



Welcome to our October newsletter
Keeping you connected with the Swindon u3a community

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Swindon u3a News

Chair's Message



My brother-in-law says that he'll think about taking to running when he sees a smiling runner. I tend to agree; runners always look like they're enduring it rather than enjoying it. Apart from my mobility issues, running always seems like doing things the hard way - cycling makes much more sense to me.

So, it's somewhat surprising that one of the images of the summer that sticks in my mind, comes from the London Marathon. Not the elite runners getting faster and faster as understanding of physiology and kit improves, but three runners struggling over the line.

Two of them seem to be taking things in their stride, but the third is only making it because the other two are virtually carrying him.

Those two runners got (for them) poor times, in order to help another runner finish. In a display of selflessness that really reflects the spirit of sportsmanship, they went out of their way to help someone they'd never met before.

What do you get out of u3a? To show how clever you are? There must be ways to reach a wider audience. To learn new things? I marvel at the things I didn't know I didn't know. To make new friends? Yes, u3a is great for that.

But I hope that along with those things, we might just be the listening ear, or supporting voice in someone else's hour of need, even though we might never know it.

u3a at its best, is about ordinary people, giving, sharing and being there for others.

Monthly Speakers' Meetings



These are held from **2.00 pm on the 2nd Monday of the month, at the Ellendune Community Centre, Barrett Way, Wroughton, Swindon SN4 9LW**

❖ Monthly Speakers' Meeting Report – September - Wilts and Berks Canal and 2050 Vision

The first meeting of the new term drew a capacity audience to hear from Paul Mumford, a Director of the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust, and Robin Earle, a Trust Historian.

Robin reminded us that canals (artificial rivers) were first built by navvies during the Industrial Revolution for the transport of coal. The Wilts and Berks canal was built at the behest of the Somerset Coal Company and aimed to connect the Kennet and Avon canal to the River Thames at Abingdon.

Work started in 1795 at Semington, with the Wootton Bassett to Swindon section commencing in 1803. Brick yards at four points along the route produced some 2 million bricks for the build, and in 1810 the official opening of the 52-mile canal took place in Abingdon. It had cost £120 million. Unfortunately, the canal company officially abandoned the canal in 1914.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary next year (2027), the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust has a vision to reconnect communities and nature through a number of key projects. Paul showed us a video of recent construction undertaken at Wichelstowe, which included the new Badgers Bridge and the pedestrian swing bridge.

With the Trust, Swindon Borough Council, Wilson Homes and Barrett Homes all working in partnership (the Joint Venture Team), this project is unusual in that the canal is being restored before the surrounding houses are built. A brand-new section of canal is currently being built between Foxham Way and Mill Lane. Mill Lane will then form a bridge over the new canal.

As for the future, the team is working on plans for a canal tunnel under the M4 to re-connect Swindon and Royal Wootton Bassett. It is also hoped to bring the canal back into the centre of Swindon. In addition, the Trust is in discussion with Swindon Borough Council and the developers of the new Eastern Villages, to take the canal out towards Shrivenham.

Other projects continue along the length of the canal, and for those interested in a visit to the Trust's Peterborough Arms at Dauntsey Lock, the pub has now re-opened!

Support Our Vision: We're working to reconnect communities and nature through these key projects:



Further information and updates on the Trust's work can be found at www.wbct.org.uk or by visiting their Information Centre in Regent Circus.

❖ Monday 12th Oct - Going to Blazes!

An hilarious glimpse at the Fire and Rescue Service by John Craig, retired Chief Officer of Wiltshire Fire Brigade

John Craig will deliver an anecdotal presentation that is a bit different! As a firefighter for 36 years and the Chief Officer of Wiltshire Fire Brigade for 13 years, he came across many situations that made him laugh. An experienced raconteur, John will share some of these with us to bring some chuckles and cheer to this grim world.

❖ **Monday 9th Nov – 2026 AGM – so there is NO monthly meeting talk**

Please register as we need to be quorate and know numbers attending.



The banner is blue with white and yellow text. On the left, the u3a Swindon logo is displayed with the tagline 'learn, laugh, live'. The main text reads '2026 AGM' followed by the location and time: 'Ellendune Centre, Wroughton Monday 9th November 2:00 for a 2:15 start.' A yellow circle on the left contains the text 'Login and click here to register'. On the right, a graphic shows several colorful hands raised, with the text 'ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING' overlaid. Additional text at the bottom states: 'Please register as we need to meet a quorate and need to know numbers attending.' and 'Car parking is limited so please ride share if possible.'

❖ **Monday 14th Dec – Christmas Party!**



Come along and celebrate! There will be Christmas-themed quizzes, a choir, plus of course tea and cake.

If you plan to attend a Monthly Meeting, please be sure to book a place by either:

1. Going onto the website swindonu3a.org.uk (just log in, click on u3a-wide events and under Swindon u3a events find the event you want to attend)

OR

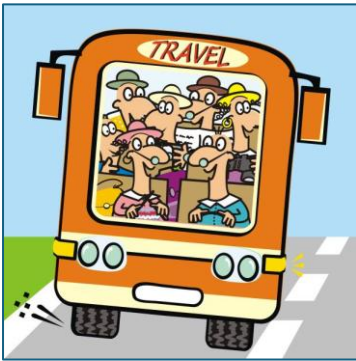
2. Telephone the office on **07345 162117 or 07823 722812** and leaving a message.

When leaving a message, please remember to state your name and membership number and, if possible, not to leave it until Monday morning as the office team cannot always pick up all the messages in time and sometimes names get missed.

If you're a new member of Swindon u3a and you're coming along to your first Monthly Meeting, please do let the people on the welcome desk know, so that you can be introduced to the u3a Volunteers Team.

Group News

➤ Travel Group J



Thursday 15th October 2026 – Visit to Exeter

Departure times and pick up points:

8.15am	The Crown, Royal Wootton Bassett
8.30am	Ellendune Community Centre Wroughton
8.45am	Coate Water (By Coate Water Petrol Station).
4pm	Depart Exeter for Swindon

Many places of interest including:

- Exeter Cathedral
- Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery
- Underground Passages
- Exeter Quayside – one of the most attractive areas of the city

Cost - £32.00 per person which includes coach fare and driver's gratuity.

Contact Jackie Theobald 01793 815262 or Email M.Theobald1@sky.com

➤ Climate Change Group

The Climate Change group got off to a flying start in September when we examined the health implications of the increasing heating of the planet that we have just experienced, a foretaste of worse to come in the next 10 years.

We welcomed several new members. In October, we will consider the implications for the climate of AI - Artificial Intelligence.

November will be the pros and cons of nuclear power; in December, the climate effects of economic and population growth.

If you are interested, contact Bill Hughes, Coordinator, email bill.hughes1@btinternet.com

Friday 16th October 2026 – Visit to Tangmere Military and Aviation Museum, Chichester

Nestled on a corner of the historic former RAF Tangmere airfield, Tangmere Military Aviation Museum stands on one of Britain's most famous fighter station sites. From its opening in 1918 until RAF Fighter Command departed in 1958, RAF Tangmere played a pivotal role in defending the nation through two World Wars and the early years of the Cold War.

Established in 1982 by a dedicated group of aviation enthusiasts, the Museum exists to preserve and share the remarkable story of Britain's military aviation heritage.

Today, Tangmere Military Aviation Museum is regarded as one of the UK's leading military aviation museums. Our extensive collection includes historic aircraft, engines, uniforms, medals, personal artefacts and thousands of photographs and documents, telling the story of military aviation from the First World War through to the Cold War.

Visitors can also enjoy a wide range of interactive exhibits, climb into authentic aircraft cockpits and experience our popular flight simulators, bringing aviation history vividly to life.

Departure Times and Pick up points:

8.00am	Ellendune Centre Wroughton
8.15am	Downs View / Marlborough Road
8.30am	Coate Water
4.00pm	Depart for Swindon

Cost £40.00 per person to include entry to museum, coach and driver's gratuities.

All members and friends' welcome

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

➤ **Llandudno 2026 – Travel Group G**

Travel groups G, C, J and friends from Swindon u3a enjoyed a holiday based in Llandudno recently. We visited many places of interest, and each person had a different highlight!

Chester on our journey north with its fascinating history and lots of eateries. Caernarfon Castle and the town with its fascinating history and ancient walkways – one archway proved too narrow and low for our coach!!

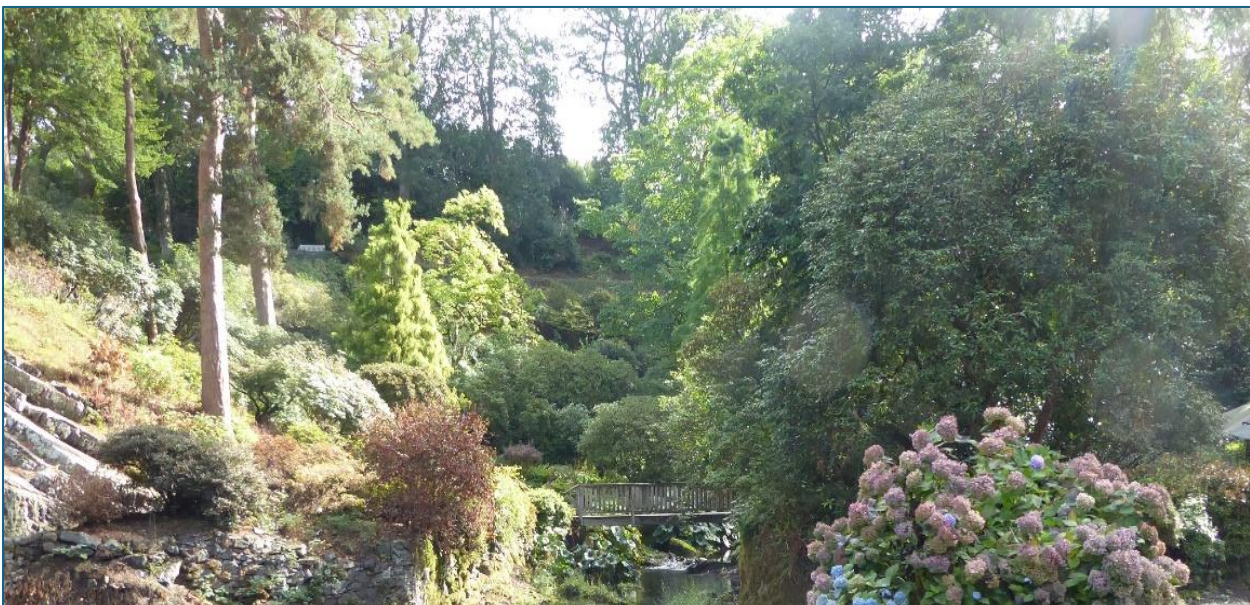
On Anglesey we visited Plas Newydd, a National Trust house and gardens. Some of us went on a red squirrel hunt but didn't see any! The highlight for many was the Whistler Mural, a whole wall with so many different scenes and symbolism on it.

Then we split into two groups, some took a tour of Halen Mon salt centre to learn how salt is produced from the sea and obviously taste the products, including Gin!! Very different. The other group went to the Anglesey Sea World.

Our next venture was to Portmeirion. An Italianate Village, the vision of Sir Clough Williams-Ellis whose family still run it. Fascinating place to visit, glad we took the guided tour.



The next day we stayed quite local visiting Bodnant Gardens.



The rain had freshened up the gardens and they really were stunning. Even non gardeners wished we had more time there. Conwy town proved too tricky for the coach, more ancient arches! So, we headed back to Llandudno to explore what we missed on our free day.

On our free day we could visit Great Orme by bus or tram, a visit to the Copper Mine, people watching at the top.



Some of us saw the goats. There were also boat rides, wanders round the town, an Alice in Wonderland trail and Jean and Phil's favourite, a guided tour of the local whisky place!! Cheers!

On our way home we had an extended lunch in Shrewsbury to wander along the river, see the old buildings and the beautiful floral display in the local park.

Thanks to all who came with us for your company, to Scott our driver, Amanda at Barnes and Val our U3A treasurer who made it all possible.

Jane and Phil

➤ **A New u3a Book Club!**



As a result of interest generated at Open Day, we are in the process of creating a new Book Club. Did you know this will become the fourth Swindon u3a Book Club. It's good to know that reading is still alive and well! There has been a lot in the news recently about not just the joys of reading but also many other benefits to mental health, stress reduction and brain agility.

So, if you'd like to do less doom scrolling and more reading why not think about joining our new group. We are still at the early stages (first book has just been chosen for discussion at the end of October) so you can also contribute to how we go forward with the group. Interested?

Contact: Gill Brain madelinegillianbrain@yahoo.com

➤ A New u3a Upholstery Group!



Do you have some upholstery skills to help get a second upholstery group off the ground?

We have a group of would-be enthusiastic new upholsterers ready to start their projects.

We have an organiser for the admin and system tasks and help from the organiser of our existing upholstery group to get started, as well as a starter tool set.

Could you offer your skills to provide upholstery support for this new group? If so, please email group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk and we will put you in touch.

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 - only £4.50 and free tea/coffee and biscuits are available just beforehand in the foyer.

Performances begin at about 11.30am.

Here's what's coming in **OCTOBER:**

7th October

Glenrothan

14th October

Power Ballard

21st October

Tuner

28th October

Half term - no Cine Seniors

Potential interactive U3A workshop/event

Opportunity:

Practical Tips & Support: Caring for Loved Ones & Making Life Easier at Home

Background:

Are you caring for a family member, helping out a neighbour or friend or starting to find certain daily tasks around the house a bit more challenging?

We are gauging interest for an upcoming interactive U3A workshop/event focused on practical, real-world solutions to keep you and your loved ones safe, comfortable, and independent at home.

Based on tried-and-tested, first-hand experience caring for my dad, this talk will cover a mix of tech and non-tech solutions, including:

- **Simple Home Modifications:**

- Smart ideas and non-tech tricks to simplify daily routines and make living at home easier.

- **Helpful Technology:**

- Practical, easy-to-use tech devices and safety solutions that offer peace of mind.

- **Supporting Others:**

- Tips you can share with friends, relatives, or neighbours who might be struggling.

Get in Touch: If you would be interested in attending a workshop or talk on this topic, **please send an email directly to Anne Hanscomb** at annehanscomb@gmail.com

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

50	÷10	×9	2/3rds of it	-12	×3	+96	20% of it	+51	Square root of it	=
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Anagrams

Unscramble the words to find British detective series from across the decades:

- Her Locks (2010 – 2017)
- Lad Face (1994 -1998)
- Crumpet Spies (1981)
- Fan Threw Rob (1974)
- He's Titan (1962 -1969)

Pick and mix quiz

What was the character Charles Parker in the book/film "Life of Pi"?

Lion	Tiger	Cheetah
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What was the first top thirty single released in June 1963 by the Rolling Stones?

It's All Over Now	Not Fade Away	Come On
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Whose image is on the reverse of the £50 polymer banknote?

Alan Turing	J.M. Turner	Jane Austen
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Which group performed the theme tune for the BBC comedy drama series "Take Three Girls" which aired between 1969 - 1971?

Clannad	Pentangle	Steeleye Span
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Missing Vowels

Find the missing vowels to reveal dystopian novels and their authors:

e.g. NMLF RMN DGR GRWLL = ANIMAL FARM AND GEORGE ORWELL

- THH NDM DSTLN DMR GRT TWD
- BR VN WW RL DN DLD SH XLY
- THR DNDC RMCM CCR THY
- THH NGR GMSN DSZN NCL LNS

Who Said IT?

Quote about technology and artificial intelligence:

"This is only a foretaste of what is to come, and only the shadow of what is going to be."

Max Newman	Alan Turing	Tommy Flowers
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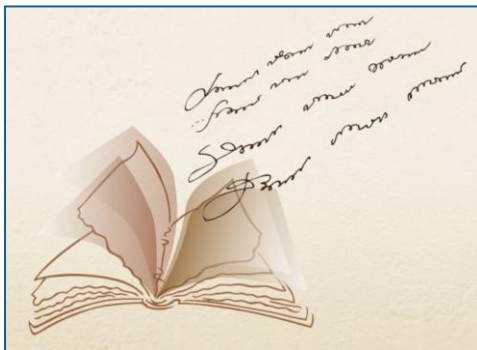
Did you know?...



Onomatomania –

frustration at being unable to recall a word – it's on the tip of my tongue!

Life in a poem (submitted by Lesley Basu)



Alden Nowlan (1933–1983) was born in Stanley, Nova Scotia, and overcame a challenging childhood marked by poverty and limited formal education to become one of Canada's most influential 20th-century poets.

His poetry often reflects themes of isolation, resilience, and the human condition. In this example he characteristically blends ironic humour and journalistic clarity with surreal, emotional imagery.

Nowlan was also a novelist, short story writer, and playwright. His work continues to be celebrated in Canada, with a provincial poetry award named in his honour.



The Bull Moose

Down from the purple mist of trees on the mountain,
lurching through forests of white spruce and cedar,
stumbling through tamarack swamps,
came the bull moose
to be stopped at last by a pole-fenced pasture.

Too tired to turn or, perhaps, aware
there was no place left to go, he stood with the cattle.
They, scenting the musk of death, seeing his great head
like the ritual mask of a blood god, moved to the other end
of the field, and waited.

The neighbours heard of it, and by afternoon
cars lined the road. The children teased him
with alder switches and he gazed at them
like an old, tolerant collie. The women asked
if he could have escaped from a Fair.
The oldest man in the parish remembered seeing
a gelded moose yoked with an ox for ploughing.
The young men snickered and tried to pour beer
down his throat, while their girlfriends took their pictures.

And the bull moose let them stroke his tick-ravaged flanks,
let them pry open his jaws with bottles, let a giggling girl
plant a little purple cap of thistles on his head.

When the wardens came, everyone agreed it was a shame
to shoot anything so shaggy and cuddlesome.
He looked like the kind of pet
women put to bed with their sons.

So they held their fire. But just as the sun dropped in the river
the bull moose gathered his strength
like a scaffolded king, straightened and lifted his horns
so that even the wardens backed away as they raised their rifles.
When he roared, people ran to their cars. All the young men
leaned on their automobile horns as he toppled.

Swindon u3a Contacts



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Office

Swindon u3a Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swindon, SN2 8DA

Going forward the office will relocate to an alternative space within the main Gorse Hill community centre accessed via the main entrance at the front of the building.

U3A office volunteers will be available in the "library room" on the right as you go in the foyer and will operate the following hours:

- 1st Monday of each month **10am-midday** **5th October**
- 3rd Monday of each month **10am-midday** **19th October**

The office staff are also available at monthly meetings at the Ellendune Centre on the **2nd Monday of each month** from **1.30pm to 2pm** and **3pm to 3.30 pm**.

For those members who attend the office for renewals please ensure that you are familiar with the opening hours detailed above.

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.

Email: office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web: 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.

Send submissions to: newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk - **deadline for the November newsletter is 19th October.**

QUIZ ANSWERS



ANSWERS

Mental maths

- 9

Anagrams:

- Sherlock (2010 – 2017)
- Cadfael (1994 -1998)
- Prime Suspect (1981)
- Father Brown (1974)
- The Saint (1962 -1969)

Pick and Mix:

- Tiger
- Come On
- Alan Turing
- Pentangle

Missing Vowels

- THE HANDMAID'S TALE AND MARGARET ATWOOD
- A BRAVE NEW WORLD AND ALDOUS HUXLEY
- THE ROAD AND CORMAC MCCARTHY
- THE HUNGER GAMES AND SUZANNE COLLINS

Who Said IT?

- Alan Turing in an interview for The Times newspaper in 1949