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Chair's Blog

Well, now that I've got my first month as a Trustee and Chair under my belt I'm concentrating on getting to know the rest of the management team and some of our hard-working volunteers better. I've recently taken the opportunity to call into our u3a Office at Gorse Hill Community Centre to sit down with a coffee and chat with some of our office volunteers. The main reason for my visit was to introduce myself to the staff and get feedback from them on "life at the office".

In May I went to my first Monthly Meeting as Chair. I'm keen to engage with members and this was a great opportunity for me to introduce myself to a large group and to get to chat with those who were there. I found the talks by presenters to be very informative and with a good bit of audience participation too. These Monthly talks at the Ellendune Hall Wroughton are well worth considering if you've never been before.

At last month's Management Committee meeting, we welcomed Chris Birch on board as a new Trustee. We know that Chris's I.T. background will serve us well; his main role on the committee will be discussed at our next meeting. However, nothing stays the same for long does it because at the end of the very same meeting, Sonia Menadue notified us of her intention to step down as both a Trustee and Management Committee member. Sonia has been a well-respected member of the team and we will surely miss her and her expertise. We also said a sad farewell to Brenda Lammin, who has done a wonderful job as our minutes secretary. This role is now filled by Denise Bloomer who has been shadowing Brenda over the last few meetings so that we can have a smooth changeover.

Chris Firth has now taken over from Gill Brain as our Newsletter Editor. He's got some new ideas relating to content and format that he wants to introduce at some point in the future. The Newsletter is our main form of communication, so don't be afraid to let us know what you think. Chris and the publicity team are also busy looking at our priorities for the year ahead. These include making more effective use of social media, continuing with input to local print-based media and setting up some publicity events.

I wish you all a nice warm and restful Summer!

Vince Williams

chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

News and Information

u3a Swindon members private chat Facebook page update.

As awareness and use of social media grows in our membership, we would like to increase the number of members signing up to Swindon u3a chat group on Facebook. This is a closed group where only u3a members are allowed to join. If you use Facebook, please register to join our chat group on the website. It is really easy to do.

Anyone in the group can post a message. This could be news about the groups you attend, or something else that you think would be of interest to u3a members. If you are already part of the chat group, you could encourage any u3a friends or colleagues to join too and post a message!

There are already 200 chat group members now out of a total membership of over 1600 and we are aiming to increase that steadily.

The old u3a Facebook page which is for public viewing will be deleted.

We will be using "Swindon u3a learn, laugh, live" Facebook page instead. We will be using this page to publicise u3a events and news to the public and will update members regularly. Kerrie Stone Publicity Group.

An apology from the editor

Last month's Newsletter included a quiz from Ken Stimson, which I found interesting and a bit challenging. However, during editing, I inadvertently transposed the punch line for the final question.

It should have been

The electric car driver with the flat battery was "Only twenty-four miles from Tesla". Not Tulsa as published

So the joke was as flat as the battery.

Group News

Latin Dance Group feedback.

I recently joined the Latin Line Dance Group which Linda runs. She is brilliant and I thoroughly enjoy the class. She is so good. It is a fairly large group. We don't stop smiling from start to finish.

It's always good to have this feedback from group members, to raise awareness and show that we continue to "learn, laugh and live!" Thank you Rupal.

This month's information about local group themes: History Groups in Swindon u3a

Are you interested in history? If so, you could find like-minded people in the u3a. The u3a is an organisation for people retired from full-time employment. It has over 130 interest groups meeting all around Swindon and surrounding areas. Several of these groups are devoted to the study of history in various forms.

The British History group researches and shares the rich field of British history and is currently studying the mid Victorian era. The Social and Cultural History Group is interested in how today's world was shaped by advances in science, medicine, technology, fashion, food, literature and art. Members are encouraged to participate in any topic of general interest.

If it's military history you're interested in the Military History group is for you. There are talks from members and guest speakers and trips are organised to museums and military venues.

Or perhaps art history is more for you. The Art Appreciation Group explores all aspects of art history including most of the decorative arts. Members research and give presentations of their chosen topics on different themes. *[This has given me a whole new perspective on It's opened my eyes to etc etc.]*

The Archaeology Group meets monthly to study topics ranging from Neolithic to Victorian eras. Typically there will be a talk and news updates with visits to local digs in the summer where practicable.

What about learning about your own family history? Members of the Family History Group pool their knowledge to research individual family histories.

Thanks again to Sue Mazzoleni for researching this.

Request for photos and group news

We always welcome photos and short summaries or highlights of group activities. Please send to the Editor and I will include in future editions of the Newsletter and use in our new publicity material.

From the editor: apology

This edition is published later than planned because of unforeseen circumstances.

.Monthly Meeting Report

In May we had presentations from two excellent speakers.

SURVEY STUDY: INVESTIGATING THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATION

Rebecca Garnett, a researcher from the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences at Oxford University, spoke about her current survey study into people's experiences with blood pressure medication.

In England, more than 50% of people aged 65+ years are prescribed at least one blood pressure medication. These medications provide benefits such as a reduced risk of stroke and heart attack. However, they also have some potential drawbacks including increased risk of serious falls and side effects. Her research will identify which of these benefits and drawbacks are most important to patients and their family members and friends. This information will ultimately be used to help better involve both groups in discussions and decisions about their medication.

The survey closes in early July, so if you took a copy away with you, please remember to complete and return it promptly. There are some spare copies available from the u3a office or if you would prefer to complete it online, the link is:

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/oxford/blood-pressure-medication-survey-b>

If you would like any additional information or have any questions about the survey, please contact Rebecca at rebecca.garnett@phc.ox.ac.uk

She thought we were a great audience with many interesting questions! Hopefully, she will come back in the future to present her results.

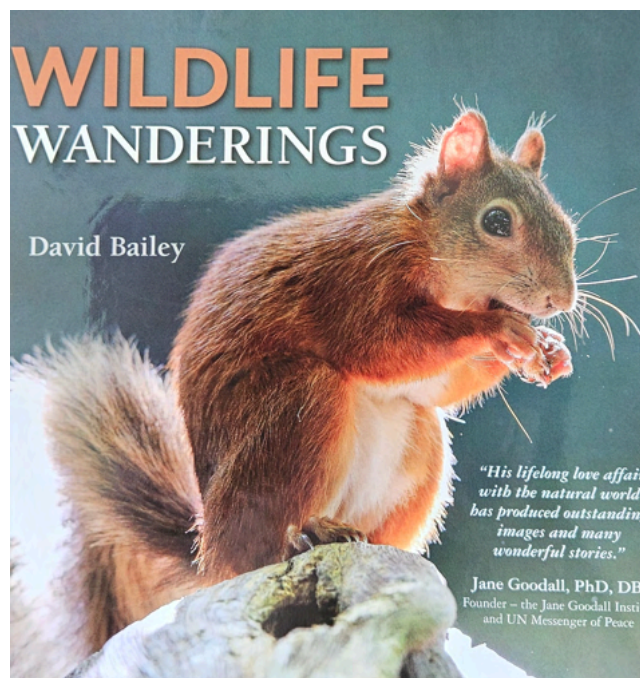
'WILDLIFE WANDERINGS' WITH DAVID BAILEY, WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Self-taught in photography, David was persuaded to turn professional in 2008 and has subsequently won several awards. Chance meetings with Dr Rhys Jones of Cardiff University and star of the BBC series Rhys Jones Wildlife Patrol led to David being asked to film some

owls – after which he was told he was joining the production team! BBC's Springwatch and ITV's Coast and Country programmes followed.

David told us there is no point in carrying around a lot of photographic kit. He uses just three good lenses (the largest of which cost £21,000) and his 'silent' camera which takes 20 photos a second. He has a hide but wildlife will quickly sense that something is different, so he spends most of his time lying flat on the ground, often for five to six hours in one position. His mantra is: pick a spot, lie down, observe and get to know your subject.

All the photos and footage produced a 'wow' or 'aahh'. We saw footage of pine martens that David had filmed in Wales by using a camera trap plus eggs and strawberry jam to lure them in.



We saw puffins (including one by a bluebell) off the coast of Pembrokeshire, beavers, otters and hares, amongst others. He showed us a 'white' red deer in velvet, spoonbills, barn owls, kestrels, and a male adder that moved at a fast walking pace along a road, through a ditch, across a cattle grid and up a bank to get to a female adder curled up on a log. He knew exactly where he was going. We also saw five kingfishers lined up on a branch and learned how to identify a female kingfisher by looking for the redness on her lower bill – just like lipstick!

Looking to the future, it was positive to hear that great bustards are now doing well on MoD land on Salisbury Plain and that red squirrels have spread from Anglesey into Wales, thanks to the Red Squirrel Trust.

Future Monthly Meetings

Monday 10 June 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon Sn4 9LW

SUMMER PARTY

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 jigsaw or book swaps this month.

Please remember to book a place – we don't want to run out of cake!

We'll take a break during the summer and there will be no Monthly meetings during July and August.

Monday 9 September 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre

THE FIELD OF THE CLOTH OF GOLD 1520

Renowned historian and speaker Dr Gill White will talk about Henry VIII and the Field of Cloth of Gold: this was a chance to compete for honour and glory with France 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 Summer Party or 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. Telephoning the office on 01793 614629**

Life in a Poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was not only one of the best-loved poets of the 19th century, he was also an educator and the first American to completely translate Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy". Like me, I am sure some of you will recall his wonderfully hypnotic epic "The Song of Hiawatha" from school days.

In 1879, near the end of his life, Longfellow wrote "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls."

I'm not quite sure what brought it to mind, but the current excess of pre-election bombast might have played a part..!!

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveller hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Returns the traveller to the shore,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*Thank you, Lesley. This was a song we sang in our school choir. Very nostalgic and poignant.
The cover photo taken on the sea wall at Dawlish reflects the rhythm and theme of the poem.* Editor

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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
The Editor reserves the right to edit items received.

learn, laugh, live