

learn, laugh, live

February 2024



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Update from the Trustees

There is much **good news** and some **bad news**. Swindon u3a membership continues to grow. Although we are now well into the new academic year, people continue to join on an almost daily basis. To date, we have 280 new members this academic year. Our total membership is more than 1570. Over 130 groups are running on a regular basis. Clearly, members feel able to recommend Swindon u3a activities since over 70% of new members say it was family or friends who encouraged them to join.

However, fewer than 20% of members express a willingness to volunteer to help out with things that have to be done in order to keep our u3a running. This seriously threatens the survival of our u3a.

We are very pleased to report that Eric Hewitt has agreed to serve as our Treasurer and welcome him as a new Trustee.

We still have an urgent need for a Chairperson. Gill Brain stepped down at the end of December having spent almost 3 years leading us through some challenging times. We thank her for all she has done and continues to do as a G.O., interim Publicity Officer and Newsletter Editor.

We cannot continue to operate without a Chairperson. Sonia Menadue, our vice chair, cannot step in indefinitely.

Back to the good news: we now have in place a robust financial model, a new website and administration system and a programme of increasingly popular monthly meetings and social events. With all this achieved, we need the coming year to be one of consolidation. A new Chairperson would be in the happy position of being able to build on what is now in place and lead us forward.

PLEASE consider whether you or someone you know could offer to serve as Chairperson and save us from the very real threat of closure. The Trustees would be happy to discuss the role with anyone who might feel they have something to offer. Possibilities could include a short term appointment. The role is briefly outlined in the Vacancies section of the newsletter. More detail will be shared with anyone expressing interest. The current group of Trustees would offer support and work together to ensure that the task was not too onerous.



Volunteer Vacancies

Chairperson

We need a new Chairperson to start as soon as possible.

The key task is to chair Management Committee Meetings which are held on the last Tuesday of each month. 9.30 – 12.00.

Ideally you will have:

- Experience in chairing team, group or committee meetings.
- Familiarity with standard meeting procedures: agenda, minutes, actions.
- Good interpersonal and communication skills.
- Basic I.T. skills and a willingness to learn how to use Simple Membership as appropriate.

You would be a Trustee of Swindon u3a.

You would receive support from the Board of Trustees.

We would be prepared to consider a short term commitment.

If you feel you may be able to contribute and would like to discuss the role in more detail, please contact Jill Kelly: membership@swindonu3a.org.uk or any other member of the Management Committee or contact the office.

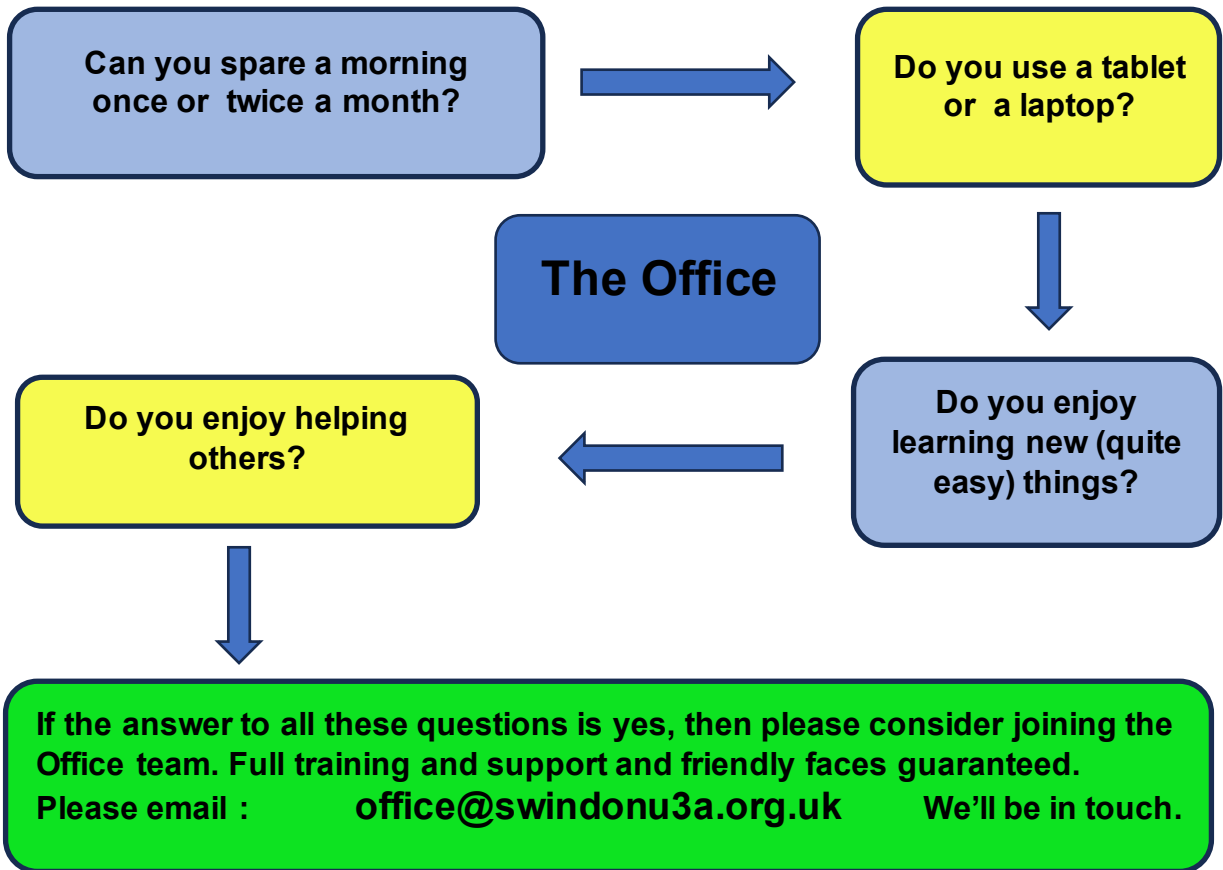
Minutes Secretary

The Minutes Secretary works with the Chair to prepare an agenda for Management Committee (MC) meetings, takes detailed notes at the meetings and produces a set of minutes with required actions. The Minutes Secretary needs to have a good command of written English, be able to type simple documents using Word and be willing to learn how to use the Google shared drive (which is pretty simple).

The MC meets on the last Tuesday every month from 9.30 am to 12 noon at Liden Community Centre.

Our current minutes secretary is happy to offer initial advice and support and to step in to deputise occasionally if needed.

If you think you may be able to help and would like to know more, please contact Jill Kelly: membership@swindonu3a.org.uk



What's On

Let's



- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. February Monthly meeting information | 12 th February |
| 2. Travel GroupJ Visit to the British Museum | 15 th February |
| 3. March Monthly meeting information | 11 th March |
| 4. Travel Group Scotland Holiday | June 2024 |

Monthly Meeting News

Please note



It is so fantastic to see the increasing numbers of people attending the Monthly Speakers Meetings, but it means that the venue for both the February and March meetings has been changed from Coleview to Ellendune.

I am sorry for the alteration, but hope to see you at Ellendune instead. Alternative venues are being explored for later in the year.

Can you please also ensure that if you plan to attend you book a place on our website. This not only enables us to have the correct number of chairs available but ensures that we comply with the relevant Health and Safety regulations.

Bookings can even be taken up to 11.30 am on the morning of the event, either

1. Go onto the website swindonu3a.org.uk (just log in and click on the event you want to attend listed on the front page) or
2. Telephone the office on **01793 614629**

Monday 12 February 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon SN4 9LW

DRIVING SAFELY IN WINTER – A PRESENTATION FROM THE OLDER DRIVERS FORUM FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE (ODFG)

This evidence-informed presentation provides the latest advice on how to drive safely in the low light, low temperatures, and slippery conditions of winter roads.

It will be delivered by Alexandra and Nigel Lloyd-Jones who founded ODFG, as a positive legacy following the death of their mother in a crash.

Alexandra has over 30 years' experience in the voluntary sector. Nigel had a career in marketing communications specialising in the automotive industry. He now leads the Older Driver Workstream for the Gloucestershire Road Safety partnership.

ODFG is part of a cohort of seven Forums and is the only one run by the voluntary sector. The Forum's mission is to provide advice on how to keep mature drivers driving safely for longer, and how to plan for when it is time to retire from driving. They also support families, and carers concerned about a mature driver.

For further information visit www.olderdriversforum.com

Monday 11 March 2024 – 2.00 pm – Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon SN4 9LW

5 of the 50 – BASED ON HER SWINDON IN 50 BUILDINGS BOOK – ANGELA ATKINSON

Swindon-based, Angela Atkinson is well-known as a champion of the town via her Born Again Swindonian blog. She's also a published author of five Swindon-related books – the most recent, a collaborative project about West Swindon came out shortly before Christmas 2023.

A small business owner, with a focus on writing or proof-editing business blogs, Angela is also currently the volunteer area lead for the Federation of Small Businesses.

She also sits on the committee of the Friends of Swindon museum and art gallery and the Mechanics' Institution Trust.

Our January Monthly Meeting Frauds and Scams

The 2024 programme got off to a great start with Neil McCallum talking about fraud and scams. It was a timely reminder of just how careful we all need to be, all of the time, and especially when we are busy or stressed. Neil's key message was about staying vigilant, not being rushed into doing anything, and not giving out any personal or confidential information.

Fraud is as old as trading itself (going back to 300 BC) but the tactics keep changing – from the old Nigerian scams of 'send us your money and we'll transfer millions into your account' to today's romance and boiler room/investment scams.

Then there is non-delivery fraud (when criminals promise to deliver highly sought after goods, take payment but fail to deliver), and telecom fraud (where victims are contacted by someone claiming to be a relative, friend or someone in a position of authority and try to take money). The scam of asking a victim to buy gift cards seems to be very popular at the moment.

Future scams are likely to involve artificial intelligence and deep fake technology, producing realistic videos that in a year or so will be impossible to spot as fakes.

Both Neil and Tim are keen to speak to as many people as possible about fraud risks, so if you would like them to attend any meetings that you organise, please do get in touch.

We hope to be able to share this and future presentations with members via the website, so please watch out for further announcements.



Group News

Travel Group J News

Visit to the British Museum London
Thursday 15th February 2024

The British Museum located in the Bloomsbury area of London is dedicated to human history, art and culture and it's eight million works is the largest in the world. It documents the story of human culture from it's beginning to the present day. The museum was established in 1753 and is largely based on the collections of the Anglo - Irish physician Sir Hans Sloan. The Rosetta Stone is the museum's most popular exhibit, don't miss it.

Departure time and pick up points:

08.15am Crown Hotel Royal Wotton Bassett
08.30am Ellendune Centre Wroughton
08.40am Coate Water, Bus stop by garage.
04.00pm Depart for Swindon

Cost: £25.00 per person which includes coach and drivers gratuity, entry to museum is free.

All members and friends are welcome

Contact:

Ken Ivie on 01793 845483 or email kenivie@uwclub.net

Travel group **Scotland holiday June 2024!**

An exciting opportunity for Swindon u3a members! Please do get in touch if interested.

Destination - Glasgow

Hotel -Westerwood Golf & Country Club, Cumbernauld, a popular Hotel destination for Barnes Coach tours.

Date of outward journey is Tuesday 4th June 2024 and we will be returning on Monday 10th June.

Price to include all coach travel, 6 nights Bed and Breakfast and Evening Meal at the hotel

Based on min 20 - £875 pp

Based on min 25 – £795 pp

Based on min 30 - £740 pp

Single supplement £210.00 pp

In addition, there will be some admission charges. The final price depends on take up of places.

Deposit of £40.00 per person due by 12th February 2024. Cheques payable to SWINDON U3A

Balance by will be payable by 8th April 2024. Cheques payable to SWINDON U3A

Itinerary; we hope to visit Leven Hall on our journey north to see the amazing Topiary. During our stay there will be five days of visits, Robbie Burns' place of birth, Transport Museum, Falkirk Wheel and Kelpies, Kelvin Museum, Glasgow Botanic Gardens, Loch Lomond – an optional boat trip, whisky distillery visit and a guided coach tour of Glasgow.

If you are interested, please contact Group Organiser Jane Caudwell - email philipbaylay@virginmedia.com or mob 07471202507.

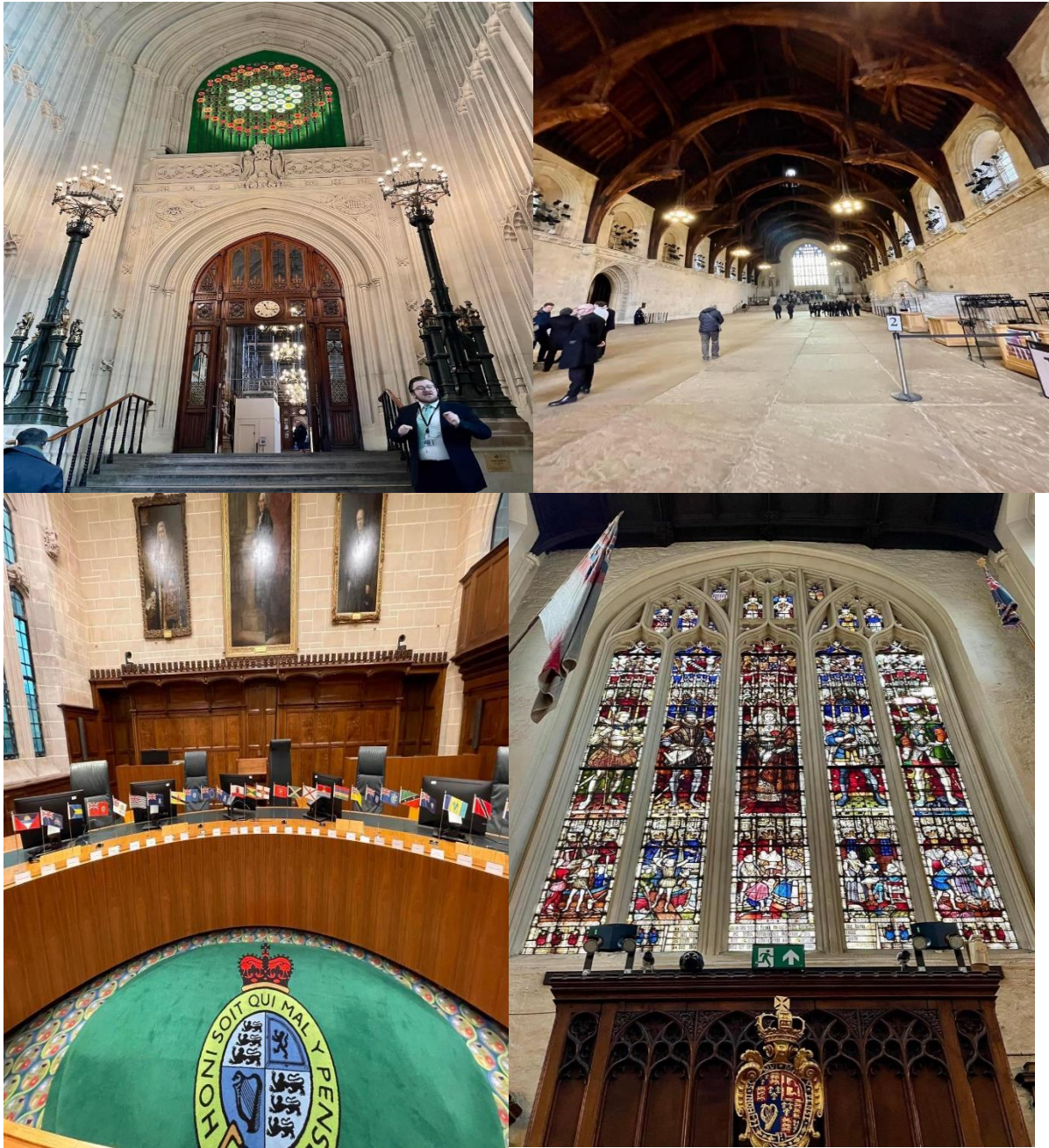
Travel Groups C & G Visit to the Houses of Parliament

Shirley Lewis writes:

A day out in London. day out in London. First stop the Houses of Parliament where we entered both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, but we weren't allowed to sit down. Only VIP bottoms can do that! Very interesting but very busy with lots of groups coming and going. We only spotted one MP, Ian Duncan Smith, talking to the group, I think the rest were fuelling up for the afternoon sitting! No photos allowed past Westminster Hall and the entrance.

After lunch a few of us visited St Margarets Church next to Westminster Abbey where we admired the stained glass, including one of Sir Walter Raleigh. We continued to the Supreme Court, surprisingly small considering its importance. There are three courtrooms, one very modern, and the emblem of plants representing the four nations of the UK, rose, thistle, leek and flax continues throughout the building on the 'pop art' of the carpet.

The police were out in force – they had obviously been warned of our visit!



Fancy improving your IT Skills?

We've been asked if we could run some short classes to help members improve their IT skills. We'd love to hear from anyone who'd like to take part and particularly what type of things you'd like the classes to cover.

Interested? Please email itsupport@swindonu3a.org.uk



Life in a poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

I had not heard of this poet before but it seems to me that she highlights something important about human interaction. In this age of social media, and online shopping, we risk underestimating just how vital simple face to face communications are for our well-being.



Small Kindnesses by Danusha Lameris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead — you first," "I like your hat."

Danusha Laméris is poet laureate of Santa Cruz County, Calif. She is a poet and an essayist born to a Dutch father and a Barbadian mother and raised in Northern California. Her first book, *The Moons of August* (Autumn House, 2014), won the 2013 Autumn House Press Poetry Prize and was a finalist for the 2015 Milt Kessler Poetry Book Award. She is also the author of *Bonfire Opera* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), a finalist for the 2021 Paterson Poetry Award and a winner of the 2021 Northern California Book Award.

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Telephone : 01793 614629

(Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email : office@swindonu3a.org.uk Web : www.swindonu3a.org.uk

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. The Editor reserves the right to amend or abbreviate any entries submitted:
Contact newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk