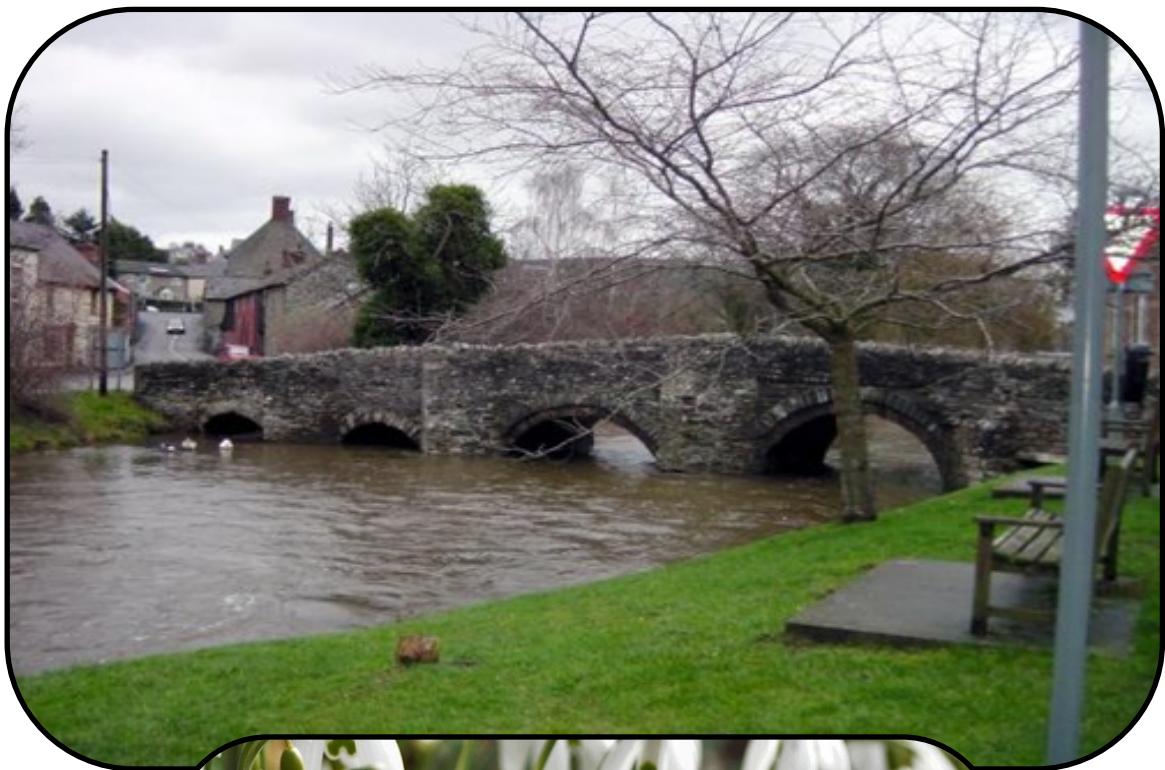


u3a
Swindon

learn, laugh, live

Newsletter
February 2022



Chair's Hello

My last greeting to you all was well before Christmas and seems such a long time ago now. I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year in spite of the Omicron cloud that dominated our festivities. As you know, in spite of holding out hope till the very last, it became sadly necessary to cancel our own u3a Christmas party as the virus figures spiralled. The recent news of the virus receding is more than welcome. Nevertheless, in 2022, we are entering a new world, having to be extra vigilant even as we return to some sort of normality in our daily lives. The good news is that so many of you have restarted your groups and are back to enjoying your u3a activities and the friendly company of fellow members. Our records show that about 150 groups are now back to operating although some continue to use zoom for the time being.

The Committee as you know have spent the last 6 months or more grappling with the issues surrounding our financial situation and have examined in depth several possible alternative courses of action. We have networked with some other u3as of similar size, have listened to members who joined our focus groups and have examined the figures from all angles, finally narrowing down our alternatives to two main options. By the time you read this you will have been sent a background paper and an invitation to join us in one of four face-to-face groups we have set up to explain these options, give our reasoning, answer your questions and listen to your comments. Please do try to attend one of these groups – we have chosen venues across Swindon and at differing times throughout February to make it easier for you. To book in please go to the web-site where you will find information on the front page. If you are unable to book online please just turn up and you will be welcome. I hope to see you at one of these meetings.

7th February 2.00pm at Gorse Hill Community Centre

16th February 2.00pm Liden Community Centre

24th February 10.00am at Coleview Community Centre

2nd March 2.00pm at St Michael's Hall, Lechlade Rd, Highworth

2022 also offers two major opportunities for us to celebrate our u3a. In June there will be an extra public holiday for the Queen's Jubilee and in September a major national u3a Day to mark 40 years since the birth of the u3a movement. u3as throughout the country will be celebrating and we shall be starting to think ahead about these events soon. If you have any ideas to contribute to our future plans for either, or both occasions please do share them.

We are also very aware that members who joined us in 2021 have not been invited to the usual New Members meeting. In normal times this takes place soon after they have joined us and it is an opportunity to both welcome you and provide some useful information about Swindon u3a.

But better late than never! We are planning a New Members meeting on the morning of 26th February and again I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.

As has been the case for nearly a year, the Committee are operating with a number of vacancies which puts a large burden on a few people. If you think you could volunteer to join us and help with any of our tasks, please get in touch with me or any other member of the Committee to discuss further.

I look forward to meeting many of you at one or more of our upcoming events. With warm wishes for a safe and enjoyable u3a year ahead.

Gill



Search Facebook

[Swindon u3a Facebook \(click or tap to go to our Facebook page\)](#)

A few months ago, I created a Facebook page for our u3a. This is by no means unusual. Many u3as have such a page and there are also a number of cross u3a Facebook pages for groups throughout the UK to share information and ideas. During the early days of the pandemic the national u3a also created a page to enable people to keep in touch and cheer each other up.

Now I know not all of you approve of Facebook and I understand many of the reasons why. Like many other communication media, it can be exploited and misused for negative purposes. The telephone breeds cold callers, the post brings junk mail, the newspaper letters pages bring strident and negative opinions. For many people Facebook is a way for keeping regularly in touch with friends and family, for sharing ideas and experiences and having some fun. It can also be a very quick and efficient form of communication. There is no need to get hooked into the more negative aspects. I simply ignore these when I come across them and keep with the positive.

Our Facebook page now has over 100 users but I would like to see more interaction and input from more of our members. It could become an excellent way to express your views, tell us what your groups do, canvas for new members, tell us about your fantastic ideas, create new groups with like-minded people. I and the other Committee members could also use it to get information out and about to members quickly and easily. It will never replace our other communication methods. We are well aware that some members don't even have emails and we still have to communicate with them via post. Others still find using the web-site difficult. However, there is no reason not to see it as an additional way in which we can communicate.

Why not join us u3a Facebookers if you haven't already?

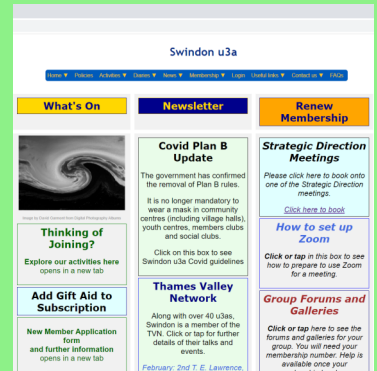
Gill

You Talk We Listen



Recently, the question was asked, “Why does the Home Page of the website come up with a message along the lines of, **Not Secure?**”

This issue has now been resolved by our webmaster. When you access the Swindon u3a website, you will see a closed padlock symbol indicating that the website is safe to use. Please remember though, that no website can ever be guaranteed 100% safe. The padlock symbol, however, does mean that information going backwards and forwards between your device and our website is happening over a secure, encrypted connection.



Sue Carvey

Merribells Handbell Ringers

Merribells have vacancies in their B Group. We are a small friendly group who enjoy making music for our own enjoyment, on an outstanding set of Handbells.

Although the ability to read music is helpful, it is by no means essential. Non music readers can easily cope with our system. We meet on alternate Thursdays at the Gorse Hill Community Centre from 10am to 12 noon.

You can make contact with us through the u3a office and your enquiry will be dealt with swiftly.



Francis Hobbs

Group Coordinator

New Members' Meeting

“If at first you don't succeed”, as the saying goes... So, we are trying again to hold a meeting for those of you who have joined us since June 1st. There are over 170 of you which is great news. We really hope that many of you will join us.

The meeting is planned for Saturday 26th February from 10.00am to 12.00 noon. Venue: St Joseph's Catholic College, Ocotol Way SN3 3LR.

New members will be receiving an e-mail with more details very soon. We know that a few of you do not have e-mail addresses and we will be contacting you by post.

The trustees are very much looking forward to meeting you.

Jill Kelly

Membership Liaison Secretary

Something New?

Whilst the range of activities on offer is already wide, it is always good to hear ideas for new groups, particularly if they offer something a little different from the current provision.

In these uncertain times, it can seem challenging to plan ahead but now would be a good time to start thinking about how we might develop new areas to explore ready for when we feel more comfortable about meeting in person.

For a new group to become successfully established requires a few things to happen. There needs to be sufficient interest for a group to be viable. Activities which can be held in members' homes or other cost free venues are perhaps the easiest to set up and can begin with small numbers. Groups needing paid for venues require a little more planning and enough members to make them workable. All activities depend on members being active participants and one or more members willing to take on the admin tasks needed to support the group.

Recently I have been asked if there might be interest in a "food and wine" type activity- something that runs successfully in other u3as. This could well be an example of a group which could 'start small' and perhaps develop over time. It would need people who were prepared to take their turn in hosting, sharing their knowledge (however limited!) and ideas for a format that would work for those interested.



Fans of "The Repair Shop," "Money for Nothing," and similar TV programmes might be interested in a recent suggestion of some kind of "Repair, Re-cycle, Re-use" group. This could appeal to people with a range of skills and interests: artists, environmentalists, skilled craftsmen and women.

Please get in touch if you are interested in any of these suggestions and have ideas to share.

Jill Kelly

Membership Liaison Secretary

Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize April 2022



This is a gentle reminder that the Swire Ridgeway Arts Prize is coming up. There will be an exhibition in the Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington (Broad Street, Uffington, Oxfordshire, SN7 7RA) open to the public on Saturday 2nd April and Sunday 3 April 2022 with an associated online exhibition. The prize giving will be Sunday 3 April 2022 as part of the Ridgeway Friends Day. Details of how to submit your works are set out in the Rules. The closing date for entries is 3rd March 2022.

The main points of the prize competition are:

- There will be separate classes for painting, sculpture (including ceramics and textiles), photography and writing (poetry or prose);
- Competition is open to all artists, amateur and professional, of any age;
- Art work submitted must be produced in the 24 months prior to closing date;
- The results of the competition will be announced and prizes awarded at the Ridgeway Friends Day planned for 3rd April 2022;
- The closing date for entries shall be one month prior to the Ridgeway Friends Day (i.e. 3rd March 2022);

The full rules of the competition are given in a separate document.

If you are interested in entering the competition, more details about the competition, competition rules and an entry form are available by email from newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk

The Future of Swindon u3a



At the time of writing (31.01.22) 43 members have signed up for the consultation meetings where you will hear about possible subscription models, be able to ask questions and make your views known. If you are able, please do come along. If you are unable to come to any of the meetings yet want to make your feelings known email me at secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk or by clicking on my name below. As Gill said in her Strategic Direction email

sent out by Linda on 28.01.22, committee members won't enter into a debate by email but I will ensure that all views expressed to me via email are passed to all committee members and if you have any questions and can't attend a meeting, please direct them to me and I will pass them to the appropriate committee member for an answer which I will ensure you receive, although this may be after the last consultation meeting which is on 2nd of March. The committee will make the final decision on how subscription levels and supplements will be calculated for the next year (2022/23) at the end of March.

Please make sure your voice is heard.

Sue Carvey

Christmas Quiz Answers

1. White
2. Cinderella
3. Morecambe and Wise
4. Panettone
5. George V (fifth) (in 1932)
6. Hen
7. C. S. Lewis' The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe
8. Bucks Fizz
9. Aldi
10. Chris Rea
11. The Snowman
12. Pigs in blankets
13. Sir Isaac Newton
14. Norway
15. The Nutcracker
16. Blue
17. Everyone in the household (for luck)
18. Adam Faith
19. Advocaat
20. Hansel and Gretel

Life in a Poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

Mary Oliver, 1935-2019, was a prize-winning American poet who took her inspiration from the natural world. This beautiful poem seems a perfect fit for our post lockdown lives; I hope you enjoy it.



Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

SWINDON FILM SOCIETY screens the best new film releases from around the world as part of a programme of films shown between September and April each year. Our films are screened on **Wednesdays at 7.45pm at the Arts Centre in Devizes Road, Old Town, Swindon**. The guest price is £9 per film, discounts for members are available.

System Crasher
Wednesday 2nd March

9 year old Benni is out of control, a 'system crasher', but her goal is to be back home with her mum.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood
Wednesday 30th March
A moving film about friendship and forgiveness.

Full details of all this season's films can be found on the SFS website: <http://www.swindonfilm.org.uk/> . This link also can be found on the Swindon U3A website under the Diaries dropdown, website front page: (Diary of Local non-U3A Events for Swindon U3A)



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Charity Number 298853

Copy Dates

Items for the March Newsletter must be received by

25th February

Items for the April Newsletter must be received by

1st April

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter
contributions e-mail address:

newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk

Geoff Bryan

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.