



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

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## 2025 AGM Round Up

The annual Swindon u3a AGM was held at Ellendune Community Centre on Monday 10 November. Thank you to all who attended and ensured that the meeting was quorate.

After a warm welcome, the Chair, Vince Williams gave an overview of the previous year, outlining the many activities which had taken place, such as Monthly Meetings often with interesting speakers and a chance to meet fellow members over tea and biscuits, Summer and Christmas Parties for all to enjoy, Open Day at the end of August, on-going publicity events, and a New Members Meeting. In summary, 2024-5 season had been a successful one for our u3a with an increase in the number of members enjoying all that our organisation has to offer.

This was followed by a report from our Treasurer Eric Hewitt, who showed several charts outlining the income and expenditure for the year, the move from cash to accrual accounting, reserves held and concluded that we were in a healthy financial position. Our accounts had been properly signed off by our accountants and copies sent to the Charity Commission.

Linda Young, Acting Vice-Chair, showed the present members of the Committee and current vacancies. Committee Members standing for election by members were Monica King (General Secretary), Eric Hewitt (Treasurer), Linda Young (Group Co-ordinator and Payments), Rose Clarke (Membership Liaison), Dave Todd (IT Support), Gill Brain (Publicity Officer).

As Vince Williams and Linda Young were standing down as Chair and Acting Vice-Chair this left two very crucial positions vacant and the members were asked to consider if anyone could stand forward to undertake these roles.

A few questions for clarification were taken from the floor and then the meeting was brought to a close. Tea and coffee were served.

## Current Vacancies

### Chair

Following our AGM on November 10, we still need a new Chair. This is a mandatory roles. If you are interested in stepping forward, please contact [vice\\_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk).

We have job descriptions for the role but in summary:

The Chair runs the monthly Management Committee meeting of Trustees. They also lead the Annual General Meeting, delivering a summary annual report in person to the membership and writing the monthly Chair's Blog for the monthly Newsletter. All the trustees are collectively responsible for all decisions made and the actions that follow.

## Group Buddy

In addition, we are looking for volunteers within the Groups Teams for an additional Group Buddy. The Group Buddy supports Group Organisers with payments and systems queries. For more info on contact: [group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk)

## Interested?

Swindon u3a is run by volunteers and can only operate if members share the tasks that make it run smoothly. If you are interested in any of these roles, even if you can only spare a small amount of time each month, please get in touch as soon as possible using the contact details above.

# Swindon u3a News

## Office Opening Times

We are reducing the opening hours of the Office to Mondays only, 10am - 12pm until March 2026. We are finding that fewer people use the office outside of the main payment periods.

Our office team are still available remotely, you can contact them at [office@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk) or via our new mobile numbers 07345 162117 or 07823 722812.

If you need to see one of us face to face, an office manager and several trustees will be at the monthly meetings on the second Monday of the month as well and at the Christmas party. Or contact us via the office and one of us will contact you.

## Breaking News – Vice-Chair

A very warm welcome to our new Vice-Chair, Sue Wigmore-Bond. Sue joined our November Committee meeting to ‘test the water’ and subsequently agreed to be co-opted onto the Committee in this important role. Thank you so much for volunteering Sue and we look forward to working with you on the Committee.

## Breaking News - Newsletter Coordinator



Hurrah, we have a new Newsletter Coordinator starting in January! We are delighted that Philip Baylay has agreed to take on this important role. Thank you so much Philip and I look forward to working with you.

Also many thanks to Lynda Feeley who has been our Newsletter Coordinator for a good deal of this year. She has done a magnificent job and left us with a much improved Newsletter to take forward.

Please continue to send us your news. It's great to learn about all the interesting things that are happening in Swindon u3a.

## Promoting Swindon u3a near you

If you would like to get involved and help out promoting our groups, please do let us know and we can keep you informed of opportunities, please contact: Gill Brain, Publicity Officer: [madelinegillianbrain@yahoo.com](mailto:madelinegillianbrain@yahoo.com)

## Upcoming events



### *Christmas Party*

Our Swindon u3a Christmas Party will take place on **Monday 8 December 2.00-4.00pm** at Ellendune Community Centre.

We have a full programme to entertain you including the annual Christmas quiz,

Christmas bingo, a Christmas wall challenge, a Christmas poem read by members – all accompanied by tea and cake. Hope to see you there.

(N.B. Do book in via the website so we have an idea of numbers coming)

## Light in the Darkest Hour - Dunkirk's Little Ships

**Paul Barnett, Maritime Historian,**

**Monday 12 January 2026, 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre**

Set amidst the carnage of defeat, a flotilla of hope sets sail to assist in an Army's determined escape.

## Pop on the Box - A History of Pop Music on British Television

**Jeff Evans**

**Monday 9 February 2026, 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre**

Following Jeff's entertaining talk on the history of children's TV, he will be making a return visit. Freelance journalist and television historian Jeff Evans, author of *Rock & Pop on British TV* (Omnibus Press), tells the intriguing story of 60 years of music on television in this fully illustrated talk, beginning in the 1950s with shows such as *Six-Five Special* and *Oh Boy!* and continuing through the decades with programmes including *Juke Box Jury*, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, *Ready, Steady, Go!*, *Top of the Pops* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, as well as a number of programmes that you may just have forgotten. Expect lots of warm memories and more than a few surprises. And if you have any questions, just fire away!

## Book your place

1. Go to the website [www.swindonu3a.org.uk](http://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

## u3a Bookshelf

Gill Brain



Our Book club meets once a month to discuss the book we have read that month. We have a wide-ranging discussion about the book itself, including everyone giving their 'score' from 0 to 10. We don't always agree (the last lot of scores ranged from 3 to 9) but we're a friendly lot and always agree to disagree when necessary. Our discussions often veer off into unknown territory – our last book club discussion ended up exploring whether or not there are parallel universes. Guess what? We didn't all agree!

Over the last year we have read a very diverse range of books – one of the great joys of a book club are being introduced to books you wouldn't normally have read. Some of the books we've read this year include: *The Midnight Library* by (Matt Haig); *Middlemarch* (by George Eliot); *The Poisonwood Bible* (by Barbara Kingsolver); *The Country Girls* (by Edna O'Brien); *The Nightingale* (by Kristin Hannah); *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* (by Rachel Joyce); *My Father's House* (by Joseph O'Connor); *The Winter Ghost* (by Kate Mosse); *Horse* (by Geraldine Brooks); *The Gathering* (by Anne Enwright). How many of these have you read?

## BMP Pétanque Women's Competition

Our postponed Ladies Pairs competition was held on the 7th November. Six teams of two had been randomly chosen from the entrants. They played three initial rounds after which the top four played a knockout to determine the medals.



Winners of the gold medals and the Rose Bowl were Val Drinkwater and Margaret Smith.



Second place and the silver medals went to Sue Carvey and Karen Everden.



Third place and the bronze medals were gained by Glenice Dew and Maggie Murphy.

## Current Affairs Group

The u3a Current Affairs group meet on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 2.00pm.

We conduct our meetings on Google Meet and we look forward to our lively, interesting discussions, which are usually about topical news items. We hold a variety of views, which makes for broader and richer discussions. We are however, always polite and respectful of others differing viewpoints.

At our last meeting, amongst other topics, we discussed the upcoming budget and tax rises, school curriculum changes. Using AI, and the American election results.

There were twelve of us at our last meeting and if you think you would like to join us, email Dave Todd at [dave@sogs.uk](mailto:dave@sogs.uk)

## 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:

3rd Dec	One Battle After Another
10th Dec	Downton Abbey
17th Dec	The Smashing Machine
24th Dec	Christmas Holidays
31st Dec	Christmas Holidays

*The line-up and start time may be subject to late change, please check website/app the week before the scheduled performance for exact information*

## 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

7	×3	+18	÷13	+166	-29	2/7 of it	Treble it	÷10	Answer
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### Anagrams

Oh no it isn't! Work out the pantomimes from the following:

- A nicer dell
- Thick Tiding Town
- Bison Stop Us

## Who's missing?

Which 3 reindeers are missing from Santa's crew: Dasher, Prancer, Cupid, Blitzen, Dancer, Donner.

## Who Said it?

Which of the following famous fictional bears said: "Christmas is a together sort of holiday."

Paddington Bear	Winnie the Pooh	Yogi Bear
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## Christmas General Knowledge

Which country started the tradition of putting up a tree?

Netherlands	Denmark	Germany
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Which Christmas themed ballet premiered in 1892?

The Nutcracker	The Little Match Girl	A Christmas Carol
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What was the first artificial Christmas tree made from?

Aluminium	Goose feathers	Plastic
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## Word of the Month

**Petrichor** - the earthy scent produced when rain falls on dry soil.

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

## Did you know?

A few interesting Christmas number one facts:

- 2023 finally saw WHAM! achieve number one with Last Christmas
- The Beatles had four Christmas number one hits:
  - 1) 1963 I want to hold your hand
  - 2) 1964 I feel fine
  - 3) 1965 Day Tripper/We can work it out
  - 4) 1967 Hello, Goodbye
- Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody was the first song to be number one twice by the same band
- Cliff Richard scored three number ones:
  1. 1960 I love you with the Shadows
  2. 1980 Mistletoe and Wine
  3. 1990 Saviour's Day

Source: [https://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/every-official-christmas-number-1-ever-\\_\\_3618/](https://www.officialcharts.com/chart-news/every-official-christmas-number-1-ever-__3618/)

## Life in a poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

**Paul Millicheap** born 14 June 1970, who writes as **Brian Bilston**, is a British poet and author. Born in Birmingham, he studied at Swansea University before entering the publishing industry as a marketing manager, notably for John Wiley in Oxford. Using the pseudonym Brian Bilston, he began publishing short, pithy, and often humorous, poems on Twitter, which then spread to an eventual 400,000 followers on social media !! The poet, Ian McMillan described Bilston as "a laureate for our fractured times". In publicity photographs promoting his speaking tours, he hides his face behind a book which led him to be called "the Banksy of the poetry world"!!

*I think you will be familiar with Brain Bilston's poems from previous newsletters; always witty and fun to read. I hope you enjoy this observation on Christmas customs.*

### Merry

#### Brian Bilston

It's a word which only comes out at Christmas.  
As for the rest of the year;  
it's as if it has been packed away in the attic  
with the decorations and the tinsel,  
waiting for its own time to shine.



Rarely do we play hell with it.  
We do not let it loose for birthdays  
or anniversaries; only in error does it intrude  
on the happiness of a new year.  
But at Christmas, it emerges blinking  
into the light, red-cheeked and perky,  
in a perfect state of mild inebriation,  
writing itself into Christmas cards,  
greeting friends on doorstep;  
embracing family before they take off their shoes,  
warming strangers on icy pavements,  
Merry Christmas, we say, Merry Christmas!

## Swindon u3a Contacts

### Chair

#### Vice Chair

Sue Wigmore  
Bond

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

[vice\\_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk)

### General Secretary

Monica King

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

### Treasury Team

Eric Hewitt

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

### Membership Liaison

Rose Clarke

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

### Group Coordinator

Linda Young

[group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk)

### Payment Manager

Linda Young

[group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk)



<b>Speaker organiser</b>	Sue Cook	<a href="mailto:speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk">speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Web Manager</b>	Dave Todd	<a href="mailto:itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk">itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
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<b>Newsletter</b>	Philip Baylay	<a href="mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk">newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>
<b>Office General Enquiries</b>		<a href="mailto:office@swindonu3a.org.uk">office@swindonu3a.org.uk</a>

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*)

The u3a office is open on Monday 10am to 12pm until March 2026.

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.

Please note: the landline number: 01793 614629 will be phased out at the end of the year.

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

**Web:** [www.swindonu3a.org.uk](http://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. We will feature as many as we can over the coming months. Send submissions to: [newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk) - deadline for the January newsletter is **Friday 19 December**.

#### **Quiz Answers:**

##### **Mental maths:**

The answer is 12

##### **Anagrams:**

Cinderella

Dick Whittington

Puss in Boots

##### **Who's missing?**

Rudolph, Vixen and Comet

##### **Who Said It?**

Winnie the Pooh

##### **Christmas General Knowledge:**

Germany started the tradition of putting up a tree in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Nutcracker premiered in 1892

Germany created the first artificial trees in the 1880s in response to deforestation. They were made using dyed goose feathers.