

Newsletter



The canal at Rushey Platt
Photograph by
David Hewitt

October 2021

Chair's 'Hello'

Introduction

By the time you read this the autumn equinox will be marking the turning of the year and summer will be fading to a memory. I hope you all managed to get a break from the normal humdrum – a quick flit to the sun (if you could face all the paperwork), a staycation perhaps or just a lovely summer party in the garden with friends and family. But before we get to feeling a bit down about the approach of winter, there is some good news!

Firstly, September marks the beginning of our u3a year and the restarting of most of our groups. Of course, some groups are holding back cautiously. We entirely understand that, but at the Committee meeting on 31st August there were already well over 1000 members who have renewed and our Membership Secretary told us of nearly 40 new members while our Groups Coordinator reported 84 Groups had already started and a further 30 were nearly ready to go. This enthusiasm is fantastic particularly in the face of increased social distancing and risk assessment paperwork and the constant news about a possible 3rd virus wave. What a brave and determined group you u3a-ers are. It feels like the wartime spirit all over again – “we’re not giving in; we’re supporting each other and we’ll stick it out!”

The Open Day

This rallying of our groups has all occurred *before* our traditional **Open Day on 23rd October at St Joseph's School** where we set out our stall and invite people to come and see what we have on offer. Do put the date in your diary and come along to support our Group Organisers and maybe even to spot yet *another* activity group you would like to join.

The Financial Situation

Of course, we remain mindful of the difficulties we have faced and continue to grapple with the issues concerning the financial situation. Our introduction of supplements has not pleased everyone and the implementation process has not always been smooth as both members most affected and Committee members have had to address some of the difficulties and implications. As with many complex changes the devil is often in the detail. However, we have overcome most of the immediate issues and are moving forward more positively. I repeat that we will be undertaking a review of the supplements in the light of up-to-date

information on membership and income/expenditure over the autumn period. At our last Committee meeting we also began a more fundamental review of how we operate and over the coming months we will be looking at various alternative models including visiting other u3as.

News

We have several vacancies for volunteers to help us out. Our Assistant Treasurer Viv Dipper will be standing down in November. She has done a great job and our Treasurer, Graham Reeve, will certainly need to replace her. Could this be the job for you? We also need someone to join our Events team and help organise our social events – a brilliant job for someone with ideas to help get us going again with speakers, quizzes, get togethers. And here's another date for your diaries: we are planning a u3a **Christmas Party on 17th December**. Please come and join us, meet the Committee, make some new chums and enjoy some good old-fashioned Christmas entertainment.

And finally, talking of get togethers, we are planning to hold some focus groups to meet with small groups of members to get feedback and ideas to help us plan the future. You may well get an invitation to join a group and I hope you'll come and share your ideas. We are all in this together to learn, laugh, live.

Gill Brain

Swindon u3a AGM

***** Important Notice *****

Due to recent restrictions, the Ellendune Community Centre is no longer able to accommodate sufficient members for this year's AGM to be held there. For that reason, the AGM, which will take place at 2.15 on Monday 8th November will now be held at **The Coleview Community Centre, Towcester Road, Swindon SN3 4AS**. We apologise for any inconvenience but it is important that the venue can safely hold all those members who wish to attend. The Coleview Community Centre has its own car park. The number 23 bus from Fleming Way stops on Towcester Road. Please try to be there.

Sue Carvey

Trustee Vacancies

At the AGM (2.15 on 8th Nov. at **Coleview Community Centre**) members can elect up to 12 u3a members to become trustees of the charity and represent the membership on the management committee.

8 of the present trustees are prepared to stand for re-election. Viv Dipper, Patricia Scaplehorn, Bryan Neaves and Jim Sinclair have decided not to stand again. If you or someone you know has the time and energy to devote to getting Swindon u3a back on its feet after the difficult times, then now's your chance. To make a nomination go to www.swindonu3a.org.uk and follow the link on the Home Page. Alternatively you can drop in to the office or ring for a nomination form. Interested? Get in touch with secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk for more details.

Minutes Secretary

After several years of taking, storing and distributing the minutes of management committee meetings, we will miss Patricia Scaplehorn as she feels that the time has come to step down. We need a volunteer to take on what she has found to be a very interesting and worthwhile role. Patricia is happy to spend time with her successor to help bed them in and Alex, our webmaster, will provide any help needed. Although the minutes secretary will obviously attend committee meetings, **this is no longer a trustee role and no election is required** - just a willing volunteer. If you think that this seems like the role for you, email secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk for more info.

Sue Carvey
General Secretary



Monica's Tea Squad

If you've been a member of Swindon u3a for a few years and have attended The Monthly Meeting, a New Members' Meeting, or other u3a event, you may remember a friendly group of faces who provided you with tea or coffee and a biscuit. Muriel and some of her Ladies have decided to take a well earned rest and so we're looking for volunteers to help out. Thankfully [Monica Brian](#), one of Muriel's Ladies, has stepped into the breach but more help is needed. If you would like to join the squad, please contact Monica by clicking on her name . You don't have to be a lady!



Swindon u3a Open Day Saturday 23rd October

**St Joseph's College
Ocotal Way
off Drakes Way
SN3 3LR
10.00 am to 12.30 pm**

Come and talk to members of the groups and see what's on offer.

Swindon New College Training Restaurant

Opens from 21st September 2021

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for lunch

Thursday for dinner

3 course lunch £9.95 2 course lunch £7.95

3 course dinner £15.50 2 course dinner £13.50

Christmas meals being served from 23rd November 2021

To make a reservation please email: faith.marles@newcollege.ac.uk

Telephone: 01793 498244

All change for the Jazz Appreciation Group

We meet monthly on the 4th Friday afternoon at Liden Community Centre to enjoy and explore all the varied genres with Jazz and associated music, such as Blues. We welcome new members, not just those who have followed this music for years, but those for whom it's a new adventure.

Regrettably, during the Lockdown we have lost both of our Leaders and our Blues expert, so it's "All Change" forced on us.

Alan Bushell founded the group close to 20 years ago. He passed away in 2020, 24 years after major heart surgery gave him a great new lease of active life.

David Dale became Joint Leader in 2015 to assist Alan, and increasingly became the lead at meetings, manning the desk with Alan handling the admin and programme issues. Unfortunately, David became ill in March 2021 so sought new Leaders with whom he was working on a handover. Sadly, he died on 30th June.

Graham Arrondelle was the Bluesman, contributing monthly to our own Len Morphew's Sunday evening Jazz programme on Swindon 105.5. He was also an expert Bass Guitarist who played with many of the UK's top artists. In 2019 we became aware that he had some health issues, and unfortunately, we lost him too.

All will be much missed.

So we needed, and have, a new team.

The new leaders are Ed Sexton and Alan Rothwell, plus David Day as a key member, and luckily we have the help, advice, and great resources of information and music provided by Len Morphew, who is also the Leader of The Mid-West Big Band.

And, importantly, 3 of the ladies have volunteered to look after the refreshments to keep the wheels, and us, moving. Hopefully, ladies will also contribute to the Leadership team, and men's help with the refreshments and other tasks will be welcome.



We have agreed the Autumn Programme:

September 24th, A Tribute to Alan, David and Graham, each of whom had diverse interests within the Jazz and Blues areas, so it will be an eclectic mix!

October 22nd, David Day will lead on “The Clarinet in Jazz”

November 26th, Ed Sexton presents “British Big Bands”

December 17th (not 24th), is a light-hearted invitation to members to bring and discuss a favourite CD, DVD or Download. Previously, this has been very successful and produced a lot of new and unexpected music.

David Dale had put a lot of effort into ideas for 2022 and beyond, which are being built on and added to. We are especially looking at new areas and upcoming artists, as well as the old masters. And, hopefully, we will be able to get some live music too.

Please wish us luck with our big leap into the unknown.

The JAG Leadership Team

Singing Group needs a new Singing Leader

We love singing but we are not a choir. Many of us have little or no previous singing experience. We'd like to improve but we are looking for fun not perfection. Our theme song is:

<p>THE HAPPY SONG I don't sing because I'm happy I'm happy because I sing</p>

We hope to re-start as soon as possible. We are looking for a **NEW SINGING LEADER** to guide us. If it could be you or you know someone who might help, please get in touch.

For further information and to register an interest as a singer or as a singing leader please contact:

[Ken Stimson](#)

Click on his name to make contact

Hybrid Meetings

You probably know what hybrid roses are but would you be able to describe a hybrid meeting?

“Hybrid” has become one of the ‘in’ words of the last few years and its application to meetings has been hastened by the pandemic and the increased use of Zoom to help us keep in touch.

In simple terms a hybrid meeting is one which *combines* two different ways in which members meet. We are all used to face-to-face meetings – that after all is at the heart of u3a groups where friends meet together to share a common interest. Most of us have probably become used to Zoom meetings during lockdown when the only way of keeping in touch with loved ones was by using Zoom technology. Well, hybrid meetings *combine* these two ways of meeting in *one* meeting.



A hybrid meeting, then, is one where some people are meeting physically in the good old-fashioned way and others are joining in the same meeting via Zoom (or similar technology). It might sound horribly complex and rather off-putting for those of us without a technological frame of mind but it need not be. For the majority of us it simply requires a laptop using Zoom for those who wish to attend the meeting remotely and who are therefore seen and can take part via the screen. The other members are in the room as normal. There are many help videos on YouTube including one designed by the u3a. There are, of course, various extras one can add if so inclined but the basic principle is simple and worth a try if it might suit your group.

What are the advantages of hybrid meetings? In normal times it probably isn't necessary but the pandemic has created a different environment. For those members who would like to attend groups but are cautious and possibly vulnerable, joining the meeting remotely may help them to feel less isolated and still part of our u3a family. And, pandemic aside, it may be that for members who have mobility issues, or transport difficulties, or other commitments which make attendance difficult, hybrid meetings may offer a way of promoting further the inclusive nature of the u3a. It is likely that the use of hybrid meetings will increase in future.

Hybrid meetings may sound rather overwhelming and too difficult to contemplate but could they be the way to get your group re-started, to keep members involved and to give everyone a chance to take part? Ask for help if you'd like to take this idea further – it's not that scary, it might be fun to give it a go. Just remember that Socrates was deeply worried that the technology of writing would affect society.

Gill Brain

Pre internet chat room using
An old version of windows...



Copy Dates

Items for the November Newsletter must be received by
10th October

Items for the December Newsletter must be received by
7th November

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter contributions e-mail address shown on page 12.

Geoff Bryan

To Meet or Not to Meet?

That is indeed the question we face on a daily basis. With Autumn upon us and a perpetually uncertain situation regarding Covid 19, we have difficult decisions to make. Does 'learning to live' with Covid 19 mean carrying on as we did before or does it mean making adjustments: the so-called 'new normal'?



How we make those choices can be influenced by a variety of factors. Are you a glass half-full or a glass half-empty kind of person? Are you a natural risk taker or risk averse? For those with underlying health conditions or with caring responsibilities for vulnerable people, the balance is tipped in favour of caution. Those enjoying good health and keen to get on with enjoying their third age may feel more confident

about and even impatient to return to a full programme of u3a activities.

Dare we hope for some October sunshine which might offer some opportunities for meeting outdoors where the risks are lower? Could u3a play a part in helping people keep in touch – perhaps through the newly created Facebook group? Visit: [Swindonu3a](#). Would those whose groups are not yet running or who do not yet feel comfortable to return to them, welcome opportunities to meet with other u3a members in mutually agreed safer environments? Could a flexible, creative approach help us through the Autumn months? If you have any ideas or suggestions, I would be pleased to hear from you.

©2010 Kevin Spear kevin@kevinspear.com www.kevinspear.com



"This year, I resolve to stay away from unnecessary risks."



[Jill Kelly](#)

Membership Liaison Secretary

Contact Jill by clicking on her name

Short Mat Bowls

We have vacancies in our Short Mat Bowls Group on a Wednesday morning from 10:00 to 11:30 at Haydon Wick Community Centre. If you would like to join us for a friendly session of bowls please contact me for further details.

[Elsie Johnson](#)

Contact Elsie by clicking on her name



Parking at the Open Day

Help Needed!

A couple of willing bodies are required to act as parking attendants at the Swindon u3a Open Day on Saturday, 23rd October at St Joseph's College, 8.30 to 12.30.

You would be working alongside people who've done it before and full training will be given.

Contact Bob by clicking on his name if you'd like to join the team.

[Bob Carvey](#)

Office

Swindon U3A Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street,
Swindon, SN2 8DA

(entry is by middle door on right hand side of building)

Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am until 12 noon

Telephone : 01793 614629

(Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email : office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web : www.swindonu3a.org.uk

Charity Number 298853

List of Email Addresses

Chair	chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
All members of committee	committee@swindonu3a.org.uk
Accommodation	accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk
Data Protection	secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk
Electronic news distribution	enews@swindonu3a.org.uk
General enquiries	office@swindonu3a.org.uk
Groups coordinator	group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk
Health & Safety	healthandsafety@swindonu3a.org.uk
Membership Liaison Secretary	membership@swindonu3a.org.uk
Newsletter contributions	newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk
Office manager	office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk
Office administration	office@swindonu3a.org.uk
Secretary	secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk
Speaker organisers (Monthly Meetings)	speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk
Treasurer	treasurer@swindonu3a.org.uk
Treasury Team for Accommodation	treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk
Banking	
Visits	
Webmaster	webmaster@swindonu3a.org.uk

The Editor reserves the right to amend or abbreviate any entries submitted.

We should also like to point out that any views expressed are not necessarily those of the organisation or of the Editor.