

u3a Newsletter Swindon **April 2026**



Welcome to our April newsletter keeping you connected with the Swindon u3a community

Contents:

- Swindon u3a News
- Opportunities to Help
- Upcoming Meetings
- Group News
- Local News and Information
- Quiz Corner
- Life in a Poem
- Swindon u3a Contacts
- Quiz Answers

Swindon u3a News



Thoughts from the Chair

As a newcomer to Swindon, I am constantly surprised by how much I don't know about the place. Things that are a shared experience to many of you, make no sense to me. Like the sounding of the hooter at the railway works, which marked the passage of the day for the town, not just the works. When it was sounded again recently to mark the 40th anniversary of the closure of the works, it was an interesting novelty. I wondered what the strange noise was, when I learned it was interesting, but it wasn't a window into the past for me, as it was for you.

At March's Monthly Meeting at the Ellendune Centre, when Graham Carter and Noel Ponting told us about the Association of Wiltshiremen in London. I was again surprised by the connection between Swindon and the cutting edges of life in the country – in areas as varied as Arsenal Football Club and Women's Suffrage.

But I'm sort of surprised that I am surprised. It is amazing just how much ordinary people achieve can achieve, especially when they get together.

When I can get there, I go to the British History Group and it came as a shock when I realised that those amazing talks that I've listened to weren't delivered by experts, but were pulled together by ordinary people, sitting down and doing research into something they didn't really know too much about before.

I want to say a huge thank you to all the U3A volunteers who make everything happen, whatever it is you do. I know that I'm looking forward to the Volunteers meeting on the 18th April, when I'll get the chance to meet more of you first hand.

Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much". Surely that is the spirit at the heart of U3A life.

Peter Cook



Meet our new Vice-Chair

My name is Sue Wigmore-Bond and I am the Vice Chair of Swindon U3A.

I joined U3A last summer after retiring from a 43-year nursing career, i knew that doing nothing simply wouldn't fit with me and felt that U3A would enable me to keep my brain working, I'd learn new skills and maybe make new friends. So far, all the above has happened and more besides, perhaps there's something in the "Live, Laugh, Learn" tag line after all. I've been so impressed by the willingness of our Group organisers who show a real passion to share their knowledge but there's more to it than that, I hear members sharing stories about their lives and families, I see them welcomed to groups with ease, quickly becoming friends -it's evident that U3A goes beyond what the activity is. so much is achieved over coffee, before/after activities, and over social events,

Becoming Vice chair was never in my master plan but it has given me a sense of purpose without taking up too much of my time whilst enabling me to do none U3A activities too. My role is deputising for the Chair and supporting the office and events/publicity teams who do amazing work behind the scenes in planning events and helping members with joining groups and assisting them in making payments.

do say hello if you see me out and about.

Gift Aid.

Gift Aid allows Swindon u3a members who are UK taxpayers to boost their £10 annual membership fee by 25% at no extra cost, simply by completing a Gift Aid declaration. Currently, over half of members have not signed up, and if all eligible members did, the charity could claim an additional £2,375 annually from HMRC. Signing up is straightforward via the member website (login and My Membership Tab) or by contacting the office. Gift Aid does not cost you anything and can be updated or cancelled should your circumstances change. To be eligible to grant Gift Aid on your membership fee you just need to pay at least £2.50 in tax each year to HMRC. Contact the office for more information.

Swindon u3a News



Volunteers' Meeting

Swindon u3a are holding a **Volunteers' Meeting** on **Sat 18th April from 10am to 12pm** in the **Alexandra Room, Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton.**

Swindon u3a relies on volunteers to make it function & without them, we wouldn't have this marvellous organisation. Our volunteers work together in teams e.g. **Office Team, Finance Team, Publicity Team, Events Team, Group Buddy team.**

So many of our members have incredible skills, that have been built up over many years & we need you. We're not looking for massive commitments that never end, just that magic touch you might be able to bring, that would make all the difference. And you wouldn't be working alone; it's another great way of meeting new people, making friends & working together.

We do hope that you can join us and **if so, please contact me via the email below**, to help us with catering, numbers etc.

Rose Clarke
Membership Liaison
membership@swindonu3a.org.uk

Can you help us with any of the following roles?

You would have lots of support and be contributing to the smooth running of our u3a.

General Secretary

The main tasks are

- Ensuring Policies are reviewed (and updated if necessary)
- Organising the AGM
- Liaising with the Charities Commission and the Third Age Trust
- Attending the monthly Management Committee

For further information contact secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk

Group Buddy

The Groups team is looking for a new group buddy to join their team. The group buddies work with the Group Coordinator and a set of group organisers to provide system and payment support and to be a first point of contact for group organisers on day-to-day matters. We are looking for a buddy to support the active and lifestyle groups, as the Group Coordinator is currently filling this vacancy. For more information, please contact Linda Young via group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk

Treasurer

Our current Treasurer writes - After much thought, I wanted to let you know that I will be stepping down as Treasurer at the end of the charity year in August 2026. I will continue in post until the AGM in November 2026 to ensure everything runs smoothly, and I'm committed to supporting a thorough and well-organised handover to whoever takes on the role next.

If anyone would like to discuss the transition or has any questions in the meantime, please feel free to contact me via the Treasury email address.: treasurer@swindonu3a.org.uk

Monthly Meetings

If you're a NEW Swindon u3a Member & you're coming along to your FIRST monthly meeting at the Ellendune Centre, then please let the u3a people on the welcome desk know, so that you can be introduced to the **u3a Volunteers Team**. Thanks.

The History of Ice Cream - Monday 11 May at 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre - Ali Warren

They say you are what you eat - which means that culinary history is a good way in to learning about social history. Certain ingredients lend themselves to a really interesting perspective on the lives of our ancestors and ice cream is surprisingly one of them. In this talk, you'll learn about the origins of ice cream, how it came to be made and how it became popular. You'll learn something about some important and interesting women along the way too!

The talk will be presented by Ali Warren, whose interest in culinary history stems from her long-term involvement in re-enactment, where she has reproduced meals from the past from the Romans to the Victorians.

Monthly Meeting Report – March 2026

Local historians Graham Carter and Noel Ponting joined our meeting in March to tell us about some of their discoveries whilst writing their book 'Moonies, Movers and Shakers – rediscovered stories and personalities from the Association of Wiltshiremen in London'.

These Moonies had nothing to do with the religious cult but referred to the legend of the Moonrakers, a term traditionally applied to people born in Wiltshire. Despite The Crammer in Devizes still being the favoured location, Graham put forward the mill pond beside the old Holy Rood Church in Old Town as another possibility – not least because Swindon was a recognised area of cheesemaking. A painting of the Moonrakers raking out the pond to get 'the cheese' (the moon) and outwitting the Excisemen hung in the Mechanics' Institute in Emlyn Square and was transported to London for the annual dinners of the Association, reminding attendees that Wiltshire people are cleverer than people think! Who knew that Sir Christopher Wren was born in Wiltshire?

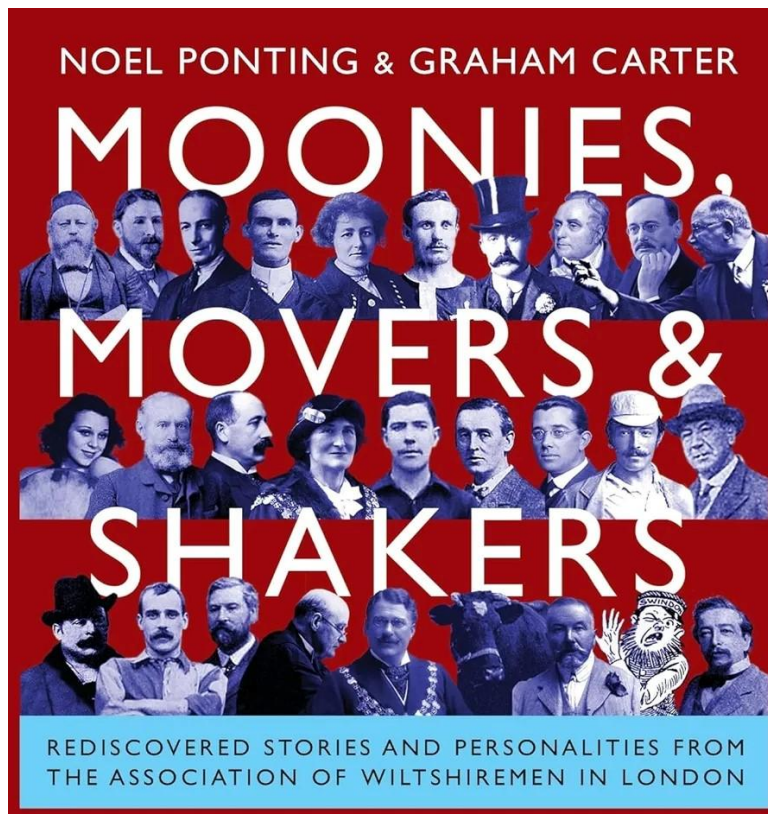
The GWR played a key role in the formation of the Moonies in London. Apprentices were dismissed at the end of their 5-7 year apprenticeship and, given the GWR's worldwide reputation for engineering, many went to London to work, often swapping the carriage works in Swindon for the gun carriages of the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. Their get togethers with other men from Swindon eventually led to the formation of the Association of Wiltshiremen in London. At their dinner in 1890, reference was made to two Swindon railwaymen who had played for the Royal Arsenal football team that afternoon in the London Challenge Cup. The part they played in the history of Arsenal, and the development of football in the south of England, ultimately turned it into the national game.

And what about the women of Wiltshire? In 1908 there was a toast to the ladies, but no right to respond until 1930, when times were beginning to change. In 1912 there was reference to 'the window smashers' and although not mentioned by name, this related to Swindon-born suffragette Edith New. Eventually, the Mayor of Wilton, Edith Maud Olivier was the first woman to give a speech to the Association in 1939.

Other notable members included Richard Burbidge from South Wraxall who became head of Harrods stores, the poet Alfred Williams, William Frederick Brown (aka Farmer Brown) who became Chief Inspector at New Scotland Yard, and Lord Oaksey who presided over the Nuremberg Trials. There were many others, each with their intriguing stories.

In 1954 it was decided not to continue to hold the annual dinners as there were now so many other distractions, in particular radio and television. And as for the painting of the

Moonrakers, sadly even that is now lost. Lots more interesting information can be found in Graham and Noel's book Moonies, Movers and Shakers.



Book your place on any Swindon u3A events

1. Go to the website www.swindonu3a.org.uk (just log in and click on u3a-wide events).
or
2. Telephone the office on 07345 162117 or 07823 722812.

Group News

Travel Group J here

Travel Group J daytrip to Cardiff Castle on Thursday May 14th

Cardiff Castle, in the heart of Wales's capital city, is at once a Roman fort, a Norman stronghold and Victorian gothic palace whose enchanting fairytale towers conceal an elaborate and splendid interior. The castle is one of Wales's greatest heritage sites, boasting almost 2,000 years of history.

The castle is mostly accessible to those with mobility issues, apart from the Norman keep. It is situated in the heart of the capital within a few minutes easy walk of shops, pubs and parks.

Estimated coach cost: £25 p.p. including driver's gratuity. Concessionary entry to the castle is £11 or £15 with a guided tour. There will also be the opportunity to take a three-course lunch as guests of the historical Cardiff and Country Club which is 7 minutes' walk from the castle. Cost £32 p.p.

Cardiff and Country Club is a private members club, nearly 160 years old. Dress code for gentlemen: Jacket and Tie

Departure times and coach pick points: The Crown Hotel Royal Wootton Bassett: 8.15 am; Ellendune Community Centre Car Park: 8:30 am and Coate Water bus stop: 8:45 am. Return home to Swindon will be 6:15 pm approx.

All members and friends are welcome. If you are interested in joining us, kindly contact Lesley or Kalyan Basu on:

01793 615059 or email your name, contact number and preferred pick-up point to : lesleybasu@hotmail.com

Payments must be made by the end of April.

Thank you

Aviation Group

Visit to the Shuttleworth Collection
Wednesday 27th May 2026

A year-round visitor attraction in the heart of Bedfordshire, Old Warden aerodrome is a working grass airfield. Home to The Shuttleworth Collection, Swiss Garden, and Shuttleworth House. Whether you're an aircraft aficionado, horticulturalist, family, or

simply looking for a unique experience, Shuttleworth has something for everyone to enjoy. Honouring the legacy of our patron, Richard Ormonde Shuttleworth – a keen aviator, racing driver and horse racer – The Shuttleworth Collection is a treasure trove of airworthy vintage aircraft from 1909-1950, agricultural and steam exhibits, veteran vehicles, classic motorcycles, bicycles, carriages, and buses. Come and visit our engineering workshop to see the live work taking place on some of these stunning aircraft, before exploring six hangars full of aeronautic and vehicular history.

Departure times and pick up points:

8.00 am Ellendune Health Centre, Wroughton

8.15 am Coate Water, opposite Sun Public House

4.00 pm Depart for Swindon

Cost £40 per person which includes, entry to museum, coach, gratuities and hot drink on arrival.

All members and friends welcome

Contact Ken Ivie on 01793 845483 or email kenivie@uwclub.net

Swindon u3a Climate Change Group - Summer Term Programme

Tuesday 14 th April	ALTERNATIVE FUELS
Tuesday 21 st April	PLASTIC FREE SWINDON
Tuesday 28 th April	NUCLEAR POWER – PROS & CONS
Tuesday 5 th May	POPULATION – TOO BIG?
Tuesday 12 th May	HEALTH & CLIMATE CHANGE

Meetings will be held at the Friends Meeting House 79 Eastcott Hill Swindon SN1 3JF starting at 10.30am. All u3a members are welcome. If you are interested, please contact Bill Hughes Co-ordinator email bill.hughes1@btinternet.com .

U3A Concertgoers Trip

Concertgoers enjoyed a fine trip in March to the new Bristol Beacon, to hear the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra play Frank Bridge's 'Summer', Ravel's Piano Concert in G, and Rachmaninov Symphony No 3, with a superb piano soloist. Our next trip is to a wonderful **matinee concert on Thursday June 18th** in Birmingham Symphony Hall, with time to explore the area nearby with the outstanding new City Library, galleries and museum, and the canal walks with cafes and restaurants.

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

- **Martinu:** Memorial to Lidice (1943) - the Czech village annihilated in WWII
- **Tchaikovsky:** Violin Concerto, with soloist Inmo Yang. Written in 1878, it is one of best-known violin concertos.

- **Prokofiev:** Symphony No 6, movements Allegro Moderato, Largo, Vivace.

Details: Concert at 2:15pm, with arrival at the Hall (the only stop) around 12 noon. Concert ends around 4:15pm.

Pick-up points:

Ashington Way West Swindon 9:30am

Downsview Road 9:45am

Highworth Brewery St Car Park 10:00am

Maximum cost for 32 people coming £63 including good seats, coach and driver's gratuity, but if 40 people come, the cost is only £57 and you will get approx. £6 *refund* pp cash on the coach.

HOW TO BOOK:

Please book and pay by 30 April. To book, send to Anne Nolan (afnolan@yahoo.com, Tel 07742 834457), an email with the following information: (NB – it's vital that we have your mobile phone no and desired pickup point):-

Name(s)

Address

Mobile Phone No

Email address

No of tickets

Amount paid (£63pp) and method of payment

Pickup Point desired

HOW TO PAY:

Please pay £63 by BACS Bank Transfer (*preferred*) to Swindon u3a Trips account, sort code 40-52-40, account no 00022106. Please use reference 'Yourname Concert' e.g. 'Smith Concert'. Alternatively, you can post a cheque made out to Swindon u3a to Anne Nolan, 7 Tenby Close, Swindon SN3 1LN

New Music Group?

(Small combo/wind band)Do you play an instrument? Would you like to have a group to play with?

I'm Brian and I came to Swindon a year ago, but my sop. sax has stayed in its box due to personal circumstances, but now I would like to give it an airing. But I don't want to play by myself! Would you like to join me? Warning: I play with only moderate ability, since I didn't start on this instrument till my 70th! But,

I was in a band in Leamington Spa U3A ("Cacophony") for some years, so I am looking for a group here to encourage me to play again.

What I envisage is that we play music that those who participate prefer to play themselves. (My own personal preference would be for jazz standards, but don't let that stop you). We could do with a keyboard player, of course, other wind instruments and possibly a drummer! And we would meet at a time and place that suits us.

So, I suggest we would meet up initially for coffee and cake and a chat to work out what to play, when and where. You could come to me at Gilbert Place (comfy) SN3 1FX sometime after Easter - send me an email at b.austin@live.co.uk or text me at [07989 667106](tel:07989667106) and we'll take it from there. Say what you play and when you could come during April, day, am/pm

Brian Austin.

Local News and Information

Cine Seniors



Sometimes there is nothing like seeing a film on the big screen. Cineworld at Shaw Ridge show regular films for 'Seniors' on Wednesday mornings. Tickets are only £4.50, free tea and coffee is available just before hand in the foyer Performances begin at about 11.30am.

Here's what's coming in the next few months:

April 15 - Rental Family

Let's get quizzical

Take a moment with our quiz. Answers at the end of the newsletter – no cheating!

Mental Maths

Follow the instructions to find the answer

46	-38	×9	÷3	1/8 of it	×18	+10	Square root of it	+73	=
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Anagrams

Find the Easter words:

- Silk menace
- No cost shrubs
- Tis Arab beret

Shakespeare

Test your knowledge of Shakespeare's plays to celebrate his birthday on 23 April:

Which of Shakespeare's title characters has the fewest lines:

Julius Caesar	King Lear	Henry V
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In which play is the line: “Double, double toil and trouble. Fire burn and cauldron bubble.”

The Tempest	Macbeth	Othello
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In which play is the famous line: “If music be the food of love, play on.”

The Winter’s Tale	Romeo and Juliet	Twelfth Night
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Bits and Bobs

Who composed the jazz classic "Take Five"?

Miles Davis	Dave Brubeck	Paul Desmond
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What was the first computer to be used for commercial business applications in England?

LEO 1	ENIAC	UNIVAC
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Which organisation uses the machine known as ERNIE?

National Lottery	National Savings & Investments	The Bank of England
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What was the name of the dog in The Famous Seven books by Enid Blyton?

Scamper	Timmy	Lassie
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Who Said It?

'A man who dares to waste one hour has not discovered the value of life.'

Aldous Huxley	Mary Warnock	Charles Darwin
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Word of the Month

If you see an unusual word, please do share it and its meaning with us and we will feature it.

LITOTES  a figure of speech which uses ironic understatement/ negative statement to affirm a sentiment. It often uses double negatives to give added emphasis or to hide an insult. You have *definitely* used litotes! E.g. ‘Well, it’s not the best ...’, ‘he’s not the sharpest tool in the box’, ‘that’s no mean feat’, ‘it’s not bad’, ‘well, it’s not wrong to...’.

Life in a poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

Wendy Cope OBE, born 21 July 1945 in Erith, Kent, is a contemporary English poet. She read history at St. Hilda's College Oxford before spending fourteen years as a primary-school teacher. In 1981, she became Arts and Review editor for the Inner London Education Authority magazine, *Contact*. Five years later, she became a freelance writer and was a television critic for *The Spectator* magazine, until 1990. She was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1992 and in 1998, she was voted the listeners' choice in a BBC Radio 4 poll to succeed Ted Hughes as Poet Laureate. The position was given to Andrew Motion but her 2001 poetry collection was shortlisted for the Whitbread poetry award. Her witty lyrics and pitch-perfect parodies have gained her a readership far beyond most of her peers. She now lives in Ely, Cambridgeshire with her husband, the poet Lachlan Mackinnon.

In this example she reminds us that often simple moments in life are the most memorable.

The Orange

**At lunchtime I bought a huge orange—
The size of it made us all laugh.
I peeled it and shared it with Robert and Dave—
They got quarters and I had a half.**

**And that orange, it made me so happy,
As ordinary things often do
Just lately. The shopping. A walk in the park.
This is peace and contentment. It's new.**

**The rest of the day was quite easy.
I did all the jobs on my list
And enjoyed them and had some time over.
I love you. I'm glad I exist.**

— Wendy Cope



Swindon u3a Contacts

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Office

Swindon u3a Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swindon, SN2 8DA
(*entry is by the middle door on the right-hand side of the building*)

As the Term 2 25/26 payments are due this month, the office will be open from 10:00 – 12:00 on the following dates in April:

Mon 13th, 20th and 27th

Wed 8th

Fri 10th, 17th and 24th.

Tel: 07823 722812 or 07345 162117. Out of office hours there is an answering machine. Our Office Managers and volunteers will endeavour to answer your questions or point you in the direction of someone who can help.

Email: office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web: www.swindonu3a.org.uk

Swindon u3a Charity Number 298853

Send us your news and more: We would love to hear from you. Share your news and photos from your groups. Send submissions to: newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk - **deadline for the April newsletter is 19th March.**

Quiz Answers:

Mental maths

81

Anagrams:

- Simnel cake
- Hot cross buns
- Easter rabbit

Shakespeare:

- Julius Caesar
- Macbeth
- Twelfth Night

Bits and Bobs:

- Paul Desmond composed Take Five which was performed by the Dave Brubeck Quartet and originally recorded in 1959.
- LEO 1 was England's first commercial computer. It was commissioned by Lyons Tea Company to solve the production scheduling and delivery to hundreds of its teashops.
- ERNIE is the electronic random number indicator equipment used by National Savings and Investments (NS&I) since 1957 to select the winning premium bonds. Today, ERNIE 5 is in operation.
- Scamper featured in the Famous Seven, Timmy appeared in the Famous Five.

Who Said It?

- Charles Darwin