



Lydiard Park January 2024
Source: Evening Advertiser

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Chairs Blog January 2025



This is just a short end-of-year blog to wish you all a very Happy New Year for 2025!

Personally, I've had a hectic time over Christmas playing games with the grandchildren and eating way too much turkey, chocolate, shortbread and sweets.

But, on the other hand, Irene (my wife) and I have also had to spend a lot of time looking after my 95 year old Mum. My Mum came down to Swindon from North Wales to spend Christmas with us, when, 2 days before the big day she fell over in her bedroom at our house at 4.30 in the morning and broke her hip. She's currently in GWH recovering after the Hip Op (that sounds like the intro to a song?) and probably giving the staff hell, but we'll have to just wait and see how the recovery goes before we can make plans for what happens next.

One bonus for Irene though, in addition to the fantastic paramedics, we also had a visit from 4 of Swindon's finest firemen at 4.30 in the morning to help with getting her down the stairs to the Ambulance, I think Irene was happy with that.

So, what are your plans for 2025? Why not try out something different and join another group or two for a taster session, we have over 130 group activities to choose from and its always worth taking a look through the full list to see what's available.

The full list of activities and groups including the days they meet up on is available on our website.

If you're up for it in 2025 then we also still have a couple of vacancies as Trustees on the Management Committee. Don't be put off by the term "Trustee", it sounds a lot more daunting than it really is, take it from me as someone who's only recently done it myself. More info is available on our trustee and volunteer vacancies later in this Newsletter, and we'd love to hear from you if you think you can help. Just get in touch with the committee or myself.

Well, that's all for now and again I wish you a very Happy New Year and I hope you have a great time in 2025 as you join in with our Swindon u3a activities.

Vince Williams

chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Current Vacancies

LIAISON OFFICER (trustee)

Liaise with and support New Members and Volunteers.
Focus on the impact of MC decisions on the general membership.
Promote the self-managing culture of u3a.
Membership of the Management Committee

PUBLICITY LEAD (Trustee)

Plan and coordinate local publicity events calendar.
Lead a small team of core volunteers to produce publicity materials and articles in local publications, Facebook and other social media
Attend Management Committee meetings
Work with Management Committee members on the Swindon u3a IT strategy
Liaise with the Newsletter Editor as appropriate
Raise awareness of the u3a central and regional activities and events in conjunction with the Newsletter Editor
Manage the publicity budget.

HOW TO APPLY

If you are interested in either of these two Trustee roles, send an expression of interest as soon as possible to committee@swindonu3a.org.uk

NB: There is a short Induction and mentoring process for new Trustees

Treasury Team Member: Trips and other costs from January 2025

The job involves:

Assisting other team members in supporting the bank account for trips

Managing payments and Simple Membership entries for trip payments and non-venue payments on the main account

For further information please contact: Eric Hewitt treasurer@swindonu3a.org.uk

Volunteer support required for u3a website.

We are looking for someone to join our IT team to help us manage our website content. This will mainly involve adding and removing pictures and text to keep the site content fresh, up to date and aligned to the u3a brand. We would expect this role to take up to one day a month, spread over the month. You don't need to be an IT expert, if you can use apps like Facebook, MS Office and/or folders on a pc, you have the skills we need and we will provide training. Interested? If so, please contact itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk.

December Monthly Meeting

A Celebration of Christmas: Party 9 December

Our party on 9 December got us into the festive spirit with another fun Christmas quiz from Chris Brooks, a performance by the Merribells Group (handbells) and a communal Christmas sing-along, led by the u3a singers. In between times, the picture quiz tested our knowledge of famous paintings and their painters.



Thanks go to our party organiser-in-chief, Gill Brain, to Ian Hartley for once again baking some delicious cakes, and to Monica Brian and her team for all the teas and coffees they have served us during the year.

January Monthly Meeting: Agatha Christie

Monday 13 January at 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre



The New Year starts with Agatha Christie

Judith Cranswick will be speaking about Agatha Christie - The Queen of Crime. Discover how the highs and lows of Agatha's often turbulent life and times influenced the novels of the world's best-selling fiction writer.

Judith is a prolific crime writer who writes cosy travel mysteries. Her proudest achievement is to have had her novels compared to those of her great mentor and inspiration, Agatha Christie. The first of her Mystery at Sea series - Passage to Greenland - reached No. 1 in Amazon's best-seller charts.

Monday 10 February 2025 at 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre Medical Detection Dogs

Our February speaker will be Danielle Mills from Medical Detection Dogs. This charity is at the forefront of innovative research into dogs' ability to detect the smell of human diseases and save lives. It trains dogs as Alert Assistance and Bio Detection Dogs.

Alert Assistance dogs are trained to support individuals with complex health conditions who have limited awareness of an impending life-threatening medical event, such as blood glucose conditions, Addison's disease, neurological problems and severe allergies. Using their amazing sense of smell, dogs can be trained to identify minute odour changes emitted before an emergency and alert the person to take preventative action.



Bio Detection dogs assist scientists through the charity's research into the development of electronic noses. The cancer dogs can provide additional screening for cancers that are currently difficult to diagnose, e.g. prostate cancer. Trials are also being conducted into Parkinson's and bacterial infections.

Tea and coffee, and jigsaw and book swaps will be available at the meetings.

Booking your place

As always, please be sure to book a place by:

1. Going on to the website www.swindonu3a.org.uk (just login, click on Swindon u3a events, then on the event), or
2. Telephoning the office on 01793 614629

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

Group News

New Groups for 2025

The Climate Change Group

will start on Tuesday 14 January at 10.30 am. 8 Goddard Avenue Old Town Swindon SN1 4HR.

Then on the 2nd Tuesday of the month until June. Anyone who would like to join contact Bill Hughes on email at

bill.hughes1@btinternet.com or text on 07933157419.

(See November 2024 Newsletter pages 8 and 12 for more detail.)

If you are thinking of starting a new group or extending an existing group, then canvas for interest by posting here.

Latest from Groups

Ukelele Improvers entertain at a local care home

In the festive run-up to Christmas, the U3A Ukelele Improvers group (aka Uke Imps) brought joy to the residents at The Ridings Care Home in Swindon with a light-hearted mini-musical performance on 11th December.

A handful of us who were available that day accepted the invitation from The Ridings and got ourselves ready to perform about fifteen popular Christmas songs for the residents. Plans progressed without a hitch and, on the day, we gathered at the venue with our ukeleles, ready to spread some holiday cheer.



The audience enjoyed the brief show, and we had a great time performing. Some of the residents even accompanied us with tambourines and anything else that made a

percussive sound! At one stage, there was even a bit of dancing to the tunes of *Little Drummer Boy* and *Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree*! Overall, it was a lovely experience that certainly got everyone into the Christmas spirit.

A big thank you to everyone who volunteered to support this event and I would like to add that I do feel fortunate to be part of a friendly U3A group of ukelele enthusiasts.

vernon.fernandes@yahoo.com

Call for more news

Let us know what you are up to here. We have more than 130 groups in the wider Swindon area, each with a story to tell. I have seen groups posting fascinating stories on Facebook, but not every member uses Facebook. This Newsletter goes to every member and has a wider reach so simply copy your social media post and send to me. It will appear here.

News from u3a Trust

I have copied here a recent item from the Friends Newsletter because I felt members may be interested in topical news from the Centre.



u3a feature in new programme exploring how to live a better later life

<https://business.itn.co.uk/programmes/redefining-later-living/>

ITN Business have launched a news-style programme, *Redefining Later Living*. It challenges negative ideas about ageing and instead explores what we can do to live happy and healthier later lives.

The programme features an interview with Iain Cassidy (the new u3a CEO) where he talks about the positive impact the u3a model can have. Iain says, "***Time and time again evidence has shown that it's the quantity and quality of your social connections that are the best indicator of not just a long life, but a healthy later life as well. What the u3a model does is enable those connections to be developed.***"

u3a webinars

If you are interested in attending one of u3a's webinars go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>

Future webinars include presentations on bridge, yoga, an aviation pioneer, mindfulness and mediation and many others. I will be looking at the IAM Roadsmart webinar on Essential Driver and vehicle checks on January 17.

Some of you may recall the presentation by the Older Drivers Forum Gloucestershire earlier this year. The Forum presents a monthly webinar on aspects of older person driving. For more details go to <https://olderdriversforum.com/gloucestershire/>

Life in a Poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

(Editor's Note: This is the December choice from Lesley, omitted in error from last month's Newsletter. Still topical though and thoughtful as ever. Thank you, Lesley for inspiring us.)

Sara Teasdale was an American lyric poet from St. Louis, Missouri, and used the name *Filsinger* after her 1914 marriage. In 1918, she won a Pulitzer Prize for her poetry collection: "Love Songs". Great poets can articulate what most of us find impossible to put into words. Here, with her uncomplicated verse, Sara Teasdale evokes for us the wonder of Christmas.



Christmas Carol by Sara Teasdale

The kings they came from out the south,
All dressed in ermine fine;
They bore Him gold and chrysoprase, * *rare green gemstone associated with happiness*
And gifts of precious wine.

The shepherds came from out the north,
Their coats were brown and old;
They brought Him little new-born lambs—
They had not any gold.

The wise men came from out the east,
And they were wrapped in white;
The star that led them all the way
Did glorify the night.

The angels came from heaven high,
And they were clad with wings;
And lo, they brought a joyful song
The host of heaven sings.

The kings they knocked upon the door,
The wise men entered in,
The shepherds followed after them
To hear the song begin.

The angels sang through all the night
Until the rising sun,
But little Jesus fell asleep
Before the song was done.

Life in a Poem January 2025 - submitted by Lesley Basu

May I wish you all a very happy new year!! 2025??? How did that happen?!

Jacqueline Margaret Kay was born in Edinburgh. An award-winning poet, playwright, and novelist, Kay has won many awards, including the Somerset Maugham Award in 1994, the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1998 and the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust Book of the Year Award in 2011. From 2016 to 2021, Jackie Kay was the "Makar" (Bard) : the poet laureate of Scotland. She also served as Chancellor of the University of Salford between 2015 and 2022. Her partner for 15 years was another poet laureate: Carol Ann Duffy !!



Promise

By Jackie Kay

Remember, the time of year
when the future appears
like a blank sheet of paper
a clean calendar, a new chance.
On thick white snow
You vow fresh footprints
then watch them go
with the wind's hearty gust.
Fill your glass. Here's tae us. Promises
made to be broken, made to last.



Swindon u3a Contacts

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Office

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

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

Telephone: 01793 614629 (Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email: office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web: www.swindonu3a.org.uk

Swindon u3a Charity Number 298853

Last Word

Last month, as an experiment, I altered the typeface from the current corporate style to a more classic style. I had 5 comments, all negative in one way or another, focused on the “serif” style and suggesting that a non-serif style was more helpful for people with visual weaknesses. I feel this is a fair point, and we’re back to the Aptos font. However, this comment did make me curious. So I investigated what differing styles were used for.

Books, newsprint and written media tend to be published in texts with serifs such as **Times Roman**.

Information notices and publications [come with non-serif styles such as TfL](#) which uses Johnston typeface: designed for the London Underground in 1916 with subsequent updates. NB like many corporate typefaces, use is strictly controlled by the owner and may not be reproduced without a formal licence.

Also, organisations often change the font according to the purpose of the publication. Food for thought.

I received the latest u3a Friends Newsletter on December 25. This is always interesting with this month’s news on seasonal yarn bombing, wreath making, Christmas customs around the world and a Maths quiz. Always something to learn or get ideas from.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Newsletter since I became editor. It’s always difficult to know if I’m including news and information that members enjoy and learn from, and I hope I’m doing a positive job here. I do though rely on input from members and readers.

Finally, I wish everyone a New Year of promise and many hours spent fruitfully in u3a groups.

Chris Firth
Newsletter Editor

newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk

December 2024

2024/25 Term 2 Event Payments

The Group Co-ordinator team are currently verifying the many term 2 payment events and expect member payment emails to be generated towards the end of week commencing 6th Jan 2025.