



Newsletter

learn, laugh, live

May 2024



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Chair's Blog

A big hello to everyone at Swindon u3a. Firstly, let me tell you a bit about myself: My name is Vince Williams, I'm married to Irene and we have two grown up children and 4 (soon to be 5) grandchildren. After being in the RAF for 32 years, travelling around Europe, we finally settled down in Swindon town when I left the service; that was all some 20 plus years ago now and we've lived in the same house in Swindon ever since.

Last month at our monthly management meeting I was pleased to be invited by the Management Committee to become a trustee and to formally take up the role of Chair for Swindon u3a, a role which I'm proud to accept and hold. I know I've got some work to do to get fully up to speed with everything but as I've already discovered, our management committee and support staff are all keen to help me get there as quickly as possible.

At this point I'd like to say a big thank you to our outgoing Chair, Gillian Brain and to Sonia Menadue for standing in while the process of finding a new Chair followed its due and proper course. Both Gillian and Sonia have led us through some turbulent times recently as new concepts, processes and systems were introduced to help us run Swindon u3a more effectively and efficiently. They have both expressed their willingness to help me in my new role, and this is something I'm very appreciative of because I want to make sure that the work done by them to introduce the new processes and systems continues to run smoothly.

One of my first meetings as Chairman was to attend the u3a's Chairs' Forum Meeting that took place on-line in March. The main subject of the meeting was to discuss the Third Age Trust's proposal for how we (as a National organisation) could become more "Fit for the Future" through the introduction of a new Council that would exist between the Trust's Board and the various individual u3a's. Almost all u3a Chairs at the meeting said they wanted more specific information on the proposal before they could make an informed decision; so watch this space for now.

I hope you all had a good Easter and this wet cold weather we've been having soon turns to lovely warm sunshine! If you have any good ideas or something you just want to chat about then you'll be pleased to know I'm very approachable and always happy to listen. After all, we all want Swindon u3a to work for the benefit of us all. I'm always happy to chat face to face, or by phone or email if you've got something you want to discuss.

I'm looking forward to meeting some of you over the coming weeks and months as I try to get around as much as I can.

Vince Williams

chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

News and Information

Each month we will highlight groups in u3a to promote u3a Swindon to others and perhaps entice you to join. Thanks to Sue Mazzolien for this first highlight which is being circulated to local community magazines.

Promoting Music Groups

Do you enjoy music? Do you sing or play an instrument? Or would you like to?

Perhaps you play **the ukulele**, or want to learn. If so, you could join one of several ukulele groups.

If you are interested in **handbell ringing** you would enjoy Merribells. Sue said 'I'd never done anything like this before but wanted to try something new. You have to really concentrate while you're playing so you can't worry about anything else! It's a great feeling to play as part of a group.'

The **u3a Singers** meet fortnightly to sing popular songs together. Everyone is welcome and there's plenty of fun to be had along the way. Ken Stimson, the group organiser, said '*singing is known to be good for you and it's even better if you can do it in good company. We are not a choir – we just enjoy the pleasure of singing together.*'

Folk music is well represented by the folk singing group and by Merrifolk who play folk music together. Or perhaps you are a guitar player and would like to join the guitar group.

If you would rather just **listen to music** there are groups devoted to classical music, musicals, rock and jazz. The concertgoers organise trips to concerts in the area throughout the year. The musical groups meet in each other's homes to watch and discuss musicals and also go out to see live performances.

Publicity stats

Sticking with publicity, the 309 new members registered to date this academic year were asked to state how they heard of u3a and given Options to tick. These included Family and Friends, Open Day, Advert/Poster, Radio, and an option labelled 'Other'. This will help us in developing our future publicity programme.

Category	Number	% of total
Friend/family	236	76.3%
Open Day	11	3.56%
Advert/poster	9	2.91%
Radio	1	0.32%
Other	52	16.8%

Immediate reactions are that word of mouth is the most important publicity driver and that others are relatively minor but still important in creating awareness.

Group News

Walking Dogs Group



Hi here are some pictures of our walking dogs group.

It was Wednesday morning, 2nd April, upon the Ridgeway by Barbury Castle.

We walk somewhere every second Wednesday and organise it via a WhatsApp group. Anyone interested can send me their mobile number to be added to the group, for walk information as we plan it.

It was very windy on this occasion but still a great walk, loads of space and 9 dogs to play and socialise with each other, also sharing balls and frizby to play with. As people we walked for 3 miles, however, I guess the dogs did about 15 miles haha.



Cheers for now
Phil Rapson

The u3a Shakespeare Group is looking for new members.

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be" **Hamlet**



We are looking for new members.

"We will meet, and there we may rehearse most..... Courageously". **Midsummer Night's Dream**

"The time of life is short! / To spend that shortness basely were too long" Henry IV Part 1.

We meet on **1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 10.30-noon** in the **Western Community Centre Lounge**. All welcome.

 Singing Group Quiz 

From what songs do these extracts come? No cheating by searching on the internet, please.

- 1 .. handy mending a fuse
2. Beneath the trees where nobody sees
3. .. life seconds numbering ...
4. Like a flower bending in the breeze
5. When did he grow to be so tall?
6. This is very sad, makes me feel so bad
7. Don't give the farmer his fun ...
8. ... feet are too big for his bed ...
9. ...like the ones I used to know ...
10. Never bring me, any tears

Have you heard the new song about the electric vehicle driver with a flat battery some distance away from a charging point? (**answers are at the end**)

Why not join us to sing all these songs and many more?

Just email group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk

Ken Stimson

Hints on taking the quiz.

When taking the quiz please cover the answers and only look when you have completed it!
Alternatively, read out the questions to an audience. You could ask them to sing the answers!

Monthly Meetings

The April meeting: The Golden Age of Children's Television

In April, TV historian Jeff Evans captivated us with a fascinating story of children's television in the UK. Everyone has their own golden era, but for the BBC it was from the start of children's programming through to the 1970s when they learned how to make programmes for children and lay the foundations for the future.

Muffin the Mule was the first star. Starting in 1946, it was the BBC's only programme for children and ran for 20 minutes on a Sunday afternoon.

In 1950 a Children's Television Department was set up, which produced Whirligig. There was Sooty (the puppet bought for 7/6d on Blackpool North Pier), who by 1957 had been joined by Sweep the dog, and a female panda named Soo but there was absolutely no touching allowed on screen! Billy Bunter was deemed suitable for both children and adults so two live performances were needed – one at 5.00 pm and another at 8.00 pm.

The next big innovation was in 1953 when the BBC turned to pre-school children, starting with Andy Pandy, Teddy and Looby Loo. By 1955 Watch with Mother ran five days a week: Monday was Picture Book, Tuesday Andy Pandy, Wednesday the Flower Pot Men, Thursday Rag Tag and Bobtail and Friday The Woodentops with Spotty Dog. Just 26 episodes of each of these programmes were made, which showed twice a year, so by the 1960s they were looking dated and there was a real appetite for change.

ITV arrived in September 1955 and produced livelier shows. There was Lassie and Roy Rogers, the Adventures of Robin Hood (with Richard Greene), The Buccaneers and Ivanhoe. Programmes were now put on film and could be sold around the world.

The 1960s brought us Thunderbirds, the Lone Ranger, and the Adventures of Champion the Wonder Horse amongst many others.

First broadcast in 1958, in 1962 a new Producer (Biddy Baxter) was appointed to Blue Peter. With a badge designed by Tony Hart, it was then broadcast twice a week and became known for its annual appeals, pets (the original Petra died after the first show was aired), and making something out of household rubbish.

With audiences still in favour of ITV, the BBC started to produce their own dramas, including works by Dickens. 1963 brought us the first Dr Who. Jackanory attracted great actors such as Judy Dench, Kenneth Williams, Derek Jacobi and Thora Hird. Then in 1965, The Magic Roundabout (imported from France) filled a gap between children's and adult programmes with a five-minute slot before the news.

Memories from the 1970s included Paddington Bear, the Wombles, Camberwick Green, Trumpton, Mr Benn, John Craven's Newsround and Bagpuss. Grange Hill began the next age of children's drama with its unsanitised version of school life, complete with bad language and bullying.

Some programmes became known simply by the time they were shown – "It's Friday, it's five to five and it's

Jeff gave us an entertaining trip down memory lane. Proving a very popular speaker, he has a range of other talks, so if you missed this one, please look out for the 2025 programme!

Monday 13 May 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon SN4 9LW

'WILDLIFE WANDERINGS' WITH DAVID BAILEY, WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

David's talk 'Wildlife Wanderings' explains equipment and time required to capture images, including the stories behind them. He will show images of a leveret having a bad hare day, fishy goings on with puffins, otters, deer rutting, beavers munching and many other feathery and furry species. There will also be a quiz – some of the answers are not what you might expect! Self-taught in photography, he was quickly persuaded to turn professional in 2008 and won the Welsh Wildlife Photographic Award in 2011. Many other awards have followed, and he has had his work published many times in newspapers and magazines, including The Countryman. Two chance meetings with Dr Rhys Jones of Cardiff University and star of the BBC series Rhys Jones Wildlife Patrol, led to David being drafted on to the production team working as consultant, cameraman, photographer and occasionally in front of the camera. He has also appeared with Nick Baker on Springwatch and made many media appearances on both TV and radio.

EXPERIENCES WITH BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATION

In May, we will also be joined by Rebecca Garnett, a PhD researcher within the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at Oxford University. She will be doing a short presentation before David and will give anyone interested an opportunity to collect a survey from her. Her latest survey study considers people's experiences with blood pressure medication. Whilst having a range of benefits, these medications can also have some potential drawbacks such as falls and side effects. Last year she had a fantastic response from u3a groups, so let's see if we can assist with this year's research topic.

Monday JUNE 10 2024 EARLY INVITATION: SUMMER PARTY

2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon Sn4 9LW

There'll be fun and games, singing and quizzes. It's a great chance to meet other Swindon u3a members and make new friends. Those in the know also come for the special summer party CAKE! There will be no Monthly meetings in July and August.

Attending Monthly Meetings

If you plan to attend a Monthly meeting, please remember to book by either:

- 1. Going onto the website swindonu3a.org.uk (just log in and click on the event you want to attend listed on the page) or**
- 2. Telephone the office on 01793 614629**

Bookings can be taken up to 11.30 am on the morning of the meeting.

Sue Cook

Life in a poem

submitted by Lesley Basu

I have become increasingly aware of late, of the importance of oral history and, in particular, the part played by nursery rhymes, fairy stories traditional folk songs and, of course, paintings (!), in preserving our national history. The recent protest by "The Right to Roam" group at Lord Bathurst's estate in Cirencester, reminded me of this month's poem. The park has been free to roam since 1695 but Lord Bathurst is now introducing charges and electric gates are being installed across the four main routes.

An Olde English Nursery Rhyme - circa 1764

They hang the man and flog the woman
That steal the goose from off the common,
But let the greater villain loose
That steals the common from the goose.

The law demands that we atone
When we take things we do not own
But leaves the lords and ladies fine
Who take things that are yours and mine.

The poor and wretched don't escape
If they conspire the law to break;
This must be so but they endure
Those who conspire to make the law.

The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common'
And geese will still a common lack

Till they go and steal it back.



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Charity Number 298853

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Singing Quiz answers:

1. When I'm Sixty-Four
2. Teddy Bears' Picnic
3. My Grandfather's Clock
4. Sway
5. Sunrise. Sunset
6. Yellow Bird
7. Run Rabbit
8. Raindrops keep falling on my head
- 9 White Christmas
- 10 Bring me Sunshine

The electric car driver with the flat battery was "Only 24 hours from Tulsa"

Copy Dates

Items for the Newsletter must be received by the Editor
by the 18th of the preceding month

Chris Firth writes

This is my first Newsletter as Editor.

Over the next few months, you may see a few changes (nothing drastic)

I would welcome suggestions from you on how we can improve the
Newsletter.

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter contributions
e-mail address: newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk The Editor reserves the right
to amend or abbreviate any entries submitted.