

learn, laugh, live  
**December 2023**



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## from the Chair

Well, as we approach the year end and Bonfire night is behind us, all sights are set on Christmas. It seems to come earlier every year! We are also, of course, nearing the end of our autumn term. I hope you have all enjoyed an interesting term of learning new things and meeting and making friends. That is what u3a is all about. Our new members who joined us in 2023 are now becoming 'old' members and getting the hang of how u3a works. We also have several new groups who started at the beginning of this term and I'm sure these are running smoothly and successfully.

Many thanks to all those who came to our AGM. It was a wonderful response and I hope you gained from the information about how our u3a has been growing and developing. As this year 2023-4 progresses we are consolidating the developmental work of last year and smoothing out the inevitable issues that have arisen as a result of change.

In this edition of the Newsletter, you will find some information about how to get the best out of our new Swindon u3a website by setting up your own personal account allowing you access to the wide range of information and activities we undertake. It will also enable you to sign up easily for any of our u3a-wide activities such as our Monthly Monday meetings ( the second Monday of each month). If, like many of us, you are a little lost (and maybe a bit afraid) about aspects of modern information technology, we will also be providing you with help and support. Again, see further details below. Do come forward and seek help with any aspect of IT you feel would help you to operate better in modern society – our IT Buddies can personalise the help they offer to meet your needs.

I hope to see you at our Christmas Party and I send you warm wishes at this special time of year. I wish you the Christmas you wish yourself.

Gill

## Christmas Party

**YOU'RE  
INVITED**

**Monday 11 December - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton, SN4 9LW**

Back by popular request, the North Swindon Big Band will be entertaining us. There will also be an opportunity to sing Christmas songs with our u3a Singing Group and enjoy tea and cake!

Due to limited venue capacity you will need to book your place at the party, either by logging in and registering for the event, calling the office 01793 614629 or emailing the office, [office@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk).



### ***North Swindon Big Band***

NSBB audiences can expect to be entertained by music from the Swing and Dance era of the 1930s, largely drawn from the Great American Song Book, together with well-known contemporary numbers. Additionally, programmes will undoubtedly include jazz and big band standards from Glenn Miller, Miles Davis and George Gershwin, as well as fabulous vocal numbers made popular by the likes of Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. During the festive season, big band arrangements of traditional carols and well-known Christmas favourites both enrich the band's programmes and encourage audience participation! Whatever your musical taste, a performance from NSBB is sure to be enjoyed by all!



**North Swindon  
Big Band**  
*with Pauline Richings and Ken Jell*



## Monday Meeting Jan 2024

Our first meeting of 2024 will then be:

**Monday 8 January 2024 - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton, SN4 9LW**

### **DON'T FALL FOR FRAUD - KEEPING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY SAFE FROM THE FRAUDSTERS - NEIL MCCALLUM AND TIM SALT**

Ever had someone knock on your door and tell you they can repair the problem with your roof you didn't know about? Or an email asking for help from a friend or relative who is stranded abroad? Fraud is now 40% of all recorded crimes in the UK. Last year fraudsters stole £1.2 billion. That's £2,300 for every minute of the year. The good news is that, even in this technology-driven world, a few simple steps can dramatically increase your financial safety and reduce the risks of someone cheating you.



Neil has over thirty years' experience of public sector performance and review work. He currently manages a portfolio of international projects, working with a range of judicial, law enforcement and non-government organisations on issues of accountability, transparency and good governance. He has worked on these issues in Botswana, Ethiopia,

The Gambia and numerous other countries, including the UK.

Tim was a serving police officer heading the West Midlands Police Fraud Squad. He was a founder member and chair of the Association of Chief Police Officers Working Group on Fraud and Chair of the National Fraud Forum, and represented the Police in discussions with the Law Commission on offences of fraud and corruption. Since leaving the police he has provided fraud and corruption prevention programmes for a wide range of organisation in both the public and private sectors across Europe, Africa and Asia. He has been an IPA member for more than 50 years.

## Membership News

At the last count 216 **new members** have registered with us since the start of the u3a year. This is more than the whole of last year. We welcome them all. As in previous years, 70% tell us that they heard of u3a through a friend. 15% indicated a willingness to **volunteer** in some way. Some have already taken up new roles along with other longer serving members who came forward at the volunteers' event. This is great news.

However, there are of course still gaps to fill. The Third Age Trust suggests that every u3a needs at least 20% of their membership to be actively involved in some aspect of running the organisation. Please do get in touch if you feel you have time and skills to offer.

We continue to see some increased use of the **Facebook** chat page which is only available to Swindon u3a members. Recent posts have included information about upcoming talks, local initiatives, new groups and asking for help from other members.

For the last 2 years we have held **focus groups** in order to help us know more about what members think about various aspects of how Swindon u3a operates. We will soon be reviewing this idea and discussing if and how we develop it this year. Watch this space!

Jill Kelly

Membership Liaison Secretary

[membership@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@swindonu3a.org.uk)

## Volunteer Vacancies

Please, please, please would you include in your New Year's Resolutions offering to help with some of the volunteer jobs below. We are in urgent need of help with these roles.

**Chair**

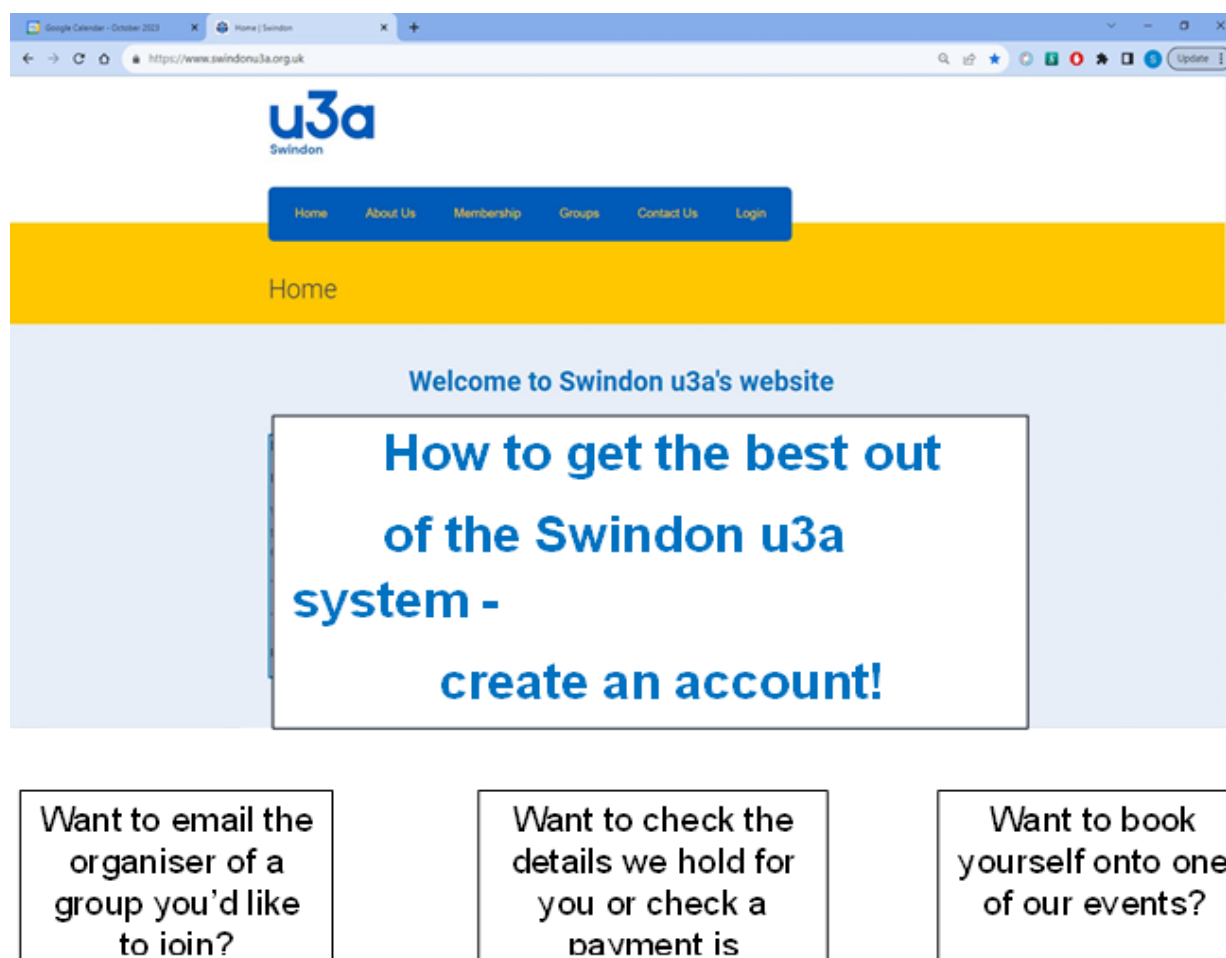
**Treasurer**

**Publicity Officer**

**Newsletter Editor**

If you think you might be able to help and you would like to know more, please get in touch with any member of the Committee ( contact details at the end of this Newsletter)





These are all things that you can do when you have created an account on the Swindon u3a system, and it is simple to set one up.

1. Go to the website, [www.swindonu3a.org.uk](http://www.swindonu3a.org.uk) and click/tap on Login on the far right of the blue bar at the top of the page.
2. You will need your **username**. This was sent to you in August but if you need help just email or phone the office ( [office@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk) / 01793 614629 ) and we'll let you know the username the system has generated for you.
3. Enter your **username** and click/tap on the **Forgot Password** button.
4. On the next page click/tap on the **Forgot Password** button
5. You will be sent an email with a link. Click/tap on this to create a **password** – it will tell you what characters the password must contain.
6. Click or tap on the grey submit box. You will receive a reply saying your password has been reset and now you can now log in to your account with your **username** and **password**.

Interested? Please mail [itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk)

## **New Members' Meeting**



Hot on the heels of last month's Volunteers' Event, over 50 people met at Coleview Community Centre on Sat Nov 25<sup>th</sup> with the focus on welcoming our newer members.

Committee members and other volunteers gave presentations on a variety of topics including: the ethos and culture of u3a; the role of the Office Team and the Monthly Meeting. There was an explanation of 'the big picture' in terms of the structure and running of our u3a. Linda Young provided a well-received introduction to Simple Membership, our new website and admin system.

After refreshments, people met together in small groups to get to know each other better and to share their experiences so far with u3a. Ideas and opinions were shared about a range of subjects including: the website and how we use Information technology; social media, events, the newsletter, volunteering, venues and transport.

Groups reported back on what proved to be the hottest topics for them. These included: some negativity regarding Facebook but some enthusiasm for WhatsApp being used within individual groups; suggestions that car-sharing could be more widely used and promoted; the importance of keeping the website clear and simple; the need for clearer information in some of the group activity details on the website; appreciation for the Newsletter and Welcome booklet; ideas for new groups and a good level of interest in Monthly Meetings.

Thanks are due to the many people who helped to set up and run the meeting. Members attending all met someone new and learned things they did not previously know about u3a. Thanks to all for their thoughtful contributions.

**Jill Kelly**

Membership Liaison Secretary.



# Group News

## Short Mat Bowls 1

By Elsie Johnson

“Short mat bowls is an indoor sport that originated in Ireland and is a variation on lawn bowls, from which it is derived. The aim of the game is to roll a bowl along a fairly flat surface and score points by getting the bowls closer to the jack ( a small white ball) than the opponent’s bowls. The carpet used for short mat bowls is between 40-45ft (12.2m – 13.7m) long and 6ft (1.8m) wide, with a fender at both ends and a white line representing the ditch 1ft (0.3m) in from the fender “



This is short mat bowls in a nutshell and is easy to learn and every member of our group is more than happy to assist a “newbie” to the game, whatever their abilities and experience in bowls

We have lively, friendly but very competitive sessions weekly at the Haydon Centre Swindon. But any rivalry is soon forgotten once the session is over. We play throughout the year- funding ourselves

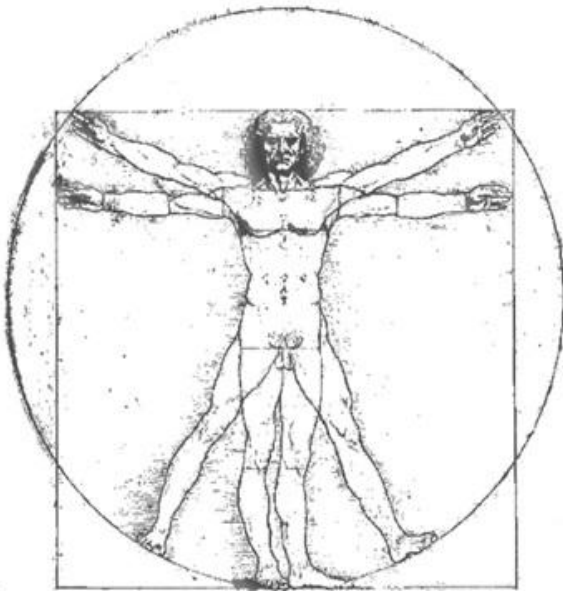


during the U3a summer recess.

We have the use of bowls at the centre but some members like to bring their own bowls along once they feel that the game is for them. These can be purchased second hand on various online sites but the use of the bowls at the centre is always an option.

From time to time we try and arrange other activities for the group. For example, we were able to arrange a couple of sessions at the Swindon Manor Indoor Bowls Club to give the group a taste of bowling on a much longer surface and we are looking forward to a Christmas meal together at one of the local eateries.

## The “Life, the Universe and Everything” Group



is looking for speakers with a STEM background.

We invite talks on a huge variety of subjects from any of the sciences, technology, engineering and maths. If you worked or have studied in any related field, or know someone that did, we're keen to hear from you.

Talks can be any length from about 10 to 50 minutes.

For more details please contact Chris Brooks:

[Wttmh1@gmail.com](mailto:Wttmh1@gmail.com)

## New Classical Music Appreciation group



Are there any U3A Swindon members who would like to meet up, possibly monthly, to discuss and listen to recordings of their favourite music in the Classical Music category?

Provided there are enough interested members, we can meet up to decide the format. I would be open to any views, and I am thinking about having a theme for each meeting.

Please get in touch if you are interested.

Howard Main [howardm@howardmain.uk](mailto:howardm@howardmain.uk)



## **New Whist group**

I would like to set up a new group for Whist players – would any of you like to join me? I'm hoping to make it enjoyable for all levels. Provided there are enough interested members, we can meet up to decide the details. Please get in touch if you are interested.

Wendy Merrills

[wendymerrills@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:wendymerrills@hotmail.co.uk)

## **CONCERTGOERS**

### **Fairy Tales and Pagan Rites with Bharatanatym Dance.**

A group of 38 of us travelled to The Anvil Theatre in Basingstoke on a November evening to attend a performance of the 70 strong Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra with their Ukrainian conductor Kirill Karabits, together with Seeta Patel Dance.

First came Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty suite. Composed in the last decade of the nineteenth century originally as a ballet in 3 acts, and later adapted as an orchestral suite. The story of the sleeping princess, the good fairy, the bad fairy and the folk tale characters who attended the wedding ball, was brought to life for us by Bournemouth Symphony's lively interpretation of Tchaikovsky's richly scored music which includes a harp and a full percussion section.

After the interval came Stravinsky's Rite of Spring composed only about 20 years later, but which shocked the western classical music scene at the time with its "crunching, snarling chords from the brass and thundering thumps from the tympani"! Like the Tchaikovsky, it also was composed as a ballet but now more often performed as an orchestral work. The music depicts a pagan ritual to celebrate the advent of Spring, and the interpretation we saw is the Indian dance style called

Bharatanatym. The dancers used all their limbs including their fingers and toes with breathtaking dexterity, and the choreography fitted perfectly with the complexity and irregular beats of Stravinsky's music. This performance was premiered in Sadlers Wells in March this year and I believe we witnessed the 3<sup>rd</sup> ever performance. A section of the stalls was removed so that result of a collaboration between the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Seeta Patel dance group whose speciality is the South the dancers (there were about 12 of them) could perform in front of the Orchestra with special lighting and smoke effects.

Thanks to Robin and the Team for selecting and organizing this concert and procuring great seats for us. We are looking forward to the next one!

**Nina Stimson**



The Office will close at **12.00 on Friday 15th December** and reopen **at 10.00 on Wednesday 3rd January**

**Normal opening hours: 10.00 - 12.00, Mon, Wed, Fri.**

**Season's Greetings from the office team**



**Life in a Poem** submitted by Lesley Basu

**Thomas Hardy** (2 June 1840 – 11 January 1928) was an English novelist and poet. Although he is probably more well known for his novels, many of which have been made into feature films, he primarily regarded himself as a poet. He was highly critical of much in Victorian society, especially the declining status of rural people in Britain, such as those from his native Wessex. He often included the local vernacular in his writing, as we see in the final verse of this famous poem.

*There are, of course, so many festive Christmas poems to choose from but I love the wistful mood of this one and it's longing for childhood innocence; hope you do too !!*



**The Oxen** by Thomas Hardy

**Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.  
“Now they are all on their knees,”  
An elder said as we sat in a flock  
By the embers in hearthside ease.**

**We pictured the meek mild creatures where  
They dwelt in their strawy pen,  
Nor did it occur to one of us there  
To doubt they were kneeling then.**

**So fair a fancy few would weave  
In these years! Yet, I feel,  
If someone said on Christmas Eve,  
“Come; see the oxen kneel,**

**“In the lonely \*barton by yonder \*coomb  
Our childhood used to know,”  
I should go with him in the gloom,  
Hoping it might be so**

*\* barton = farmhouse \*coomb = valley*



## **Management Committee**

Chair	Gill Brain
Vice-chair	Sonia Menadue
Treasurer	Vacant
Secretary	Monica King
Office Manager	Sylvia Alexander
Membership Liaison	Jill Kelly
Accommodation	Chris Ockwell
IT	Dave Todd
Groups Co-ordinator	Sharon Finch
Projects	Linda Young

## **Key Tasks (Non committee)**

Assistant Office manager	Sue Carvey
Speakers organiser	Sue Cook
Minutes Secretary	Brenda Lammin

Contact any of the above via the Office

## **Office**

Swindon u3a Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swindon, SN2 8DA

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

Hours : Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am until 12 noon

Telephone : 01793 614629

(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)

## Contacts

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Vice Chair Sonia Menadue	<a href="mailto:vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk">vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Accommodation Chris Ockwell	<a href="mailto:accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk">accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
IT Manager Dave Todd	<a href="mailto:itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk">itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Groups' Coordinator Sharon Finch	<a href="mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk">group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Membership Liaison Secretary Jill Kelly	<a href="mailto:membership@swindonu3a.org.uk">membership@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Office manager Sylvia Alexander	<a href="mailto:office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk">office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
General Secretary Monica King	<a href="mailto:secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk">secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Speaker organiser Sue Cook	<a href="mailto:speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk">speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
All members of committee	<a href="mailto:committee@swindonu3a.org.uk">committee@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Treasury Team	<a href="mailto:treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk">treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
General enquiries	<a href="mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk">office@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Health & Safety	<a href="mailto:secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk">secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Office administration	<a href="mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk">office@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
Newsletter contributions	<a href="mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk">newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>

### Copy Dates

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

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter contributions e-mail address [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk)

The Editor reserves the right to amend or abbreviate any entries submitted.