

learn, laugh, live



Happy Christmas

Chair's Hello

By the time you read this we will be well into the 'party season' and there will be little escape from the Christmas carols, tinsel, and present buying. It will be the first proper Christmas for two years before the Covid virus robbed us of the freedoms to travel to visit relatives, organise festive parties, attend Christmas concerts and the like. I hope you are all able to enjoy Christmas exactly the way you wish to this year.

At Swindon u3a we are not letting Christmas go by without our own special celebration. This year we have a wonderful concert organised. **The North Swindon Big Band** will be playing a special Christmas concert for us on **the 19th December at the Ellendune Community Centre 2.00 - 4.00 pm**. They will be playing a splendid selection of music to suit all tastes. There is much more information about the band later in this Newsletter – do read it to whet your appetite. And do put the date in your diaries.

We rounded off the u3a year soundly with a successful AGM. Thank you to all who attended – it was a truly wonderful turnout and I think we used every chair from every corner of the Ellendune Centre. I hope the reports helped to give you a rounded view of what the Committee has been doing and what has been achieved in 2021-22. I hope you also got an idea of the fellowship of our u3a, and perhaps met some friends over coffee and cake for a chat. For those who stayed on, Chris Brooks, our Whizz of a Quizmaster, set us some brainteasing challenges on the theme of November.

By the time you read this we will have just completed our 2022 series of Focus Groups. Thank you to all who took part. We very much value the time and feedback you give us. The Committee will be discussing your feedback and taking your ideas and thoughts, both positive and negative, into account in our future planning. This is the second year of Focus Group meetings and we have found them an immensely useful addition to the ways in which the Committee tries to keep in touch with members.

As usual, I must also ask you to consider volunteering to help the Committee with various tasks. We are especially in need of a General Secretary and I, or any member of the Committee, would be happy to discuss with you what is involved.

So, I close by sending you every good wish for the Christmas season. I hope you have an enjoyable time, I hope you meet up with family and friends, I hope you have fun but most of all I wish you peace, health and happiness.

With warmest wishes



Gill

Christmas Concert

By the North Swindon Big Band

19th December at the Ellendune Community Centre 2.00 - 4.00 pm

The North Swindon Big Band is a 19 piece band based in Swindon. The band plays a wide range of music from the swing and dance music era of the 1930s through to the present day. Its repertoire includes Glen Miller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Frank Sinatra and Sammy Nestico. Since it will be Christmas time expect some Christmas classics too.

Formed in 1993 (as the u3a Dance Orchestra) it performs regularly at private and public events in and around Swindon and Wiltshire.

It should be an exciting and fun concert – you may even be inspired to dance! Put the date in your diary now.



Our Life President is 100 on the 28th December

I don't suppose many of you knew we had a Life President. And I doubt if there is anyone who remembers him. But he exists. Who is he?

Norman Richards inaugurated Swindon u3a in 1986/7 and played an active role in building the organisation from scratch. Prior to retiring he had been the Senior Probation Officer responsible for pioneering the "Community Scheme" for offenders in Wiltshire which included involving offenders in Saturday Clubs for children with severe learning difficulties and disabilities. He also ran the stroke club and a wheelchair shopping service for the elderly and disabled. He always held a deeply felt belief in the importance of the community and of treating others with respect.

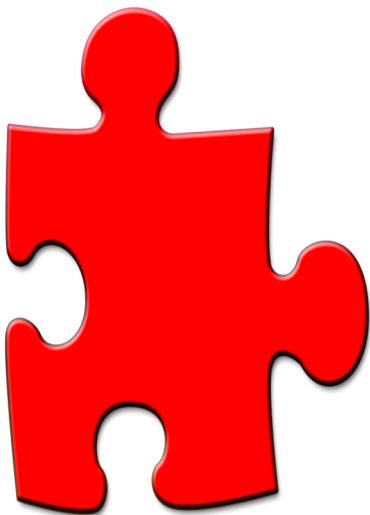
At Swindon u3a he started as Vice Chair for 3 years and then Chair for seven years. He also contributed a lot to the development of the initial National u3a Council. He then moved with his wife Pauline, to Chichester. I am told he was determined to retire completely at this point but within no time at all was actively involved in setting up a u3a in Chichester basing it very much on the Swindon model. He ran a Crime and Society Group while Pauline started a Travel Group.

At the end of 2015 he finally stood down from duties and formal involvement in his u3a groups. A very well-earned rest!

We wish Norman all the very best for his 100th birthday. I will be sending him a message from us all here in Swindon where his u3a journey started.

Gill

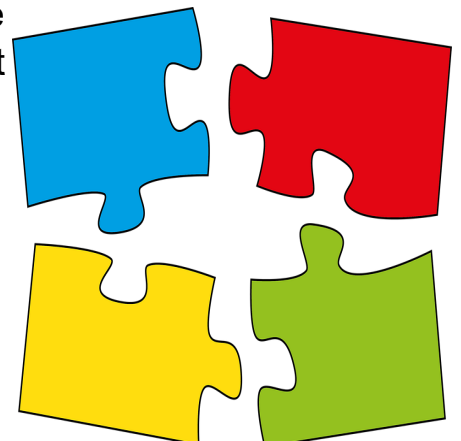
Jigsaw Testers Needed!



In the Swindon u3a office we have lots of lovely and some maybe not quite so lovely jigsaws for members to borrow. We have so many, in fact, that we are running out of space. It would be really helpful if you could come along, borrow a jigsaw to take home and check to see if it has all its pieces. Any which are not complete can then be discarded so that we can be confident that anyone borrowing a jigsaw in future won't be disappointed.

The office is open on Mondays,
Wednesdays and Fridays from
10.00 to 12.00.

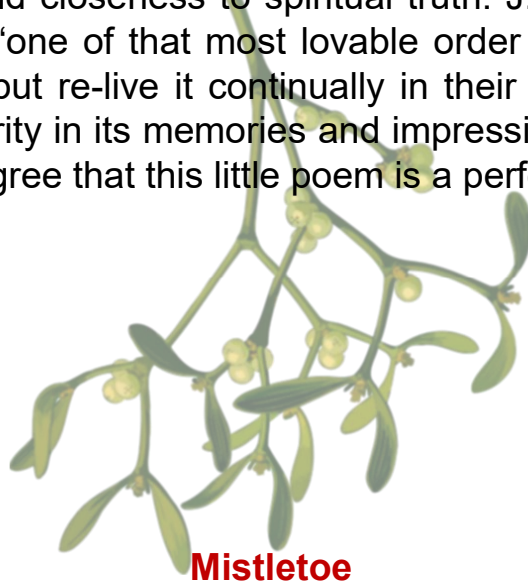
Swindon u3a Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre,
Chapel Street, SN2 8DA, 01793 614629



Life in a Poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

Walter de la Mare, 1873 - 1956, was born in London. He is known as one of modern literature's chief exemplars of the romantic imagination through his novels, short stories and poetry. As a youth he attended St Paul's Cathedral School but his formal education did not extend beyond this point. De la Mare began writing short stories and poetry while working as a bookkeeper for the Standard Oil Company (not very romantic you might think!) in their London office during the 1890s. His first published short story, "Kismet", appeared in the journal *Sketch* in 1895. In 1902 he published his first major work, the poetry collection ***Songs of Childhood***, which was recognised as a significant example of children's literature for its creative imagery and variety of meters. Like me, I expect many of you remember it from your school days. He is known for his frequent depiction of childhood as a time of intuition, deep motion, and closeness to spiritual truth. J.B. Priestley concluded in 1924 that de la Mare is "one of that most lovable order of artists who never lose sight of their childhood, but re-live it continually in their work and contrive to find expression for their maturity in its memories and impressions, its romantic vision of the world." I think you'll agree that this little poem is a perfect example of that.



Mistletoe

By Walter de La Mare

Sitting under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

Monthly Speakers' Meetings

Monday 19th December 2022

As a special Christmas treat, the North Swindon Big Band will be performing a Christmas Concert for us on Monday 19th December. 2.00 for a 2.15 pm start at the Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton. There will be Christmas refreshments during the interval too!

Monday 9th January 2023

After all the Christmas and New Year festivities, we launch the programme for 2023 with Ken Ingamells giving a talk on “Global Warming - Fact or Scaremongering”.

For 40 years Ken was a weather forecaster in the Met Office, working in many parts of the UK and overseas - from the Arctic to the Antarctic, Hawaii to the Indian Ocean. He was also a keen sailor and photographer.

The world has gone through many warm and cold periods. What is different now? Ken will explain in very simple terms the science of global warming so that people can make up their own minds and hopefully be able to distinguish fact from false news.

So please come along on Monday 9th January, 2.00 for a 2.15 pm start, at the Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton.

There is no need to book. Please just turn up on the day and you will be very welcome. However, if you are able to book online, this is really helpful and gives us a guide for numbers attending.

Sue Cook



Thank you team, this was excellent. I found the whole course very interesting. The approach to use it or lose it was not as I expected but that made it even more interesting.

Now that I've retired and have time on my hands it's important to me that I maximise my physical and mental health in order to get the most out of life for as long as possible. My expectations have been met!



Use It Or Lose It

Living Longer, Living Well

The next course will take place on the 16th Feb, 23rd Feb and 2nd March starting at 2.00 pm. The venue is yet to be decided. The cost, to cover photocopying and refreshments will be £2 per person per course. This popular course comprises of 3 two-hour sessions. In it we consider various aspects of living longer and living well. We'll look at natural ageing and cover the latest thinking on how to keep our minds and bodies active. Due to the nature of the course we can only take a maximum of 16 people, so if you are interested please click on the link below to register your interest.

The Use It or Lose It Team

Ukes For Fun

Ukes For Fun showing their skills by entertaining the Dorcan Seniors Club. In respect of the group playing, the club decided to give a contribution to the Prospect Hospice for their funds to continue their valuable work.

Dave Prior



u3a - Fair Weather Short Walks

A group walk in early November took us to Savernake Forest for a 4-mile trundle past a few of the 20-plus still standing or lost named oak trees, and also down to the arboretum.

The 12-trunked pedunculate Cathedral Oak with its over 10 metre girth is believed to be well over 1000 years old, and possibly the second oldest oak tree in the UK. (The oldest may be the sessile Big Bellied Oak, also in Savernake, but there are other candidates elsewhere like the Major Oak in Nottinghamshire).

We managed to not get lost, which is always a bonus!

Rob





Travel Group C & G visit to Waddesdon Manor Christmas Event

A big thank you to Jane Caudwell for organising this wonderful trip to Waddesdon Manor. The group visited the Christmas market, the east wing decorated for Christmas and the light trail through the woods. A great time was had by all.

Photos by Shirley Lewis



Member Notice

I accidently bought the wrong cartridges for my printer and would be happy to pass them on to anyone who can make use of them. I have a Black and a Colour cartridge for a Canon Pixma 510 (black) and 511 (colour). They are free to a good home and I can drop them off in the office if necessary. Please contact me by clicking on my name below.

Valerie Hebden

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Charity Number 298853

Copy Dates

Items for the **January** Newsletter must be received by

19th December

Items for the **February** Newsletter must be received by

19th January

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.