

**learn, laugh, live**



## Chair's Hello

This year seems to be flying by. It's May already with a heat wave predicted for later in the month, even before I've had time to put away my winter boots and insulated vests! However, I might have the last laugh yet if '*ne'er cast a clout till May is out*' proves correct.

There has been a lot of Swindon u3a activity in the past month. At our April Monthly Meeting we had a very entertaining talk from Dr Phil Harding who introduced us to a fascinating ground level perspective of Salisbury. We had a good turnout and I do hope you will all support our monthly meetings when you can. As well as a speaker there is always an opportunity to meet members from other groups as well as your own and maybe make new friends.

The Committee members are busy making detailed plans for the new academic year 2023-24. As you already know this will be the year in which we make the final transition to the new financial model with all groups paying for their venue costs but membership subscriptions falling substantially. We will be working with Group Organisers to support them in understanding and operating the new system.

At our last Committee meeting we discussed several other important issues which will continue to occupy our thinking and planning activities in the months ahead. These included:

**Succession Planning** As you know from my constant messages urging you to consider volunteering, we face a 'time bomb' ticking away which will have important consequences for our organisation. Several of the Committee members are due to end their term of office (3 years is the maximum) in the coming year and we are very concerned about the lack of interest from members in considering Committee roles. Please see my additional article in this Newsletter.

**IT/Web Developments** After a good deal of research and discussions with other u3as, Dave Todd, our IT Manager and the IT team have decided on which new system will best suit our needs. It is called 'Simple Membership'. Work is on-going to co-ordinate the needs of our groups, of the finance system and of our membership as we move to implement this new system.

There is good news as well. For example, we have had 177 new members over this academic year and our membership has grown to over 1500, after a dip in membership during the pandemic. The Publicity Team has been planning a whole summer/autumn programme of publicity which should help to put our u3a more firmly on the local map – see my separate article on 'Publicity' in this Newsletter.

I hope to see many of you at our social events over the summer – a Summer Party is planned for June 12<sup>th</sup> at Ellendune - do put it in your diary. Meanwhile enjoy the Spring weather.

Warm wishes

## Job Vacancies

### At Swindon u3a

The u3a ethos is that it is an organisation run **for** its members **by** its members. If members don't come forward to help with some of the essential organisation of our u3a, we cannot continue. Please consider carefully that we have no paid managers. We all joined because we wanted to take a course, learn something new or develop our skills, but we can't all keep taking without giving something back.

Every task that gets done, whether in being a Group Organiser, counting the money, giving out publicity leaflets, communicating important messages, publishing this Newsletter, organising events, supporting members with queries, running the website and so on, is done by someone just like you who is prepared to give up some time to help.

Our organisation is not a super large, complex multi-national – it's a small, friendly, supportive group of people who are learning as they go along – whether they are learning French or Pétanque or learning how to answer the telephone in the office. When I offered to become the Chair in March 2021, I had no idea what I was letting myself in for but I've been learning ever since with the support of my u3a colleagues and friends.

None of the jobs are outside your scope and abilities. There is lots of help – we're all in this together trying to do the best we can for our u3a. Please consider joining one of our teams. Come and talk to me about the possibilities over a cuppa; come and try before you buy; come and be an apprentice to the current post-holder; come and get to know us and realise we are just like you!

Current Vacancies are:

1. **An Assets/Equipment Officer** - to keep our records up to date. In the Office we have a cupboard of equipment such as projectors, audio equipment, flipchart stands, banners etc. for members to borrow. We just need to know what we have, whether it works and who has borrowed and returned it.
2. **A General Secretary** – someone to work with the Committee to keep our annual agenda for us, receive and send information to the National u3a Office, help us organise the AGM and remind us of the requirements of our Constitution.
3. **A Publicity Officer** – to work with the Publicity Team to organise an annual programme of Swindon u3a publicity. There's lots of help, people with ideas and skills to work with. It's fun!

Just come and talk to me about any of the above .....

**Gill Brain**



Many of you will have had the experience of having to explain to someone what u3a is. Unlike many leisure/learning social groups we are often a hidden gem. To counter this we have been planning, and indeed have already begun, a positive and action-packed programme of publicity this year to ensure that we are better known in the area.

**The Publicity Team** Firstly, let me introduce our team of volunteers who are working with me: Geoff Bryan, Jill Kelly, Sally Howse, Sue Mazzoleni, Sue Nobbs, Robin Clegg, Drusilla Attwood. Without these fantastic volunteers we would not be able to achieve very much. Together over the last few months we have been reviewing our publicity and undertaking a range of activities to ensure our publicity is more effective.

**Publicity Activities** Current developments include reviewing, redesigning and updating our leaflets, posters and other publicity material, writing material for local media (we've had several articles in Swindon Link and in local magazines), developing new publicity ideas (e.g. we are currently working on a 'business card' with contact details), putting up information stands at key local public places e.g. throughout April there has been a u3a exhibition stand at the Swindon Hub in town and regular radio interviews with Swindon u3a members on Swindon radio 105.5.

**Local Events** We have already had a stand at the Health and Wellness event at Christchurch, Old Town in March. We are planning a Swindon u3a presence at various forthcoming local events throughout the rest of this year. These include:

Royal Wootton Bassett market 27<sup>th</sup> May and 12<sup>th</sup> Aug

Old Town Rotary Swindon Duck Race 20<sup>th</sup> May

Wiltshire Steam and Vintage Rally (Lydiard Park) 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June

Wroughton Carnival 8<sup>th</sup> July

Asda Orbital 26<sup>th</sup> August

Open Day 2<sup>nd</sup> September 10.00-1.00 (our own key public event of the year!)

Further dates are still under consideration. If you can spare an hour or so to help at any of the above events or if you are interested in joining our Publicity Team and contributing to our ideas, planning and development, do please get in touch with me. We even have a simple crib sheet to guide new volunteers at events. The more people who help us, the more we can achieve.

**Gill Brain**

## April Monthly Meeting

Matt Holland was our speaker at the April Monthly meeting, talking passionately about 'Life through Literature'. Speaking without any pictures or props, Matt just used words to create powerful images for us throughout the afternoon.



A leading figure in the life and development of Swindon, a promoter of life-long learning and a lover of life, Matt enthralled us with examples of how good writing and wide reading can entertain, inform, mislead, and impact our lives. It is

incredible how the 26 letters of the alphabet can take us on such amazing journeys. Literature entertains, re-assures and encompasses us. It also disturbs and unsettles us – a sign of literature at its best. A good book makes us think.

In a survey of the top ten most relaxing activities, reading came out in top position. Matt's advice is not to read to fall asleep, but rather read to be awake.

Sometime gaucho, farmworker, exporter, linguist, academic, and book reviewer, Matt lives and works at Lower Shaw Farm, formerly home to seventy black and white cows but now a thriving centre for lifelong learning and creative activities. A three acre oasis in the middle of suburban Swindon, the farm offers weekend breaks, events and courses for adults and families, where 'Life is for Learning' and 'Today's stranger is tomorrow's friend'.

As well as working on the farm and helping to organise its courses and events, Matt is founder and director of the Swindon Festival of Literature, attracting well-known authors, thinkers, artists, storytellers and poets to the town. Now a well-established festival, it had a shaky start when he was initially told by the Council that 'literature is too long a word for Swindon'! Matt recalled Terry Waite attending a couple of years ago and being asked what kept him going during his captivity. His answer was that reading the guards' tatty old Westerns had made him feel connected to humanity.

This year's festival runs from 1-7 May. For further information, see [www.swindonfestivalofliterature.co.uk](http://www.swindonfestivalofliterature.co.uk)

For further information on Lower Shaw Farm, see [www.lowershawfarm.co.uk](http://www.lowershawfarm.co.uk)

**Sue Cook**

## Life in a poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

Another witty offering for you from Brian Bilston this month, which I hope you will enjoy. Some of you might like to know that he will be appearing at the Arts Centre on the 15th June.

### Today's Climate Forecast

And onto today's climate forecast,  
where we can expect to see a prolonged spell of inaction,  
interspersed with patches of hazy promises  
across many areas.

Over Westminster and other centres of government,  
a build-up of hot air will cause inactivity  
to soar to record levels over the coming days,  
in spite of the high pressure.

Elsewhere, a front of chronic misinformation  
will sweep in from the east,  
bringing with it a band of climate change deniers  
and the chance of scattered falsehoods,

while powerful gusts of idiocy and ignorance  
look set to blow across social media.

Outbreaks of 'We just got on with it in 1976'  
and 'It's called the British summer, mate' are likely.

In summary: unsettling.



## Cartonnage Group

Would you be interested in joining a lovely handmade crafting class?

Cartonnage is the art of box making out of cardboard, glue and fabric. It originated in France many years ago and has enjoyed a revival in recent years.

If you have a good eye for detail (we need to accurately measure and cut the card) and think you would enjoy producing unique and useful things, why don't you come along and see how we do it?



We meet fortnightly at Coleview Community Centre on Wednesday mornings.

Please contact Sally Goddard (Group Organiser) if you are interested in joining us you can contact me by clicking on my name.

**Sally Goddard**

Cartonnage Group Organiser

## Membership News

We currently have over 1500 members. Of those, more than 180 have joined since registration opened last July. More than 70 groups have welcomed new members. We are being joined by people from all areas of the town and surrounding villages including Wroughton, Blunsdon, Shrivenham, Broad Town, Chiseldon, Royal Wootton Bassett and Highworth. In recent times we have seen an increase in the number of people joining us from newer parts of the town in West and North Swindon.

A New Members' Meeting was held last November and we have a date in the diary for the next one: Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November at Coleview Community Centre 10.00 am. All who have joined us since the last meeting will be sent a personal invitation. Anyone who was unable to attend the last one would also be very welcome.

More than 50 members are currently involved in a wide range of additional volunteer roles. Whilst some of these roles require a regular commitment, others do not. We are always keen to hear from members who would be prepared to help out on an occasional basis with things such as administrative tasks, publicity and events.

**Jill Kelly**



## **Summer Party - June 12<sup>th</sup>**

Since there are so many Bank Holidays in May, we haven't been able to squeeze in a May monthly meeting but we are making up for it in June.

**On June 12<sup>th</sup> at Ellendune Community Centre 2.00-5.00pm** there will be a Summer Party. We are working on finalising the programme now but expect a Summer Quiz, a Poetry Trail, some music and maybe dancing to welcome summer. Oh and yes, there'll be cake and tea as well!

I hope you will put this in your diary now so you won't forget. It is always so nice to see our members get together and have a chance to meet people from other interest groups. So, we will be planning some team work and an opportunity to mingle. Above all there will be **Fun**. Don't miss it! See you there.

**Gill Brain**

## **Future Meetings**

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

**Monday 12 June - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre:** Why not come along for an afternoon of Summer Fun. Please see further details in the Chair's report.

**June and July:** There will be no monthly meetings in June and July.

**Sue Cook**



## **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](#) by clicking on his name.

## The Arts Society Kennet & Swindon (TASKS)

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 £55, which includes 10 lectures and The Arts Society magazine. There is a reduced subscription later in the year but guests can enjoy a lecture for £7.

Become a member or try us out as a guest for top class illustrated talks at 11am mainly on the third Monday of the month at **The Ellendune Community Centre**, Wroughton, SN4 9LW.

Our next few lectures:

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

Our new exciting programme for May 2023 - April 2024

**15th May** 'The Culture of Ukraine'. by Rosamund Bartlett

**19th June** 'Venice in 18th Century London'. by Peter Medhurst

**18th September** 'The Flowering of British Renaissance'. by Leslie Primo

Check out our website: [info@theartssocietykennet.org.uk](mailto:info@theartssocietykennet.org.uk)

Or our Membership Secretary: 01793 840790

We meet for coffee at 10am and look forward to meeting you. Sue (Chairman)



## List of Email Addresses

Chair	Gill Brain	<a href="mailto:chair@swindonu3a.org.uk">chair@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>
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>
Office manager	Sylvia Alexander	<a href="mailto:office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk">office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Speaker organiser (Monthly Meetings)	Sue Cook	<a href="mailto:speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk">speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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Accommodation		
Banking		
Visits		
Web Manager	Dave Todd	

## Office

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Charity Number 298853

### Copy Dates

Items for the **June** Newsletter must be received by  
**19th May**

Items for the **July** Newsletter must be received by  
**18th June**

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.