pottery garden [hookshousepottery](http://hookshousepottery.com) at 10.30 am, where we will also hold a plant and seed swap. Then on Monday 8 June we will visit Hodges Barn and Glebe House, Shipton Moyne, which are open for the National Garden Scheme ngs.org.uk. We will meet at Hodges Barn near the entrance at 2 pm.

You can find details of our programme of visits at the groups page of our website <https://tetbury.u3asite.uk/>

By Caroline Hose

Historic Buildings Group

The Historic Buildings visit in May was to The Hall Estate in Bradford on Avon. 30 members attended the visit.



The Hall Estate features a Grade 1 listed Jacobean mansion. It was the home of pioneers in Britain's wool, rubber, and automotive products. During our guided tour, we discovered the story behind The Hall Estate, with over 400 years of remarkable history. From its early families to its place in Bradford-on-Avon's heritage, every room held a chapter waiting to be explored.

Our excellent volunteer guide provided lots of information about the people, architecture, and events that shaped this extraordinary house. We were particularly impressed with the displays relating to Dr Alex Moulton, who owned the estate in the 20th century. They showcased his contributions to engineering and design. Do you remember his revolutionary designed cycle with suspension - the first of its kind in the world? He collaborated with Sir Alex Issigonis in developing the cone suspension unit for the first Mini in 1959, used through to 2000. He went on to design the novel hydrolastic and hydragas suspension used in many vehicles from 1962 through to 2002.

The display featured some wonderful Eames design furniture, including two of the classic Eames lounge chairs with matching ottoman, and "Quad" electrostatic loudspeakers - some real 1960's nostalgia for us!



The Hall Estate is supported by The Alex Moulton Charitable Trust and promoted as a site of historical and architectural significance. It celebrates the work of Dr. Alex Moulton while also supporting the conservation of this historic building. We'd encourage you to visit this wonderful hidden gem. Please see [here](#) for more information about The Hall Estate.

Our June visits are to the A417 "Missing Link", and to Frocester Court. If you are a member of our Group, keep an eye on your email for the next invitations to book for the visits.

If you'd like to join our Group, contact us using the link on our Group page here: https://tetbury.u3asite.uk/u3a_groups/historic-buildings/

By David & Maggie Smith, Group Leaders

History Group

History and art: The d'Este at Ferrara by George Keeling



*Ferrara City
Image by alex1965 from Pixabay*

At the beginning of May the History Group were treated to a much-researched talk on the d'Este family who lived at Ferrara in Italy. Ferrara is situated in the north of Italy lying beside the river Po, and about 25 - 31 miles west of the Adriatic Sea. Today, Ferrara, despite not being a busy tourist town, is a UNESCO World Heritage city known for its buildings, frescoes, paintings and sculptures sponsored and financed by the d'Este family. During the fifteenth century under three members of the family - Leonello, Borso, and Ercole - the town enjoyed peace and prosperity, and became home to one of the greatest courts of Renaissance Italy.

The Este family first gained control of Ferrera in 1264, although the town belonged to the papacy, and for over three centuries maintained political control. They started their long rule over the town as marquesses, but this changed in 1471 when Borso d'Este was formally raised to the position of Duke.

Este Castle was built as a defence against the people of Ferrara under Niccolo II d'Este (reigned 1361-1388) following a taxation revolt when the townspeople invaded the Court Chancellery and killed the tax chief. It was during Niccolo II d'Este's reign that Ferrara started to gain a reputation as an art city.

Niccolo III d'Este (reigned 1393-1441) had a long reign spanning nearly five decades. His rule was defined by military campaigns, political intrigue and personal scandals. He was well known for fathering many children out of wedlock "Here and there beside the Po, All are children of Niccolo". Beyond politics and warfare he was also a patron of the arts and attracted many scholars, poets and artists to his court.

Marquess Leonello d'Este (reigned 1441-1450) focused his rule on culture rather than military expansion and created a stable period for Ferrara. He was a major patron of the artist Pisanello, and commissioned portrait medals. During his time Ferrera was increasingly known for art and culture - it was filled with painters, architects and scholars. Ferrara is considered a crucial birthplace of modern secular music due to the patronage of the Este dynasty during the Renaissance.

Borso d'Este (reigned 1450-1470) was considered very vain, and became not only the Duke of Ferrara from the Pope, but also the first Duke of Modena and Reggio from the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III. But image and power, were important to him and paintings featuring Borso wearing cloth of gold and a certain hat, were imbued with political messages. The most famous frescoes in Ferrara

are to be found in the "Hall of the Month" in the Palazzo Schifanoia painted by Francesco del Cossa, Cosme Tura and Ercole de Roberti who all worked under the patronage of Borso d'Este. Each painting features one month and depicts Borso doing good i.e. giving money to his fool or promoting the university or seamstresses of the town. As well as supporting the university, Borso d'Este is also remembered for endowing a richly illuminated Bible created between 1455 and 1461.

Ercole I (1471-1505) married Eleonora of Aragon. But during his time he faced a hostile coalition between Venice and Pope Sixtus IV, and during the battles conceded land right up to the walls of the city of Ferrara. In spite of these difficulties he doubled the size of the city building palaces, roads, squares and convents. He continued to patronise the arts including poetry, drama and musical art. It was one of his sons, Alfonso, who married Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of Pope Alexander VI.

This was a very interesting talk which only included a few personalities of the House of d'Este and the art they enabled in Ferrara.

by Corinne Hinton

Playreading Group 1

"Chips with everything"

We enjoyed the play reading in the snug at Steepleton, with carrot cake kindly supplied by Judith. The play follows the journey of a group of new recruits in post-war Britain. It examines the nature of class consciousness. Pip Thompson has been conscripted for national service in the Royal Air Force. Being a socialist he does not want to become an officer but would prefer to be treated as an ordinary airman. Pip's views stem from an experience whilst walking through the East End of London, seeing the squalor, typified by greasy cafés offering 'chips with everything'.

Pip is the only privately educated recruit in a draft of other National Service recruits. He has tried to buck the system by not applying for an officer's commission. The officers are hostile to his socio-political protest, and do everything they can to make him abandon his decision to join the ranks of

commissioned officers. Pip is essentially on an ego trip, but his experience with an escaped conscript, Smiler (an abused draftee) made Pip conform to his role as a middle-class member of society and accept a role as a commissioned officer.

This story allows the class system to be examined and, in particular, how powerful forces make sure people accept their place in society in post war Britain.

By Judith Tookey

And finally the deadline for contributions to the June newsletter is Monday 15th June.

Please send your articles to Caroline, your newsletter editor, at newsletttertetburyu3a@gmail.com

Groups

List of current groups - all are active and accepting new members except those indicated *

For further information and to register interest, visit the Groups page of our website tetbury.u3asite.uk

Art Appreciation	Golf
Aviation & Classic Cars	Historic Buildings
Backgammon (for fun)	History
Badminton	Mah-Jong
Board Games	Meditation & Mindfulness
Book Club Mondays	Photography
Book Club Wednesday	Pickleball
Boules - Friday	Play Reading 1
Boules - Wednesday	Play Reading 2
Computing - Apple beginners	Pub Lunch
Computing - technical support	Quiz
* Creative Writing Group 2 FULL - waiting list	Scrabble
*Creative Writing Group 1 FULL - waiting list	Short Breaks
Creative Writing Group 3	Short Walks - Friday
Cribbage	Short Walks - Thursday
Curry Club	Spanish - Advanced Beginners to Intermediate
Family History	Spanish - Advanced Intermediate to Fluent
French	*Ukulele FULL - waiting list
Garden Visits	Wine Tasting Group

u3a National Events

Online Learning Events

u3a members can join a wide range of online talks, workshops and courses for free with their membership. Most of these opportunities are presented by members themselves, sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement. There is also a wide range of talks on offer from well-known speakers and organisations, plus in-person events at venues like the Royal Institution.

All of these events can be booked at the link below via Eventbrite. Online events are hosted on Zoom - further information and 'how to' guides are here www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events

Want to be the first in the know? Sign up to receive regular monthly updates on upcoming events: [subscribe here](#)

Interest Groups Online

Interest Groups Online is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home. Like with a u3a, the activities are run by members and are a great way to meet people from all across the u3a movement.

It costs £12 to join for the year, equating to £1 per month. Membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of the next year. Membership and your groups are managed via the u3a Beacon Members Portal.

To become a member of Interest Groups Online you will need to fill out a short form and make your payment on the u3a Beacon Members Portal. As part of your subscription to Interest Groups Online, you can opt in to receive a free copy of the u3a magazine, Third Age Matters (TAM).

Take a look at the groups page for details on the wide variety of online groups, courses and talks, and how to join [interest groups online](#)