

u3a

Swindon

learn, laugh, live



Newsletter

December 2021

Chair's Hello

I am writing this in mid-November and already the country seems to be preparing for Christmas. By the time you read this I suspect the Christmas trees will be up and shining, the Christmas lights will be twinkling around gates, walls, eaves, and the panic about presents (and will there be a shortage of turkeys?) will have set in. In other words, hopefully, unlike last year, this Christmas will be one in which most of us can resume more normal festive behaviour!

Swindon u3a has almost resumed normality too. In spite of the continued anxiety about Covid, a wonderfully large number of members have renewed their subscriptions, re-started their groups and have enjoyed returning to learning and meeting up with u3a friends. The various issues that we have had to face (e.g. supplements, risk assessments, venues) haven't stopped most of us from resuming 'normal' u3a life. We have proved to be a resilient group intent on living life to the full. We have also added a large number of new members and I extend a warm welcome to you all as you join our u3a family.

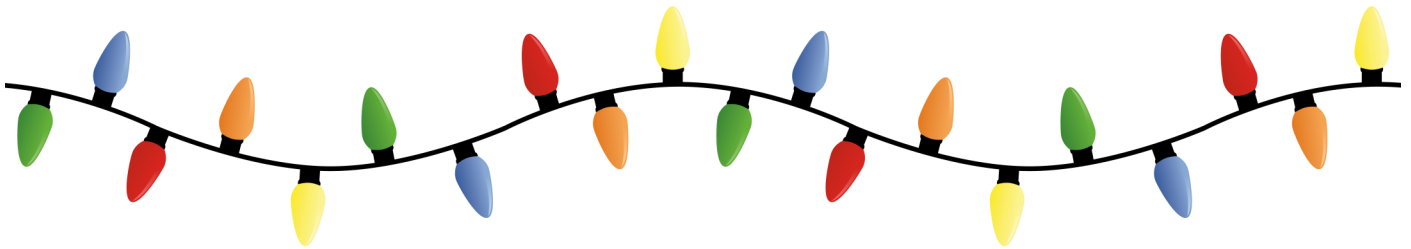
The Committee continues to work hard to deal with both the operational and strategic issues which face us. Firstly, our October Open Day was ably planned by the Events Team under the direction of our Vice Chair, Linda Young. Congratulations to the team for enabling a successful event and thanks to all the Group Organisers who attended. We put on a wonderful display of the diversity of the u3a activities. Our AGM has been a bit more problematic and, bearing in mind the continued risks of Covid, we eventually decided that it was not responsible to hold a large in-person meeting. We will therefore be holding an on-line AGM on December 6th. Please try to attend if you possibly can. Our General Secretary, Sue Carvey, and Webmaster, Alex Cranswick, are putting a lot of effort in ensuring this goes as smoothly as possible.

A huge thank you also to those of you who are taking part in our Focus Groups. Your input will help us in our important planning for the future of our organisation. During December and January we will be moving towards some important decisions, especially concerning our financial situation and we will input a wealth of information, including that from Focus Groups, into this decision making process. In addition, I know that all the Committee members are enjoying meeting members face to face, getting to know you better and listening to your ideas. I will keep you fully informed on all these matters as we progress.

And so, as we ring out the old and ring in the new, I wish you all a very merry Christmas and look forward to a 2022 which brings us improved health and happiness.

Gill

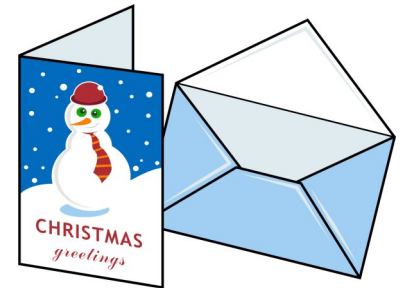




Christmas Party December 17th 2021

Here is your invitation to our u3a 2021 Christmas Party

Where: Ellendune Community Centre
When: December 17th
Time: 7.15pm for 7.30pm Sleights at 9.30pm



Please come and join in the fun. There will be Christmas singing, Christmas bells, Christmas poetry, Christmas quiz, Christmas flowers and much more – in fact everything that we missed last year when Christmas was cancelled. No cancellation this year – we're determined to have a really good time! Don't worry if you are on your own. I'm reserving places at my table just for you! Your attendance would really add to the festive spirit. Please do join us. Put it in your diary now.

For safety we do need to know who and how many are coming so please book your place(s) via the website booking system. If you go on to the website you will see Christmas Party on the very front page. Just click and book. If you prefer, contact me directly.

See you there for a holly, jolly time.

[Gill Brain](#)

Click or tap her name to send message

A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and Happy New Year!



Swindon u3a AGM
6th December 2021, 2.00 for 2.15 by Zoom



to those who have already registered for the AGM

Hopefully, this will be the last we will hear of the AGM for this year unless we don't get the 100 members needed to make the meeting valid. If that is the case, we will have to do it all over again, and I'm sure nobody wants that! Please, if you haven't already registered and you are able to, register now. You can do this from the Home page of the website. All you need are your name and u3a number. If you are unsure of the name(s) you can use or your 2021/2022 number, get in touch with me by clicking on my name and asking the question. I'll get back to you with the info you need.

If you missed the email towards the beginning of November with the documents you might want to read before the meeting, you can "[Click here to go to the home page](#)". To access them you will need your name, u3a number and email address. If you are interested in the finances of our u3a, a particularly useful document is the **AGM 2021 FAQs** prepared by the Treasurer, Graham Reeve.

At the AGM you are welcome to ask questions and to help us manage these efficiently during the meeting, please submit your questions in advance. You will also be able to do this from the Home page of the website. All questions should be received by 12 noon on Friday, 3rd December.

[Sue Carvey](#)

Copy Dates

Items for the January Newsletter must be received by

11th December

Items for the February Newsletter must be received by

12th January

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter contributions e-mail address shown at the end.

Geoff Bryan

Life in a poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

Alfred Williams was born in South Marston in 1877. A poet and collector of folk songs, he wrote his first books of poetry while labouring in the railway works in Swindon. The son of a carpenter, he grew up in poverty after his father abandoned his wife and eight children. He became a farm labourer at eleven, and then, when he was fourteen, he entered Swindon Railway Works where he worked as a steam hammer operator for the next twenty-three years. Nicknamed “The Hammerman Poet”, he served in India during World War One and wrote several poems about the landscape there. His poetry is rooted in the beloved Wiltshire where he lived most of his life. Largely self-taught, Williams published six volumes of poetry and a series of prose books about his home villages, but died in poverty in 1930 in South Marston. His famous book: *Life in a Railway Factory* has been described as “being undisputed as the most important literary work ever produced in Swindon, about Swindon.”

Although rather old style by today's standards, there is something very moving about Alfred Williams' determination to write poetry. I find this example particularly poignant. I hope you enjoy it.

On the Road to Baydon

How still, how solitary are the heights
That round me in a sweeping circle lie!
A hazy texture intercepts the sky,
The glimmering field is strewn with golden lights;
The languorous air to soothing sleep invites;
No breath to mar the stillness, not a sigh!
No rustling cricket's chirp, nor any cry,
No pewees wheeling their aerial flights.
It seems that every living thing were fled;
Suspended Nature hung aside her lute;
That ghostly Silence, from the land of dread,
Stole hitherward our senses to confute;
That the inhabitable world were dead;
Language unheard of, sound itself were mute.

Alfred Williams



Group News

Travel Groups G & C

Advanced notice of trips in February and March 2022

Tuesday 1st February - Oakham Treasures

Monday 14th March - Bletchley Park

Full details will be in future newsletters but any member interested please contact [Bill Mead](#) by clicking on his name.



Railway Interest Group

An appeal for help!

The Railway Interest Group meets monthly at STEAM and are entertained and informed by such speakers we can find. But.....they all want money these days and the exercise is getting a bit expensive even to the point where we must consider our future.

I reckon that other groups have come up against this problem and found a solution so please share it with us before we run out of ideas.

[Phil Eagle](#)

Contact the Group Coordinator by clicking on his name

Short Mat Bowls

We have spaces in our Monday morning Short Mat Bowls Group 3 11.00am – 12.30pm at Haydon Wick Sports centre.

Come along to get some gentle exercise.

We are a friendly group with all abilities having fun.

All equipment is provided with coaching if necessary and only flat shoes required.

[Terry Rogers](#)

Contact the Group organiser by clicking on his name

Romeo and Juliet

The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School is offering us discounted tickets on the Theatre School's upcoming production, Romeo and Juliet, which is playing at the Redgrave Theatre in Bristol between Friday 3th December and Friday 10th December. There are a range of both matinee and evening performances.

Our theatre group are happy to aggregate ticket purchases to get this excellent price but you will need to make your own way there.

Tickets are ordinarily £16 but for U3A groups of 10 or more they are offering tickets at £10 per head. To access this rate, **please contact the Theatre Group organiser by clicking on her name.** [Anne Hembury](#)

For details of the production with times and date, please see the [Redgrave Theatre's website](#). The running time is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes including a 20 minutes interval and we hope that the show might make a wonderful pre-Christmas trip for you. Nearby Clifton village has a range of restaurants and independent shops.

You might not be familiar with Bristol Old Vic Theatre School itself, but you will be aware of their alumni: Olivia Colman, Sir Daniel Day-Lewis and Sir Patrick Stewart to name but a few. Go along this December to see the stars of tomorrow in action!



Built in 1966 the Redgrave Theatre was originally known simply as the 'Clifton College Theatre'. The design was based on the Mermaid Theatre in London and was the first purpose built school theatre in the country.

The theatre was officially opened by the actor Sir Michael Redgrave - an ex-student of the college. After Sir Michael's death in 1985 the building was renamed 'The Redgrave Theatre' in his honour.

Be aware of potential scams

There are many different scams out there and you may have come across some already. You need to be on your guard all the time and never fall into the trap of “it can never happen to me” because that is when it will happen to you. Scammers script and rehearse their approach as well as any Shakespeare group. What are the warning signs to look out for?

Someone contacts you out of the blue either by telephone, email or letter. If you haven't asked them to contact you, be suspicious. They send these initial contacts out to thousands of people, not just you, and hope to get a few replies. They usually do and this is where they make their living.

Repeat contacts from the same company. These will seem friendly and helpful but they are just confidence builders to hook you in and take your money.

Somebody offers you a quick way to make big returns on your investments or pension. If it were possible to get these returns everybody would be doing it.

Anyone who suggests moving your money to a new bank account because your money is at risk of being stolen. Banks never ask you to do this.

Anyone who asks for payment in cash for work done or proposed work. Banks try to stop you doing this by querying or stopping large cash withdrawals. Scammers will tell you what to say to your bank to get round this. This is a red flag.

Phone calls from your bank's security department asking you for your details. Scammers will sound very convincing and even get the bank's real phone number to come up on your phone. Don't engage in any conversation with them except to say thank you and hang up. Then call the bank yourself, preferably from another phone.



If you have doubts about any phone call, email or letter do not follow it up. Discuss it with someone you trust: a family member, friend or neighbour. Don't let the scammers fool you into parting with anything.

Bob Carvey

The Davy Notebooks Project

Are you looking for something to keep you occupied during the long winter days when it's more difficult to get out and about? Are you interested in science or poetry? If so you might like to take part in the Davy Project. Dr Andrew Lacey of the University of Lancaster contacted Swindon u3a to ask for help in transcribing Davy's notebooks.

Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) discovered more chemical elements than any individual has before or since. His achievements saw him rise up through society's ranks from relatively modest origins to become, just over 200 years ago, the President of the Royal Society.

In 1815, he invented a miners' safety lamp that came to be known as the Davy Lamp, saving countless lives in Britain and Europe, and vastly improving the nation's industrial capability.

Davy kept notebooks throughout his life, but most of the pages of these notebooks have never been transcribed before. Most entries have yet to be dated or considered in the light of what they tell us about Davy, his scientific discoveries, and the relationship between poetry and science. Images of the notebooks will be available on a free to access website as part of the Lancaster Digital collections.

To find out more go to Zooniverse <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/humphrydavy/davy-notebooks-project/classify/workflow/18786>

Sue Carvey



Image: Front endpaper and p.1 of Davy notebook RI MS HD/15/F (c. 1805), courtesy of the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

Craft group in Royal Wootton Bassett

Following a question about knitting groups in u3a by members who had difficulty travelling to the Swindon groups, it was suggested to set up one locally. So the knitting group was formed. Aiming at first to support the Brighter Future projects the knitting needles began clicking. Soon other projects were suggested. Knitted flowers for all the shop windows for the Bassett in Bloom project helped win gold for the town, poppies for Remembrance Day, bottle tops for Age Concern, 250 sent, town figures to decorate a tree in the town's Christmas tree festival, squares for blankets, baby items for the premature babies, twiddle muffs etc. As well as supporting members to develop knitting and crochet skills it became a community supporting people new to the area and those who for various reasons needed friendly support.

As for everyone the effects of COVID lockdown was devastating.

We tried to keep in touch by email but like many groups we lost several members or their relations over the months and when possible sent messages of sympathy and support.

Restarting the group has been a challenge, not only because of the reluctance of many to mix in company again but also our venue restricted the opening hours. This meant rearranging the time and clashing with other established groups so people had to make choices.

However the knitting needles are clicking again but also rebranding as a crafting group has encouraged hand sewing, embroidery, loom knitting, colouring in for those who are finding it too difficult to knit or sew. Any hand craft that can be done without machines and within the confines of the venue is possible. The advantage being sharing knowledge and giving support in a friendly environment.

Other benefits being people see us working in the group and often ask about what we are doing and our group. Spreading an awareness of the u3a which may not be immediately useful to them but they will spread the information and remember when they or their family are looking for a hobby. Often we are approached with requests to buy something or can an article be made for them? Our reply is always everything is made for charities or personal use. Many people are happy with this and give generously.

Our present project is Santa Sacks. Obviously we can't machine in the venue but we encourage people to contribute by donating materials new or recyclable for those who can machine sew at home. In the group decorations can be made from felt or knitted to be attached as well as those to decorate in the home.



The group is small at the moment, but new members male and female are welcome and I know the future is bright. With the ethos of crafting and friendship where there is support even if you have a day where you don't achieve because arthritis is playing up it doesn't matter you are still welcome.

[**Kathrene Fairgrieve**](#)

Click or tap her name to send a message

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Treasury Team for Accommodation Banking Visits	treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk
Webmaster	webmaster@swindonu3a.org.uk

Management Committee

Chair	Gill Brain
Vice-chair	Linda Young
Treasurer	Graham Reeve
Assistant Treasurer	Viv Dipper
Secretary	Sue Carvey
Office Manager	Sylvia Alexander
Membership Liaison	Jill Kelly
Accommodation	Chris Ockwell
Webmaster	Alex Cranswick
Groups Co-ordinator	Linda Young (Acting)
Health and Safety	Vacant

Key Tasks (Non committee)

Minutes Secretary	Brenda Lammin
Office manager (Assistant)	Glenys Bettley
Speakers organiser	Vacant

Office

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

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Charity Number 298853

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.