



**u3a**  
Swindon

**learn, laugh, live**

**Newsletter**

**April 2023**

## Chair's Hello

Spring is in the air! As I write this the sun is shining, the birds are nesting, the buds are swelling and the Spring Equinox is just a few days away. By the time you read this we will be well into April and beginning to throw off our fat winter coats and jumpers and breathe the warmer air.

Much has been happening at Committee level as we move forward into this important year – one in which we move to the new financial model for the future. With the excellent support of our new Committee members - Treasurer, Andrew Hancox, and IT/website Manager, Dave Todd, we are planning to ensure a smooth transition to the new model. The intention, as we have already indicated to you previously, is to reduce the membership subscription substantially which will result in more money in your pocket but far less money available centrally to spend on cross u3a activities, such as office and IT costs, publicity, social events, printing, postage, etc. We are therefore looking in close detail at central budgeting costs to ensure we can meet all such needs. We continue to hold support for members and groups at the centre of our thinking and planning and soon after Easter will be holding meetings with Group Organisers to ensure they all understand the new system being introduced.

You will all be aware that there have been some issues with our website and in particular our ability to send out certain emails. We have been considering carefully the various options for development of a new website and a decision has now been taken which will enable us to start to move forward to a robust new system suitable for the future. This will take some time to bed down and our SuCAS system will continue to operate in the meantime. The immediate good news is that the email problem has been resolved.

Our membership and group activities continue to thrive with 157 new members to date this year and a few new groups either already started or planning to start shortly. 'Walking with Dogs' has started and is looking for new members so if you have a dog why not consider making your dog walks a social occasion to make new friends. Barn-dancing is planning a comeback! The Publicity Team is actively planning to attend several local events/festivals over the coming year to ensure people know about our u3a and what it can offer.

A number of social events are planned for the remainder of the year. Please note there will be no monthly meeting in May due to the 3 official Bank Holidays but we are planning a summer social event with a Summer Quiz and some fun activities. More details to follow. It has been delightful to meet so many of you in person at these general events.

All very best wishes for the Easter season. May you continue to enjoy your u3a activities.

With warm regards,

**Gill**

## **Committee Volunteers Wanted, Wanted, Wanted!**

No, the above is *not* a printing error. It is an attempt to draw your attention to the serious situation that your u3a is in as regards the fragile position of the size of the Swindon u3a Committee.

In the last Newsletter, I gave you the roles and names of the present Committee. What you might not have realised is that the Committee has reduced substantially in size. In 2020 there were 11 members of the Committee and 1 vacancy. Today there are 7 members of the Committee and up to 4 vacancies. Several current members of the Committee are undertaking multiple roles which were formerly filled by several people. This puts a tremendous burden on current Committee members at a time when much needs to be done and members expect a lot from us.

What you may also not have realised is that according to our Constitution a Committee member has a 3-year term of office and some Committee members will be expected to stand down at some time in the coming year. The increased burden on current Committee members of performing multiple roles means that some are more likely to stand down even earlier. So, we are at a critical stage. Swindon u3a cannot continue without a Committee. 4 Roles in particular **MUST** be filled (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) or we have to prepare to close the entire operation down.

Please consider carefully whether you could spare a few hours to stand for a Committee role. With a full Committee the tasks are not burdensome: one Committee meeting a month, plus some thinking, planning and emailing from home and the occasional extra meeting from time to time. It isn't rocket science and the more people we have the more the tasks can be shared and the less burden on all. Many Committee roles also have a small volunteer team to support them with the tasks that need to be done e.g. the Group Assistants, Publicity Team, Treasury Team, Events Team, IT Team, Office Team. There is also lots of support from the National u3a and full insurance cover.

Please, please think about whether, as well as enjoying your u3a activities, you could give a little bit back to help us run the organisation. If you even just *think* you might be able to help, please contact me for a chat by clicking on my name.

**Gill Brain**



## Dates for Your Diary

For those of you who like to plan well ahead, here are some dates to note.

**Open Day: Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> September. St Joseph's College, Ocotal Way. SN3 3LR**

Our big annual event to meet and share our activities with each other and prospective new members.

**Volunteers' Event: Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 10.00 a.m. – 11.30 a.m. Coleview Community Centre. SN3 4AS.**

This will be an opportunity for all our 'behind the scenes' volunteers to get together, share their experience and hopefully have some fun! It will also be a chance for anyone thinking they might like to volunteer but not sure, to come along and find out more. More details nearer the time.

**AGM: 13<sup>th</sup> November: Ellendune Community Centre. Wroughton SN4 9LW**

**New Members' Meeting: Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November 10.00 a.m. – 11.30 a.m. Coleview Community Centre. SN3 4AS**

This event will be for all those who have joined us since the last New Members' meeting. Anyone who was unable to attend the previous one would be more than welcome to come along too. It will be an opportunity to meet other new members as well as some of the Trustees and Volunteers. You will be able to learn a little more about how the u3a operates, ask questions, share ideas and join in some light-hearted activities.

*Jill Kelly*

Membership Liaison Secretary

## Forthcoming Monthly Meetings

**Monday 17th April - 2.00 pm - Coleview Community Centre**

Matt Holland will be talking about the Swindon Festival of Literature, the role of literature and reading in life, and a little about the role of Lower Shaw Farm.

If you are able to book online, this is really helpful and gives us a guide for numbers attending. However, if you just turn up on the day, you will be very welcome.

**May:** As there are three Bank Holidays this month, we have decided not to hold a Monthly meeting.

**Monday 12th June - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre**

An afternoon of Summer Fun and a Quiz.

**July and August:** No Monthly meetings.

*Sue Cook*

## March Monthly Meeting

Staffing issues at Wessex Archaeology necessitated changes to the proposed talk at the last minute, but what a surprise they had for us. Dr Phil Harding, a Fieldwork Archaeologist working on large scale excavation projects, is probably best known for his regular appearances on Channel 4's Time Team where he was one of the core group of archaeologists for many years.

Phil gave an entertaining talk on the city of Salisbury. Renowned for its medieval cathedral and planned city, traces of timber framed buildings still remain. Laid out on a grid system around 1220, each checker had a name associated with an inn. Excavations

have taken place since the 1960s as the city developed and much of the area to the east was excavated when the ring road was constructed. Project work funded by the Manpower Services Commission in the 1980's has only recently been written up, and work is on-going to match up existing buildings with the foundations of former houses and mapping work undertaken by William Nash in the 1600s.

Discoveries are being made all the time. If you dig a hole, always remember to look down it, you never know what you might find – in one case it was part of the original Council House.

There is so much to learn about medieval Salisbury just by walking around the city. It is still possible to see the checker system measuring 7 x 3 perches (35m x 15m) and Phil can often be seen 'pacing off' the width of a building, or he can be found visiting the numerous inns – purely in the name of research of course!

More work is needed on excavating the 'backlands'. External buildings found may have been kitchens, separated from the main buildings to avoid the risk of fire. No thatch was permitted in Salisbury – roofs had to be tiled. Everything needed to build a house would have been available locally and there was a thriving economy with merchants bringing in spices and other items from abroad. Who knew that Salisbury was once known as Little Venice because of its channels of running water?

Phil believes he was born to be an archaeologist and it was a privilege not to have to decide on a career as it was already mapped out for him. His passion and knowledge for his subject was certainly clear to all of us.

**Sue Cook**

*Phil's book [Joining the Dots: Uniting Salisbury's Past through Holes in the Ground](#) can be purchased online. This brings Salisbury's archaeological evidence together for the first time to tell the story of the city and its residents through its past.*





## **Aviation Group**

### **Visit to Shuttleworth Collection**

**Thursday 4th May 2023**

The Shuttleworth Collection is a working aeronautical and automotive museum located at the Old Warden Aerodrome. The collection was founded in 1928 by aviator Richard Ormonde Shuttleworth. Sadly, while flying a Fairy Battle at night on the 2nd August 1940 Richard fatally crashed.

Old Warden is the oldest aviation museum in the world and one of the most prestigious due to the variety of old and well preserved aircraft.

Some of the most notable aircraft in the collection are the 5 Edwardian aeroplanes of which one is the oldest British aeroplane still in flying condition. Also on display are famous aircraft such as the Westland Lysander, Avro Anson, Gloster Gladiator and the world's oldest airworthy aircraft the Bleriot XI.

The very large collection of motor vehicles including, 1901 Arrol - Johnston, 1912 Wolseley, 1935 Austin 7 plus a number of pre and post war motor cycles.

Departure times and Pick up points:

08:00h Brewery Street Car Park

08:20h Ellendune Centre, Wroughton

08:30h Downes View Road / Marlborough Road

08:35h Coate Water Bus Stop opposite the Sun Inn, Public House

16:00h Depart for Swindon

Cost £34 per person which includes entry to museum, coach and drivers gratuity.

All members and friends welcome.

Contact: [Ken Ivie](#) or [Clynt Perrott](#) by clicking on one of the names.



## **Military History Group**

### **Visit to the National Army Museum**

**Wednesday 31st May 2023**

The National Army Museum is the British Army's central museum. It is located in the Chelsea district of central London adjacent to The Royal Hospital Chelsea the home of the Chelsea Pensioners.

From 2014 - 2017 the museum was closed to the public for a major rebuilding programme. The refurbishment cost £23.75 million and the works created five galleries that cover British military history from the English Civil War up to the modern day.

Refreshments are available in the cafe which serves a wide variety of food and drink, freshly made salads, sandwiches, soups, homemade pies, puddings and cakes.

Departure times and pick up points:

08:00h Highworth, Brewery Street car park

08:20h Ellendune Centre, Wroughton

08:30h Downs View / Marlborough Road

08:35h Coate Water bus stop, opposite the Sun Inn Public House

16:00h Depart for Swindon

Cost £21 per person which includes coach and drivers gratuity, entry to museum is free

All members and friends are welcome

Contact: [Ken Ivie](#) or [Gerry Churchard](#) by clicking on one of the names.

## New Dog Walking Group

We now have 4 people walking and are currently meeting at the front of Lydiard House but hope to expand to other locations. We intend to walk every two weeks if the group wishes and the purpose is for dog socialisation and sharing training ideas.

We do intend to vary the location for walks but using Lydiard at present for simplicity and the fact that the fields are quite free of mud etc at this time of year. For more information and the date of the next meeting

please contact me, [Phil Rapson](#) by clicking or tapping on my name.



## Barn Dancing

Monday 22nd May 2023                      2.00 pm - 3.45 pm

at Liden Community Centre, Barrington Close, Swindon SN3 6HF

Caller: Mike Courthold

***Please note that a Waiting List is in operation, but still put your name forward because of cancellations.***

After 3 years absence, we will be holding a barn dance on Monday 22 May. Mike will kindly call again from his extensive record collection. The purpose is to establish interest in starting a barn dancing group from September 2023.

All dancers welcome, plus callers and potential callers. You do not need a partner. Wear flat shoes or trainers and bring water. Refreshments will be provided. Please arrive by 1.45 pm to register with your membership number. Please advise by 12th May if you can join us. To contact Rosie click or tap on her name.

[Rosie Jarvis](#)



**Travel Group J**  
**Reading Day trip**  
**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April**  
**£22 per person**

Come and have a day out in Reading and discover the rich history of this town.

The coach leaves Ellendune Medical Centre at 9:00am and Coate Water at 9:15am



Come and have a day out in Reading and discover the rich history of this town.

Included in the price is either a guided walking tour of the Abbey Quarter or a sit down talk in the very interesting Museum.

After that there will be free time to see what Reading has to offer; perhaps a leisurely lunch, retail therapy or further discoveries.

Coach leaves Reading at 4:00pm to return to Swindon.

Please contact [Fiona Meredith](#) by clicking or tapping on her name.

## u3a Radio Podcast

The u3a radio podcast, set up in 2020, showcases the amazing things happening across the movement. It's created by a team of u3a members who all have radio experience and features interviews with members, interest group leaders, Trustees, national volunteers and Subject Advisers.



The entire series is available to listen to on our [YouTube Channel](#), and since January 2022, has also been available to listen to on podcasting platforms including [Spotify](#), [Google Podcasts](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#) .

The team are always looking for more stories – [please get in touch](#) if you'd like to contribute.

## Life in a Poem

submitted by Lesley Basu

Chris Ross is fast becoming the Cockney equivalent of Pam Ayres! He grew up in Bow, an area he knows like the back of his hand. His father was a well known local singer and band leader: Al Ross. His interest in poetry surprised him in his mature years and he has since published several books. This one may strike a chord with some of you but you'll have to imagine the cockney accent...

### In the days when I needed an 'airbrush

In the days when I needed an 'airbrush  
and the pretty girls all knew my name,  
when the great smell of Brut and a blue mo'air suit  
could keep you ahead of the game !

My Vespa was all that I needed  
Me glasses just blocked out the sun.  
When "The Four Tops" would sing my 'ole life in one song,  
The world was just there to 'ave fun !

When all that we needed was all that we 'ad,  
We let it all slip through our fingers.  
The 'air and the Vespa, the Brut and the suit;  
they're all gone, only the memory lingers.

London 'ad just finished swinging as the 70s took a firm hold.  
Platform-soled boots and bell-bottomed suits,  
And anyone over thirty was old !  
The whole world was changing before us  
but oh, what a time we had then !

Perhaps it was us who were changing the world,  
(And it's being done time and again )  
I still play me old "Four Tops " albums  
and sing along with "It's All in the Game "

I remember the days when I needed an 'airbrush  
and the pretty girls all knew my name.



## List of Email Addresses

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All members of committee		<a href="mailto:committee@swindonu3a.org.uk">committee@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Accommodation	Chris Ockwell	<a href="mailto:accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk">accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Data Protection	Sharon Finch	<a href="mailto:dpo@swindonu3a.org.uk">dpo@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Groups' Coordinator	Linda Young	<a href="mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk">group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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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>
Office manager	Sylvia Alexander	<a href="mailto:office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk">office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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## Office

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Charity Number 298853

### Copy Dates

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

**18th April**

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

**19th May**

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.