



Swindon Floods 2019: Page 8

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Chairs Blog October 2024

I've been asked on a number of occasions to include a headshot picture of myself for the blog, so eventually I've managed to find one that's half-decent, but I still hate it! This was taken at the Volunteers event earlier this year, where I got to meet a few of our hard-working volunteers, Some of you may also recall seeing me around at the Open Day too, going from desk to desk and chatting with new members. Anyway, for those of you who I've not met in person yet then this is me, so give me a nudge and say hello if you see me!



I'm just out of our monthly Management Committee meeting and preparations are now well underway for our AGM on the 11th of November. Please try to get along to the event if you possibly can, because we must get a minimum headcount of 100 valid members to have a Quorum. Currently, we are not there yet. I know from personal experience that sometimes it can be difficult to park at some of our larger events, so please consider car sharing with other members if you can.

At the AGM we vote for next year's Trustees. We have nominations for seven positions so far, including the core roles needed to run our organisation, but that still leaves two Trustee roles unfilled: these roles include Publicity Lead and Liaison Secretary.

Nominations in time for voting at the AGM are now formally closed, but that doesn't mean we are not accepting new nominations, The Committee can review applications and bring new trustees on board at any time of the year. So, if you want more information or think you can help us out then we are always keen to hear from you. Just email me or committee@swindonu3a.org.uk.

For some years now the board of the "Third Age Trust" have been assessing the need for operational changes. Last year the board drew up a proposal for a new governance structure. Their proposal was sent to all u3as in January.

The proposal introduces a new Council of Representatives that will sit between the Board of the Third Age Trust and individual u3a's. All members of this new Council would be made up of u3a members who would represent their regions and networks.

The Council promotes the needs of u3as, identifies overall trends, and contributes to the overall strategy and development of the u3a movement.

A smaller Board will provide oversight of the Trust's performance and ensure compliance with charity, corporate law, and other legal requirements Each u3a was asked to consider and vote on the proposal at the Third Age Trust AGM held on the 16th

October 2024. The proposal for the new structure was overwhelmingly approved, The aim is to become operational by April 2025..

The AGM will provide more details of our organisation's performance in the last year, as well as our current financial status. You have an opportunity to ask questions about both current performance and future plans as well as make suggestions to myself and the current Management Committee. Please attend if you can.

Register your intention to attend by clicking on the AGM link on our Website under the U3a-wide events menu,

or follow this link: <https://www.swindonu3a.org.uk/localevents>

See you there!

Vince Williams

chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Monthly meetings for November and December 2024 and report of October Meeting

1 Report of October 14 Meeting: Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Tony Hearn spoke at the October Monthly Meeting about the background to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and outlined how its work continues today. At the end of WWI, Sir Fabian Ware, Commander of the British Red Cross, began recording the details of soldiers who had been killed during the war. This was too great a task for just one team and the Graves Registration Unit was formed with responsibility for recording and marking graves. This subsequently became the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917.

The real work started after the Armistice. It was an enormous task to try to identify the servicemen and establish the cemeteries on a global basis. In fact, Rudyard Kipling described it as “the single biggest piece of work since the Pharaohs ... and they only worked in their own country”.

Today the Commission commemorates the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth who died during the First and Second World Wars. They maintain some 1.1 million headstones at more than 23,000 locations in 150 countries around the world, with the majority of sites being in Europe.

- Thiepval Memorial alone lists 72,000 missing British and South African servicemen who died in the Battles of the Somme.
- **Tyne Cot Memorial** bears the names of almost 35,000 officers and men whose graves are not known and has nearly 12,000 Commonwealth servicemen buried in its Cemetery. 70% of whom are unknown.

Commonwealth War Graves headstones are of the same design worldwide and are inscribed with a person’s name, rank, awards, service number, religious emblem and a personal inscription provided by the family. There is usually a regimental crest or badge at the top of the headstone.

In the UK there are some 306,000 memorials in 13,000 locations, including sites such as Whitworth Road, Radnor Street and St Mary’s Rodbourne in Swindon.

The Commission is also one of the largest horticultural organisations in the world. It ensures there is always some colour in the cemeteries, even in the desert, and it is well known for its spectacular rose displays.



Bazenville, Normandy: the first formal cemetery after D-Day: initial interments 8 June 1944 holding Commonwealth, German and Polish bodies were interred.

With so many sites to look after, the Commission cannot visit every single one regularly and is always looking for volunteers who can take on the task of looking after a local site, some of which may just have one or two headstones, but nevertheless need to be maintained to a high standard.

Recently a number of reburials have taken place in Northern France as more and more remains of soldiers are unearthed due to a major canal construction project that runs through the heart of the Somme battlefield. And so the work of the Commission continues

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

2 Monday 11 November 2024: 2.15 pm Notice of Swindon u3a Annual General Meeting

Dear Members

Notice is hereby given of the Swindon u3a AGM, to be held at Ellendune Centre, Wroughton on 11th November 2024 at 2.15 pm (Entry from 2 pm).

It is essential if you are planning to attend, that you register your place via the website or ask the Office to do so for you (01793 614629).

We are obliged to meet a quorate for the AGM attendance, so we need to know the numbers.

Monica King
Honorary Secretary

3 Monday 9 December 2024 – 2.00-4.30 pm
CHRISTMAS PARTY
Ellendune Community Centre



Doesn't time fly? It might seem rather early to be thinking about Christmas but it will be upon us in no time! Can you remember where you put that Christmas jumper?

So put the date of our annual Christmas Party into your diaries now. There will be a Christmas Quiz, music, fun and games. Oh, and tea and cakes of course. We would love you to come and join us on:

Remembering Glenys Bettley

What a lady, and as we heard everything about her at her funeral, so clever giving her free time to so many groups, and always thinking of others.

Glenys had been chair, vice chair and group organiser for many groups within the U3A. She attended the bell ringers, so it was fitting that her funeral started with a recording of Prelude Te Deum which had previously been recorded by so many people within the group.

Glenys was my deputy office manager and helped me out many a time with I.T. problems. Never once did she make me feel I couldn't do it, just carefully coming beside me and explaining again, with such patience.

The last time I saw Glenys was at her home when we shared many happy memories talking about her 80 Birthday, with a lovely trip on the canal boat. The sun shone and we all wished her well with a glass of bubbly and a buffet lunch.

We discovered that we both got married in the same year: 1966, and how we had both managed to get enough money to buy a table and four chairs and of course made from Formica. I wonder how much they would go for now, perhaps we will see them on the Antique Road Show!

We shall all have our personal memories of Glenys, but I know she wouldn't want us to be sad. Think of all those happy memories, as no one can take those away.

Sylvia Alexander. Office Manager

New Members' Meeting Report, 2 October

More than 40 of our newest members met with 10 of our volunteers at Coleview Community Centre on 12th October. A varied programme allowed people to get to know each other and share their early u3a experiences.

Short presentations included:

- how the organisation is structured;
- an introduction to the Website Homepage;
- information about the office- where it is and what our volunteers there offer;
- details of Monthly Meetings and other Events and
- an overview of the work of the publicity team.

A quick quiz added to our shared knowledge of Swindon u3a. Answers at the end of the newsletter. P11

Quick Quiz: What do we know about Swindon u3a?

1. Did u3a start in a) USA b) France c) UK?
2. Is Swindon u3a registered with the Charities Commission?
3. Can Swindon u3a use its funds to donate to other charities?
4. Do you have to be a certain age to join?
5. What day of the week are Monthly Meetings?
6. Which of these **is not** currently a Swindon u3a group?
 - a) Art Appreciation
 - b) Jazz Appreciation
 - c) Wine Appreciation
7. How many different walking groups are there?
 - a)6
 - b)9
 - c)11
8. Where would you find a copy of the Swindon u3a Constitution?
9. Which of these **is** currently a Swindon u3a group?
 - a) Gaelic
 - b) Polish
 - c) Welsh
10. Which of these **is not** currently a u3a group?
 - a) Cycling
 - b) Badminton,
 - c) Short Mat Bowls

A final session offered the opportunity to discuss some key topics including experience of and attitudes to I.T and access to transport. The importance of volunteers was highlighted.

Thanks to all who attended. We all went home better informed about Swindon u3a and our fellow members!

Jill Kelly (Membership Liaison)

Group News

1 Travel Group J: Visit to London Museums 5th December 2024

Dropping off point in London V&A Museum

Departure time and pick-up points:

8.00 am Crown Hotel, Royal Wootton Bassett

8.30 am Ellendune Centre, Wroughton

4.00 pm Depart from V&A for Swindon.

Cost: £27 per person which includes coach and driver's gratuity.

All members and friends welcome.

Contact:

Jackie Theobald 01793 815262

Julia Babcock. 01793 814654

2 Royal Wootton Bassett Travel Group: Winchester and the Christmas Market 26th November 2024

Unfortunately, this trip has been cancelled.

Contact Wendy Bolwell <wendysue4@btinternet.com> for more information

3 Proposed revival of the CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP from Bill Hughes

Climate change, or runaway global heating, is the greatest threat to our very survival. Scientists have known about this for decades and those in power and authority have acknowledged this seriously since the UN Rio conference in 1992 when outline plans were made by many nations to transition to a low or no carbon economy.

It seems that lip service was given by authorities and some of the mainstream media but effective action has been a painfully slow or non-existent in some cases. In 2015 the IPCC Paris Agreement, hopes were raised that nations were going to implement policies that would keep average global temperatures below an increase in 1.5 degrees C (a critical turning point for climate stability) compared with pre-industrial temperatures and achieve "net zero" by 2050.



Valencia 2024

However, as the recent devastating hurricanes Milton and Helene in Florida have grimly reminded us, temperatures of the seas and oceans are increasing, and that the worldwide burning of fossil fuels is actually increasing and the CO₂ emissions that cause the “greenhouse effect.”



East Africa 2024

To help understand the crisis we are in, I propose having 6 monthly meetings in which we look at understanding the basic science and jargon from the perspective of an interested lay person.

This will include the ecological, economic, social, political, psychological and other aspects of climate change and measures and policies for mitigation and coping with this increasingly critical situation.

Even in Swindon, we have seen in recent years more severe weather and the flooding of roads and land with prolonged heavy rain and flash flooding. In the building of new developments around Swindon, areas of flood plain such as Wichelstowe, lagoons have had to be made to take the run-off of excess water during severe rainfall.

If you are interested in joining this group can you contact me on email bill.hughes1@btinternet.com or text on 07933157419.

Many thanks.
Bill Hughes

Life in a Poem

From Lesley Basu

A new "punny" poem by the wonderful Brian Bilston this month to cheer you up now the gloomy weather is fast approaching! Here, he reminds us of the endless possibilities for invention (and misunderstanding..!) with the English language. Some of you, like me, will remember with fondness his performance at the Arts Centre in Old Town.

To be Pacific

Why do you always go off on a tandem,
say goodbye without further adieu ?
It's time you climbed down from your pedal stool-
this is not a phrase you're going through,

when antidotal evidence suggests
you've been freewheeling right from the start.
Or rather, *from the gecko*, as you might say.
You're always upsetting the apple tart.



I can't be asked to correct you these days:
it takes two to tangle, I won't deny it.
But when push comes to shovel and all's set and done,
I just want a little piece of quiet,

to curl myself up in a feeble position
so I can give my poor ears some rest bite
from these sayings that do not pass mustard,
the flaws in the ointment you cite.

You're no escape goat or social leopard;
I don't regard you as a hapless case.
But be aware there are reaper cushions
when you cut off your nose despite your face.

By Brian Bilston -2024

Swindon u3a Contacts

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Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10 am until 12 noon

Telephone: 01793 614629 (Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email: office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web: www.swindonu3a.org.uk

Swindon u3a Charity Number 2988533

Last Word

Once again, another busy month and thank you for submitting news of future group activities. Please keep sending these notices to me.

Let me have reports and photos of group activity to show all our members just what goes on in our 120-plus groups.

Two items have caught my eye this month: the first is the report of the October meeting about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I have visited both the Great War and World War 2 European battle areas, and both the bravery and utter waste of the soldiers of all sides have made a lifelong impression, especially in Normandy where like many of you I have memories from and of family members fighting here.

The second is the proposal to restart a Climate Change Group> The events in Spain and Florida last month remind us how our day-to-day weather is changing. Please support Bill in his efforts to raise awareness and remind us of ways in which we can all help.

I have no new dates since last Month's edition.

Quiz Answers (see P 7: 1) b 2) Yes 3) No 4) No 5) Mondays 6) c 7) c 8)Website 9) c 10) a

Don't forget to attend the AGM on November 11 to approve both the accounts, the new Management Committee and to have your say on the future of the organisation.

Chris Firth
Editor