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## Chair's Blog

At last month's Management Committee meeting we went through our annual finance report and set our various budget lines for the year ahead. You'll be pleased to know that there were no big surprises for us in this year's accounts and that things are in good shape; therefore we have agreed to keep the annual membership fee for next year at its current rate of £10.

If you want to attend one of our regular Monthly Meetings then please remember to book in on-line. This requirement goes for our other larger meetings as well such as the AGM. The venues that we hire out can only legally hold a certain number of people (due to their fire and insurance regulations) so we need to be able to plan well ahead to get a suitable sized venue for those who would like to attend.

At this point in my blog I thought it would be nice to share with you some of my own experiences as part of one of my Swindon u3a group activities.

One of the reasons I joined Swindon u3a was because I wanted to try my hand at different things, stuff I'd not done before, rather than just sit at home wondering what to do with my time now that I've retired. My wife, Irene, had already taken the plunge to join Swindon U3a a few months before me and had signed up to a number of groups, Field Archery being one of those groups.



So, after a few weeks of her going out alone I decided to tag along for one of her Archery group sessions and instantly got taken in by the very friendly members of the group. Jim took me under his wing, he gave me one of the group bows and a few arrows and then took me straight to the training targets. He said all the right flattering things like "great shot Vince" and "you're a natural" etc. and by the end of the first lesson I was hooked.



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Since then, I've bought my own equipment and try to get to as many of the groups weekly shoots as I can.

The group has access to indoor and outdoor training targets, plus an excellent wooded range at Roves Farm that includes over 20 forest themed targets dotted around the woods, so there's always something new to keep the interest going.

It was nice to see the sunshine make an appearance this week at the archery range because I was a bit fed up getting my feet all wet and muddy every week.



This month I'm off with the group to visit another large Archery Range site in South Wales. We have exclusive use of the facilities there for the whole day and I'm looking forward to spending our time there with the lads and lasses from our group and getting some expert tuition from the on-site experts.

So, if you have some positive experiences that you want to share about one of the groups you attend then why not ***write in to the Newsletter Editor with your story*** and share it all with us?

That's all for this month folks, I hope the weather has improved to something resembling summer by the time you get to read this!

Vince Williams  
[chair@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@swindonu3a.org.uk)

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**Swindon u3a Office**

**Hi all, just to let you know, the Office will be closed throughout July.**

**We will close at 12.00 on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June and re-open at 10.00 on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> August.**

**Our normal opening hours are:**

**10.00 - 12.00**

**Monday, Wednesday and Friday**

**01793 614629**

**[office@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk)**

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## Dates for your Diary

(I've had a request to include key dates in the newsletter. This is my first stab. If you have anything you think would be of member-wide interest, contact me and I will include it here. Editor)

**28 June u3a office closes for the Summer Break. (p3)**

**13 July Volunteer Event: details in this edition (p6)**

**27 July u3a Promotion and Publicity Coffee morning 9.30-12.30 the Church Croft Centre opposite St Bartholomew's Church SN4 7BJ.** Call for Volunteers who are willing to spend an hour to help: contact Chris Firth Newsletter Editor [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk)

**16 August Publicity and promotion event Asda Orbital Retail Park. 10 am to 4 pm** call for Volunteers to help (2-hour slots) Contact Newsletter Editor [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk)  
Final details in August Newsletter

**31 August Open Day. St Joseph's College.** More details in the August Newsletter. Initial call for Volunteers in this edition (p7)

**9 September 2. pm: Ellendune Hall Wroughton** Monthly meetings resume. details below (p5)

**12 October New Members Meeting:** Coleview Community Centre More details to follow

## Call for photographs and news of notable events in groups in 2023-24

The Publicity Team is reviewing the current publicity material for the 2024-25 u3a year.

We have over 100 different groups in Swindon u3a, and about 1600 members, and are one of the most active groups in the u3a world.

Please send us photographs, stories, notable events, and highlights to celebrate this year and use in the new publicity: flyers, display boards, banners, and social media. This will help us spread the message of the benefits of u3a activities wider in the Swindon area and reach more people.

Formats: text in Word and photographs as jpeg.

Send to [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk)

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## Monthly Meetings

### Report of Monthly Meeting - Summer Party

In June we celebrated the start of the Summer Break with a party.

In teams of up to six, we worked out who was the tallest, who was born the furthest North and South (quite difficult working this out internationally!), what was the best holiday we had ever had, etc, as well as listing songs with Summer in the title or lyrics and listing as many party games as we could think of.

A fun Summer quiz was followed by tea and cake and the chance to complete a picture quiz with famous quotes from Shakespeare. The Singing Group serenaded us too – starting by ‘taking’ us to Polynesia and finishing with a rendition of ‘World in Union’.

A fun end to the year and a great chance to meet other Swindon u3a members and make new friends.

### Summer Break

We’ll take a break during the summer with no Monthly meetings during July and August.

The next meeting will take place on:

#### **Monday 9 September 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre**

Renowned historian and speaker Dr Gill White will be talking about Henry VIII and the Field of Cloth of Gold – which was a chance to compete for honour and glory and become ‘top dog’.

She will explore the reasons for the celebrations and the aftermath of this magnificent, yet futile, event.

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

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

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## News and Information

### **Members Volunteer Event: Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 10-00 am – 12.00 noon Coleview Community Centre SN3 4AS**

As in previous years, this is an opportunity for all those who work behind the scenes to meet together, ask questions, share ideas and information as well as have some fun.

Several people are relatively new in their volunteer roles so we hope this will be a chance to get to know each other better and understand more about how we each contribute to the running of our organisation. The event is also open to anyone not yet in a volunteer role, but interested in learning more about how things work and perhaps getting involved.

Approximately 50 people contribute on a regular basis in a wide range of roles including Group support; Publicity; Events; Finance and payments; I.T. and tech support; Office admin; and Management Committee.

A further small group of people help with occasional tasks such as taking a turn on publicity stands, setting up events or helping other members with new technology.

If you wish to attend, please register in one of the following ways:

- via the link on the Homepage of the website
- contact the office on 01793 614629
- email: [membership@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@swindonu3a.org.uk)

Jill Kelly  
Membership Liaison Secretary.

### **Muriel Aplin: a memory**

Muriel, a long-term member of U3A, died on June 10<sup>th</sup>, aged 90+

Muriel was involved since the early days of Swindon U3A. She was part of the “Tea making Team” who were always to be seen in the kitchen serving tea and cake at events such as Monday afternoon speaker sessions, Open Days and parties

She organized the Concert Goers Group for a long time and had been attending concerts up to earlier this year. She also organized the Literature Group which used to meet in her home in Covingham.

She was involved in all kinds of activities in the Town and was always friendly and welcoming.

Muriel’s funeral It is on 19th July at 12 noon at Kingsdown Crematorium and afterwards at the Meeting House.

Nina Stimson



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## Open Day volunteers wanted: Can you help?



**Swindon's Open Day** is taking place on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 10 am – 1 pm this year at St Joseph's Catholic College.

Could you spare a couple of hours to help it run smoothly on the day? If so, please contact Linda Young at [systems@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:systems@swindonu3a.org.uk).

## Call for Swindon u3a website administrator:



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 and up to date and aligned to the u3a brand.

We would expect this role to take up to one a 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](mailto:itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk).



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## News from the Groups

### Swindon u3a Literature Group

The Swindon u3a Literature Group is a long-established group with over 20 years of history. It meets fortnightly on a Wednesday, 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm, in Lawn Community Centre. That is on the number 12 bus route, or up the road from Queens Drive which has many buses; there is parking available.

The group was initially run by the late Muriel Aplin who, as a cherished member, remained active in the group, sharing her knowledge in our discussions. In the past, the group read a variety of great classics. More recently we have looked at some of Shakespeare's plays, assisted by course books from the Open University.

In September 2024 we will start King Lear, followed by The Tempest in early 2025.

In September 2025 the group has plans to venture into selected Children's Literature.

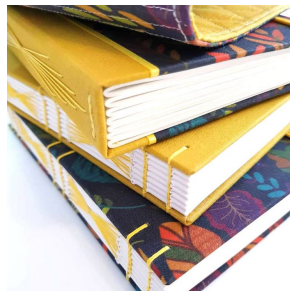
When we meet, we read the play together, as expressively as we feel able (not always easy with Shakespeare but fun to try) but not going as far as acting. Then we read the commentary aloud, taking turns, and pausing to examine and chat about items which interest us.

We finish the session with a general catch-up over tea and biscuits. There is a maximum of 12 of us in the group and we currently have four spaces.

Please get in touch if you would be interested in joining us or want to know more.

### One-day Bookbinding Course

Sally Goddard is offering to run a one-day Bookbinding workshop in October, for about 10 people.



If you're interested in finding out more, you can contact Sally here ([Email Group Leaders - Cartonnage - \(swindonu3a.org.uk\)](mailto:Email Group Leaders - Cartonnage - (swindonu3a.org.uk))) or you can meet her at the Open Day where she is hosting a stall for her popular Flower Arranging and Cartonnage groups.

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## Swindon u3a Travel Group: Glasgow: June 2024

We had a really memorable and busy trip to Glasgow in June 2024, visiting many different venues during our stay. Not a midge in sight!



On our journey north, we visited Leighton Hall, a privately owned estate, advertised as “no stuffy museum”, being family-run. It is full of art treasures. A lovely welcome from the owner, Suzie, who had the fires lit to warm us up!

In the evenings we had time to walk around our hotel grounds it being a golf hotel and visit the spa, pool and gym before we dined. Later we had a few quizzes to challenge our brains! One comment made by all of us, the hospitality of the local people was amazing, they were all very proud to showcase their venues.

On our visit to Robbie Burns’ place of birth. I think we were all surprised by just how many of his poems and sayings are still quoted today, Auld Lang Syne being the most famous. A simple home with several other places to visit within walking distance including the Auld Kirk and Brigadoon.

Our day in Glasgow city was action packed as we were driven round the centre having a guided tour. We learned why Glasgow developed originally, why Napoleon sports a bollard on his head, how the people of Glasgow can hang washing in the green area.

The Glasgow Riverside Museum of Transport displays all forms from skateboards to trams to cars to a Tall Ship!

The iconic Falkirk Wheel and Kelpies were probably the highlight for many of the group. The sun shone at the right times and we had a smooth ride in a boat on the wheel, the world’s only rotating boat lift. It is almost silent! The Kelpies at 30 metres tall are impressive close-up.

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Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery is vast, displaying art of all eras and styles and needs more than a 4-hour visit. We had a flavour of it for sure. A lunchtime organ recital added to our enjoyment.

A walking tour of the Botanic Gardens rounded off our day. Among other plants, we saw Insectivores, and ancient trees and heard the latest advice about forbidden plants and glass houses.

Our last full day was spent at Hill House, a home designed by Charles Rennie Macintosh and the interior by his wife. No thistles here on chairs, instead books are strategically placed. Appropriate as the house was designed for the publisher Blackie. Then followed by a river cruise on Loch Lomond in the sunshine!

On our way home, we had a food stop at Tebay. Then onto Levens Hall famous for its topiary. It is another family-owned house. We met the gardeners, not the owners. It takes 4 1/5 full-time staff over five months to trim the trees and shrubs!

Many thanks to all of our group! And special thanks to Scott, our driver and the team at Barnes.

Thanks also to the U3A team: Val Dickens the u3a treasurer for our trip and Linda Young our group buddy for her advice.

Sue York, one of our group for planning the original itinerary for 2023. I was able to just use it with just a few tweaks.

We certainly followed u3a principles of Learn, Laugh and Live!

Jane Caudwell

## Hands-on Gardening Group

I've had a request from the group to promote the Old Town Open Gardens event 7 July

***Old Town Open Gardens** is back again this year on **Sunday 7th July 12 noon to 5.30 pm**. This year we have **11 gardens** opening, including 3 new ones. The gardens show what plants grow well locally, giving visitors lots of inspiration. The gardens range from a small "jungle" exotic garden behind a terraced house to larger gardens with wildflower meadows, water features and 'No-dig' organic vegetable gardens.*

*Visitors can learn about the history of the gardens, ranging from Jurassic period fossils, Roman villas and secret room relics from World War 2. Owners will talk about their gardens, and what grows well locally and answer questions. Visitors can enjoy homemade cakes and cream teas, just sit and relax in the gardens, and buy plants from the plant sales at many of the gardens.*

*Tickets are £5 per person, children are free. The maps show which gardens are dog-friendly, have free children's activities and have afternoon teas and plant sales. etc. All proceeds from the day go to Twigs, Shine Post Natal support and Old Town Community Gardeners. Tickets are available from Old Town Hardware, The Hop, Baristocats, Mabel's and Eventbrite.*

*From Holly Barrand*

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## Life in a Poem

*The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper " W.B.Yeats*

I recently came across today's writer and poet: Caroline Mellor. Once again, I found a quiet oasis in her writing, away from the harsh noise of electioneering!! Caroline graduated from the University of Sussex in English Literature. Having spent most of her twenties travelling the world and practising as a Holistic Therapist, she settled by the sea in the South Downs with her young family and decided to follow her dream of being a writer. *Lesley Basu*

### SMALL THINGS by Caroline Mellor

What if there is no new you  
No #vanlife mountain vista  
No trail of dust, no grand rebirth

What if your life  
is more a slow, uncoiling thing  
than a series of bangs,  
a bowl to fill and fill  
rather than a bucket list?

Stop looking for the big moments.  
They will find you in their own time.  
Turn your gaze instead to the small things,  
the minutiae of the sacred ordinary:  
the quiet grace of dust dancing in the sunbeams,  
the sound of the rain through the streetlamps.  
The soft smell of the skin on someone's neck  
that takes you home in a microsecond.

What if you could take your one messy, complicated life,  
all of your failures and your unmet yearnings,  
all of the colours, the dreams and the hungers  
and, just for a moment, see it for what it is:  
a fragmentary masterpiece of the universe,  
a speck of dust dancing in the sunbeams  
which you alone hold in warm, cupped hands.

*From The Honey in the Bones published by Golden Dragonfly Press. (Amherst Mass USA) Available from Amazon and independent booksellers*



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## 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)

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Charity Number 29885

## Items for the Newsletter

Items for the **newsletter** must be received by the editor by the 21st of the preceding month, using the Newsletter contributions e-mail address: [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk)  
The Editor reserves the right to edit items received.