

# Newsletter

February 2023



## Chair's Hello

February already! You will hopefully have resumed your u3a activities after the Christmas break and be enjoying your groups and your friendships again. As I write this there is a sprinkling of snow everywhere and it feels as if we are in full blown winter. But, thinking optimistically – Spring is just around the corner and the first sightings of snowdrops suggests we will soon be enjoying our daffodils and tulips and thinking about planting seeds for the summer.

The year ahead will be a busy one preparing and implementing the introduction of the new financial model for the 2023-2024 u3a year. We need to start our planning early so that we are clear about what the new, lower, membership subscription will be by July when renewal of membership subscriptions begins. To help us with this planning we welcome Andrew Hancox to the Committee as our new Treasurer. Andrew was the Assistant Treasurer and is now taking over the financial reins. He is already working to strengthen the Finance Team so we can support everyone through the coming changes.

Another welcome addition to the Committee is our new IT Manager, David Todd. You will all know of the frustrations we have experienced recently with our web-site and email facility – not all of which have been the fault of *our* system. Dave has begun the process of looking into what we need to do to strengthen and improve and is currently researching the best way forward. The Committee continues to operate with two vacancies and would welcome help from anyone who feels able to offer a little time. Do contact me for a chat if you think you might be able to help. The more volunteers we have the less burden of work there is for everyone!

During March and April, we will be holding meetings with GOs (Group Organisers) and members to further introduce and explain the new systems and procedures so that we can all go into 2023-24 with understanding. Our aim is to make everything as simple and straightforward as possible so that there is no need for undue concern. We are, however, aware that change will cause anxiety. Linda Young, our Groups Co-ordinator will be happy to answer questions as will I.

We had a very action packed 2022 and are looking forward to meeting with you again at social events planned for 2023. We already have a pretty full programme of Monthly meetings with a range of interesting speakers. On 9<sup>th</sup> January we learned a lot about Global warming and on the 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. we will be learning about the 'Art of Ageing Well'. We plan several additional summer events in addition to new focus groups' meetings and meetings with new members and volunteers.

The Committee is keen to strengthen all possible channels of communication but this is not always easy. The Newsletter is obviously our main way to communicating but as it is only published once a month news can be out of date. Our Website is another channel, as is social media. Please read my article on our u3a Facebook in this Newsletter. It is worth considering this as another way of keeping everyone more up to date.

## Monthly Speakers' Meetings

### Monday 13th February 2023 - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre

In February, our speaker will be Cat Attewell, Community Engagement Officer for Home Instead Swindon, on the **Art of Ageing Well**. Cat has been leading and supporting community groups with older people for a number of years and is passionate about people retaining and developing their individual interests and joys throughout their entire lives.

In a workshop style talk, we will look at what we can learn to positively help ourselves through the inevitable experience of getting older. We will look at people who do it well, consider the trials and triumphs of the journey, and add some ideas that might help. Through shared discussions we will discover our own individual strategies to enable us all to enjoy ageing well.

### Monday 13th March 2023 - 2.00 pm - Coleview Community Centre

**Archaeology – It's not just digging:** Postponed from last October, a multidisciplinary team from Wessex Archaeology will present an overview of how heritage is brought to life using ecology, art, science and technology. They will demonstrate the diversity of skills needed to interpret heritage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Short talks and demonstrations will be followed by opportunities to handle artefacts from 10,000 BC to the Second World War and members will be invited to step into a virtual reality experience where they can explore a Roman Villa, Anglo Saxon Hall or Second World War Aircraft Wreck.

*Sue Cook*



## Focus Group Reports 2022

In November 2022 we held 6 'focus' groups. All members were invited to volunteer. Thanks are due to the 39 members who took part. Some belonged to more than one activity group and between them they represented 65 different groups. They included long-standing members, others who had joined during the challenging 'Covid' period and some very recently joined. Just under half were group organisers.

Each group was run by one of the Trustees with notes taken by a volunteer. The same 5 key questions were put to each group. The responses have given us some in-depth insights into the views of those who took part. All groups resulted in thoughtful, helpful and detailed discussion. On some issues, responses were very similar; on others there was a broad, sometimes conflicting range of responses. The information gathered will help to inform how we develop in the future.

The questions and Summary Report follow. Both the Full Report and the Summary Report are available via the home page of the website. Anyone without access to the internet who would like a copy of the full report should contact the office.

*Jill Kelly*

Membership Liaison Secretary

## Focus Groups 2022: Summary Report

There were six groups, all of which were asked the following 5 questions:

How would you describe/explain Swindon u3a to someone who has never heard of it?

What do you feel works well in your activity groups?

What challenges/niggles are there with your group activity(ies)?

What is your attitude to participation in the u3a beyond your activity groups?

What do you know about how u3a is run?

The **full report** is available via the website. The following is a **brief summary** of the key points:

The u3a offers the opportunity to meet with other people no longer in full time work who wish to pursue a wide range of learning and social activities.

It emphasises the importance of life-long learning.

The social aspect is very important to many members.

It is run entirely by volunteers with the self-help ethos a key to its existence.

It offers a range of additional learning and social opportunities beyond those of individual groups.

Most people learn about it through word of mouth.

Effective group organisers are key to successful group activities.

Many group organisers and other members give a great deal of time and effort to ensure there is effective preparation, communication and administration of group activities.

Many groups involve people taking turns to contribute to or lead activities.

Different types of group i.e. physical activities, academic study, crafts, languages, arts, music, need different things in order to be successful.

Some groups need an 'expert' in order to work well.

There are occasional examples of groups feeling 'cliquey' with new members feeling left out.

The location of venues, car parking issues and difficulties with public transport make it hard for some members to access groups and activities they are interested in.

Some members are reluctant to take a share in leading or contributing to activities.

There is a range of opinion regarding the funding/supplements issue and concern about the changes ahead.

Waiting lists are a challenge in some areas.

Some concerns were expressed about the availability and quality of equipment.

Aspects of the current u3a I.T. systems are a cause of concern and frustration.

Most people are aware of the Newsletter and at least skim read it. Accessing it via some devices can be an issue.

Interest in Monthly Meetings and social events is limited but considered valuable by those who do attend.

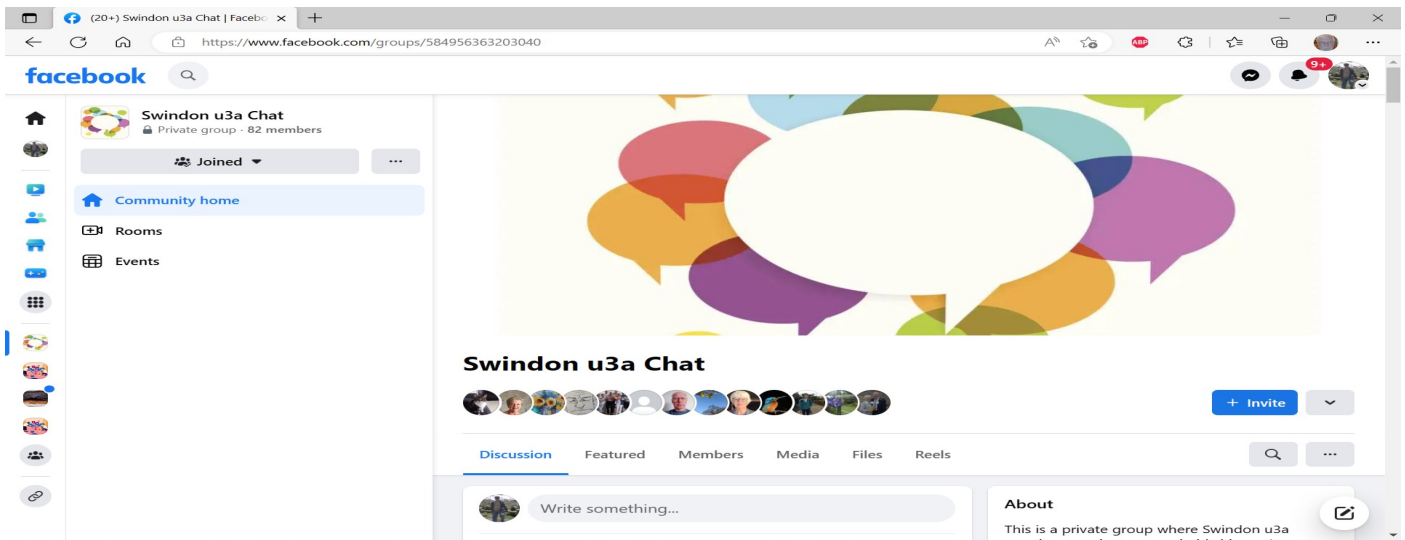
Interest in Facebook or other social media is very limited. WhatsApp is seen as a useful communication tool amongst group members.

There is a range of opinion regarding the holding of activities and events in evenings, at weekends or in school holidays.

There is limited knowledge and understanding of the role played by the Third Age Trust, Trustees and other volunteers.

There is a desire for more publicity and greater diversity in the membership.

*Jill Kelly*



## Swindon u3a Facebook

I know that many of you do not and will not use Facebook but I would like to persuade at least a few more of our members to consider using our own Facebook site called **Swindon u3a Chat**. It is not unusual these days for u3as to have their own Facebook page/s and there are also several cross u3a Facebook sites enabling u3as around the UK to share ideas and information.

I know that not all of you approve of social media and I understand many of the reasons why. It is rarely the medium that's at fault but the way it is used. The telephone breeds cold callers, the post brings junk mail, the newspapers letters' pages attract strident and negative opinions, but we can use all these channels constructively, and so it is with Facebook. For many people it is a way of keeping in touch with friends and family, for sharing ideas and experiences, for learning, and for having some fun. There is no need to get drawn into the negative aspects. Simply ignore them and keep with the positive.

I would really encourage more of you to use our own Facebook site. It has many advantages. Since our Newsletter is monthly, news and information there can be out of date. Facebook enables quick messaging, last minute reminders, immediate information about what's on, and it allows for more interaction and feedback from our members. It can be an excellent way for you to tell us about what your group does, canvas for new members, tell us your ideas, create new groups with like-minded people. The Committee could also get information out to members quickly and easily.

Facebook won't replace other methods of communication – nothing can ever replace the power of face-to-face communication, but where this is not always possible there is no reason not to use Facebook as one of the alternatives. I recognise that some members do not have email, and find the web-site difficult but it will always be the case that not all members use all communication channels.

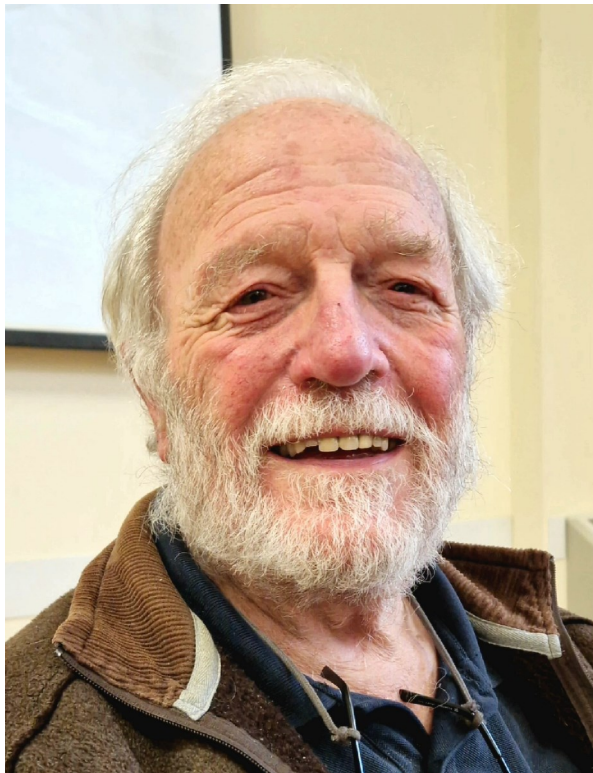
Why not join other Swindon u3a Facebookers if you haven't already? Find us by clicking on **Swindon u3a Chat**.

**Gill Brain**

## Monthly Meeting January 2023

### Ken Ingamells – Global Warming

Ken (90) gave us an excellent talk on the causes and effects of global warming. He spoke with the experience of a 40 year background in meteorology and with an interest in photography and the polar regions.



His talk was interspersed with anecdotes including one about our late Queen. Apparently on a visit to Canada, when she was Princess Elizabeth, there was no suitable accommodation available so a destroyer provided her accommodation. She occupied the captain's cabin which was refurbished for her including a new mahogany duckboard in the shower. When she left, the captain had the duckboard made into a table and was reputed to claim that the future Queen of England had stood naked on his table.

Ken clearly explained the causes of man made global warming but also told us about the longer term cycles of warming and cooling that the Earth undergoes. We heard about the effects this is having and will increasingly have on our existence on this planet. Whilst we have been very adaptable in the past, we will need to be radically more adaptable this time. We live in a more crowded and industrial world these days. One of the biggest threats we face is the melting of the polar icecaps resulting in rising sea levels. This could wipe out entire communities such as the low lying islands of the Maldives.

All the facts were given to us but Ken did not propose any certain outcomes but left us to draw our own conclusions.

**Bob Carvey**

### Cribbage Anyone?

We've had some enquiries about starting up a Cribbage group. Would you be interested in joining? If so please contact the [Groups Co-ordinator](#) by clicking on the link above.



## Life in a poem

submitted by Lesley Basu

**Brian Bilston** is a new discovery for me. Frequently described as the “Poet Laureate of “Twitter”, he is a poet clouded in the pipe smoke of mystery. Very little is known about him other than the fragments of information revealed on social media: his penchant for tank tops, his enjoyment of Vimto, his dislike of Jeremy Clarkson!! He won the 2015 Great British Write Off poetry prize for a poem disguised in a Venn diagram. He is currently working on two projects: a follow-up collection of poems to **You Took the Last Bus Home** and a volume of poetry for children. I hope you enjoy this example as much as I did.

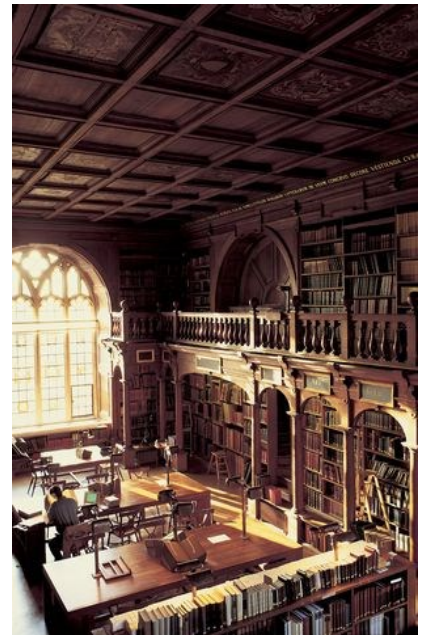
### **There’s a Supermarket Where the Library Once Stood**

There’s a supermarket where the library once stood.  
I sometimes forget that it’s now gone for good.  
Last week I asked if they had any Flaubert.  
A shrug in response. ‘The cheese counter’s there.’

There’s a supermarket where the library had been.  
I’ve been reading some Dhal in ‘Indian cuisine’.  
No golden tickets, witches or giants, of course;  
just chickpeas and lentils in a creamy spiced sauce.

There’s a supermarket where the library once was.  
I had tried to hand back an old *Grapes of Wrath*.  
Sorry, they told me, but it’s really too late,  
they’ll be shrivelled and well past their best-before-date.

There’s a supermarket where the library once stood.  
A Sainsbury’s Local has bulldozed my childhood.  
The library had been starved of state funding, I guess.  
Take books off the menu and live well for less.



### **RWB - u3a Activities**

We are looking for new members to join our Coffee Mornings and Afternoon Socials; we meet at The Angel Hotel and The Cross Keys Pub, on alternate Wednesday/Thursdays, the venues are free to use as long as we buy drinks. Come along, meet new friends, we are a friendly group.

I have two spaces in my Scrabble Group, which meets on the first Monday of each month at The Cross Keys Pub in the afternoon between 2pm-4pm, again the venue is free to use and Scrabble equipment is provided. For more information please contact me by clicking on my name.

**John Turner**

## Travel Group J

### Visit To American Museum Bath and Bath City

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023

The American Museum is housed in a fine Georgian House with outstanding views over Limpley Stoke Valley on the edge of Bath. The only museum with Americana outside of the United States.

AM. Visit the American Museum and Gardens with exhibitions on Quilting and Folk Art.

PM. Move to Bath City for free time.

Departing Ellendune Centre Wroughton 9am

Depart Bath for Swindon 4pm

Cost £30.00 per person includes entrance to Museum and Gardens, Coach and Driver's Gratuity.

The cost per person may reduce subject to uptake for the trip.

All members and friends welcome.

Contact [Julia Badcock](#) by clicking on her name.

## The Arts Society Kennet & Swindon (TASKS)

Please join us for our top class illustrated lectures at 11am on the third Monday of the month at The Ellendune Community Hall, Wroughton SN4 9LW.

We are a friendly group for anyone in the Swindon or Marlborough area who enjoys learning and understanding more about the Arts and meeting new people.

Our annual subscription is at present £45 which includes 10 lectures and The Arts Society magazine. There is a reduced subscription as our year ends in April. Guests are £7 each.

### Up and coming lectures:

**February 20th:** 'The Low Countries and the Start of Landscape Painting' by Mariska Beekenkamp-Wladimiroff

**March 20th:** (AGM at 10.30am; lecture at 11am as usual) 'Curves, Colour and Cool: An introduction to Mid-Century Modern' by Mark Hill (from Antiques Roadshow)

**April 17th:** 'The Sun King and the Court of Versailles' by Jane Gardener

Check our website: [theartssocietykennet.org.uk](http://theartssocietykennet.org.uk) or our Membership

Secretary Judi: [info@theartssocietykennet.org.uk](mailto:info@theartssocietykennet.org.uk)



### **Bookworms Group**

The Bookworms Group is looking for a new member. Ideally we would like a man to join us as we have only one male in the group and he would appreciate some company. We read a wide variety of books and the library mostly provides them for us.

We meet on the last Friday of every month at the Lawns Community Centre in the mornings.

Please contact [\*\*Wendy Hall\*\*](#), the Joint Group Organiser if you are interested by clicking or tapping on her name.



## Folk Singers

Just thought other u3a members might like to see what the Folk Singers get up to at their fortnightly meetings. This picture shows one of the organizers getting into the spirit of the theme, celebrating Robbie Burns birthday when we sung many, many songs from Scotland. We do not always have themes but it does cause us to investigate different songs and the history which can run through the song. We do have a couple of vacancies. If you are interested please click on my name to make contact.



*Rosemary*

My Bonnie lies over the ocean,  
My Bonnie lies over the sea,  
My Bonnie lies over the ocean,  
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.

[Chorus]  
Bring back, bring back,  
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me, to me.  
Bring back, bring back,  
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.

Oh, blow ye winds over the ocean,  
Oh, blow ye winds over the sea,  
Oh, blow ye winds over the ocean,  
And bring back my Bonnie to me.

[Repeat Chorus]

Last night as I lay on my pillow,  
Last night as I lay on my bed,  
Last night as I lay on my pillow,  
I dreamt that my Bonnie was dead.

[Repeat chorus]

The winds have blown over the ocean,  
The winds have blown over the sea,  
The winds have blown over the ocean,  
And brought back my Bonnie to me.

[Repeat chorus]



## Wassail at Twigs Community Garden

“At TWIGS we aim to give people who experience mental health problems the chance to regain confidence and self esteem and to learn new skills.”

On 14th January Twigs held a Wassail ceremony as is traditional at this time of year. We were fortunate to have The Ickniel Way Morris Men, in full traditional costume, to entertain us. They led the large crowd of supporters around the gardens to the apple tree for the ceremony. Supporters were decked out with dry flower corsages and many children had flower wreaths around their heads.

The ceremony started with a traditional dance followed by wassail songs and children placing offerings of toast on the tree. We all then made lots of noise on musical instruments, many improvised, to frighten off the evil spirits. The ceremony was followed by a splendid exhibition of Morris dancing, with soup, hot punch and cakes on offer. We can now expect a bumper apple crop again this year!

Visit the Twigs website by clicking or tapping below.

[TWIGS Community Gardens](#)



# Thames Valley Network

## The Great Exhibition of 1851 and its legacy

Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February at 10.30 a.m. on Zoom



A talk by **David Morton** on the history of the Great Exhibition, an idea from Prince Albert to showcase the art, design, and manufacturing of the British Empire. It follows the controversial design, build and subsequent history of The Crystal Palace. We also learn about the legacy of The Great Exhibition and what remains today.

Fee for this event is £1. Please book electronically by clicking on the 'TICKETSOURCE' icon immediately below the event on [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk) This is by far the best and easiest option. You will receive an acknowledgement immediately and the Zoom link about 48 hours before the event. If you experience any difficulty, please email the organiser David Morton on [davidmorton57@gmail.com](mailto:davidmorton57@gmail.com) with your name and the u3a to which you belong.

If you have not received the Zoom link by midday on Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February please email the organiser as above. Please do not wait until the day of the event.

**Closing date Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> February (No further applications after this date)**

*To receive details of future TVN events, please send your name and preferred email*

## List of Email Addresses

Chair	Gill Brain	<a href="mailto:chair@swindonu3a.org.uk">chair@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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All members of committee		<a href="mailto:committee@swindonu3a.org.uk">committee@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Data Protection	Sharon Finch	<a href="mailto:dpo@swindonu3a.org.uk">dpo@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
General enquiries		<a href="mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk">office@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Groups' Coordinator	Linda Young	<a href="mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk">group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Health & Safety		<a href="mailto:secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk">secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Membership Liaison Secretary	Jill Kelly	<a href="mailto:membership@swindonu3a.org.uk">membership@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Newsletter contributions		<a href="mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk">newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Office administration		<a href="mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk">office@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Banking		
Visits		
Web Manager	Dave Todd	

## Office

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

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(Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email: [office@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk)

Web: [www.swindonu3a.org.uk](http://www.swindonu3a.org.uk)

Charity Number 298853

### Copy Dates

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

**16th February**

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

**19th March**

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

[newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto: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.