

Newsletter

March 2022



Chair's "Hello"

I was just beginning to see a glimpse of a brighter future, with the retreat of Covid, the lifting of restrictions, and the first, early signs of Spring. Then the news of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine came through this morning. None of us can know yet what repercussions this will have on us as shock waves of war ripple out across the world but we can feel deep sympathy for those people now unwillingly forced into war.

You may be interested to know that u3a is an international organisation and that there is a u3a in Lviv, Ukraine. They are about 300 miles west of the capital and run groups on such topics as the history of Ukraine, the history of Lviv, English, Polish, German, walking in the Carpathian Mountains, Psychology, Health, Ancient people, Herbal medicine, Computer Science, Tourism, Crafts, music and interesting talks. They also have a Theatrical Musical Group. I have got in touch with good wishes from Swindon u3a and hoping we can build a closer link in future when the warfare is over.

Back home, we have just completed our third round of consultation meetings about the future strategic direction of our own u3a. The meetings have been very informative, we have copious notes plus emails from those who couldn't attend, feedback from focus groups and information from research and networking.

Following this, the Trustees will be meeting to take all this feedback into account and move towards the final decision by the end of March. Detailed plans can then be designed and implemented before the next subscription year opens in June/July. We fully understand that the final decision cannot please everyone. We sincerely wish that we could wave such a magic wand but hope you will understand that we are acting with the best long-term interests of our u3a at heart.

Our Treasurer, Graham Reeve, will be leaving the Committee at the end of March due to pressures on his time. Graham has done a terrific job for us in the last year, firstly by uncovering and analysing the financial 'black hole' facing us, and then guiding us with solid data towards possible solutions. We are going to miss him. We are therefore urgently seeking a replacement Treasurer. Please see my separate 'Job Vacancy' message later in the Newsletter and let us know if you or anyone you know may be able to help.

In spite of all the difficulties we have faced in the last year I am confident that we can move forward now to a solution that will put us again on a solid path towards a strengthened u3a. I do so hope we can count on your support and take you with us into whatever the uncertain future holds. Spring is just around the corner. Let us be confident and support each other.

All best wishes to you

Gill
chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Committee Vacancy – Treasurer

Our Treasurer, Graham Reeve, will be leaving the Committee at the end of March. We are seeking a replacement from 1st April 2022. The role would ideally suit someone with a financial background whether in a company or charity setting. Our financial situation has been challenging in the past year but from April onwards key decisions as to our future operational model will have been taken and the Treasurer would be working with the rest of the Committee to adapt, develop and implement systems to ensure a stable financial future.

The Treasurer is supported by all Committee members and manages a Treasury team of three members, which we are currently looking to increase. The Treasury team works closely with the Office team and the Group Coordinator.

The Treasurer would be expected to:

- Maintain full and accurate accounting records for Swindon u3a

- Keep the Committee updated on the financial position and prepare an annual statement of accounts for independent audit and presentation at the AGM

- To ensure that Swindon u3a complies with the Charity Commission requirements

Ideally, the skills required are:

- Good accountancy skills and knowledge

- Confident use of Excel

- Ability to work closely and flexibly with others

- Ability to work to timescales and produce clear and detailed reports

- Personal attributes of discretion, confidentiality and interpersonal skills.

If you feel you could help Swindon u3a by fulfilling this role please get in touch with the [Chair](#) or [Vice-Chair](#) for more information and/or an informal discussion.



Travel Group C – Space For New Members

Are you looking for a new group to join? We have availability.

We meet on alternate Tuesdays, 10.00 - 12.00 at Toothill Church, Dunwich Drive, SN5 8SX. Trips to various places of interest are arranged on a regular basis, voted for by the group. We try to undertake approximately 7 – 8 trips annually, examples being Bletchley Park, Mottisfont and Slimbridge. We twin with Wroughton Travel Group G for our trips which allows us to keep costs to a minimum. Members are asked to undertake research prior to each trip and may like to complete a quiz, which is provided. We understand that not everyone likes to read to a group of people, please don't worry as there will always be someone who will do this for you. Research allows for group discussions and an insight into our chosen visit. We are a friendly, sociable group and would welcome new members with enthusiasm.

Please make contact with us through the u3a office, or website. We look forward to hearing from you. Click on Gill's name below to make contact.

[Gill Hancock](#)
Group Leader



College Restaurant

I hope you are all well and now enjoying getting out and about more. Here are the details of our current offer for your consideration.

From 1st March to the 7th April

Lunch - £8.50 for three course or £7.50 for two courses

Dinner - £13.00 for three courses

Tea/coffee £1.00 (50p to be donated to WAGS charity for retired Police Dogs)

To make a reservation email: faith.marles@newcollege.ac.uk or telephone 01793 498244

Focus Group Reports

Following 6 focus group meetings in November, contributions have been collated and a report produced. This is quite a long and detailed document. It is available to all members on the website. Click on the relevant tile on the front page. Anyone without access to the website can contact the office to request a copy to be sent as an e-mail attachment. Those with no access to the website or e-mail can request a paper copy to be posted. A summary of the key points is included with this newsletter.

Thanks are due to all those who took part in what has proved to be an interesting and helpful process. The Trustees are already making use of the information gleaned, determining priorities and working on implementing suggested improvements. We will be reporting back on progress in due course.

We also intend to review the Focus group process itself with a view to identifying what worked well and what could be improved. It is hoped that we can hold a further round of meetings in the Autumn.

Jill Kelly

Membership Liaison Secretary

Focus Groups: Summary

There were six groups, all of which were asked the following 6 questions:

What priority do you give to the learning opportunities v the social experience?

What has been your experience so far - both positive and negative?

How important to you are activities such as the monthly meetings, day trips, occasional visits, one off events?

How do you feel about the way u3a communicates with you?

How do you feel about technology with regard to u3a: e-mail, Website, Facebook, Zoom?

Do you have any suggestions for improvements/new groups?

One group, which consisted solely of new members, was asked two further questions:

What made you decide to join our u3a? (New Members only)

What do you feel u3a offers you that you would find difficult to access elsewhere? (New Members only)

On some topics, responses were highly consistent; in other areas there was a wide range of opinion.

A full and detailed report of the collated information is available on the Website.

The following is a brief summary of the key points:

Summary of key issues:

For some people, learning is their main priority; others prioritise the social opportunities.

All members acknowledge that our u3a offers both learning and social benefits and that many activities offer a balance of both.

Most people feel more positive than negative about their u3a experience.

The 'self-help' ethos and volunteer nature of u3a should be emphasised.

Waiting lists are a cause for concern.

The website needs to be updated, made clearer and easier to use.

There is a lack of clarity about where to go for information.

Communication in general needs to be clearer.

The Management Committee could be more visible.

The response to monthly meetings/trips etc is mixed.

The Yearbook and paper copies of the Newsletter are missed but it is acknowledged that there is a need to embrace technology and to cut costs.

IT support for members is needed across a range of devices and applications.

There is nervousness about the use of social media.

Group Organisers are key to the organisation. More training and support is needed.

Transport is an issue for some members.

There is a need for more information about venues, a greater range of venues, clearer procedures for booking and support in doing so.

There is some support for the idea of more 'local' gatherings.

Most people feel they get value for money but supplements have caused a great deal of concern.

There is a perceived need for more widespread publicity.

The Importance

Of Listening



Travel Group G Holiday

To

Northern Ireland

Saturday 3rd September to Friday 9th September 2022

We will be staying in Belfast

Cost is £730 with a single supplement of £155

We will be staying at The Wellington Park Hotel which is in the Queens district of Belfast

The price includes dinner, bed and breakfast

Our visits will include:

The Titanic Exhibition

An open top bus tour of Belfast

Bushmills Distillery

Giants Causeway experience

Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

Mount Stewart which is a National Trust Property and is not included in the price



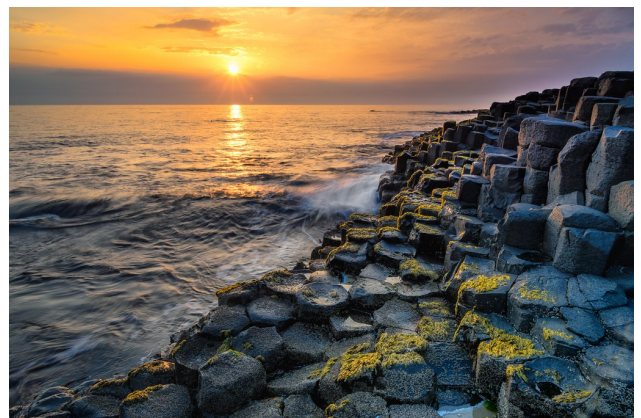
There is a deposit payable of £40 by 11/04/2022

Final Payment needs to be made by 04/07//2022

Barnes Insurance is £35

Please contact either Sue York or Carmen Abela for further details and for a booking form.

Click here for [Sue York](#) or here for [Carmen Abela](#)



Life in a Poem - submitted by Lesley Basu

Walter D. Wintle was an American poet, active in late 19th to early 20th century. Very little is known about him but, having watched Nadal come through to win the Australian Open and more recently, the astounding achievements of all the athletes in the Winter Olympics, both men and women, I think his wisdom lives on!

Thinking by Walter D. Wintle

If you think you are beaten, you are
If you think you dare not, you don't,
If you like to win, but you think you can't
It is almost certain you won't.

If you think you'll lose, you're lost
For out of the world we find,
Success begins with a fellow's will
It's all in the state of mind.

If you think you are outclassed, you are
You've got to think high to rise,
You've got to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win a prize.

Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man,
But soon or late the man who wins
Is the man WHO THINKS HE CAN!

Travel group C & G

Bletchley Park Monday 14th March 2022

Cost £29.50 includes coach, entrance and drivers gratuity. No refunds given as tickets have to be paid for 2 weeks prior to visit.

Pick up points

Ashington Way	08.15 am
Ellendune	08.30 am
Matalan [Greenbridge]	08.50 am

For details contact Sue by clicking on her name:

[Sue York](#)

Ukulele Course for Beginners

Tutors: Di Foxwell & Monty Toplis
Venue: Private homes, Wroughton & Old Town
Duration: Ten weekly periods of two hours
Time and Date: to be decided
No of Students: Eight
Level of Ability: Beginners

Introduction to the Ukulele

- Its parts and structure
- About the Strings
- Tuning your Ukulele
- Ukulele sizes
- Makes and Costs
- Resources

Getting Started with some basic chords

- Playing some easy songs
- Basic Strumming patterns
- Hand care, aids and plectrums
- Some basic scales to practice
- Reading tabs and Riffs

Moving on

- Further chords
- Building up more songs
- Further strumming patterns
- Building up strumming patterns
- Further scales to practice
- Using a capo

Building up the repertoire

- Building up the skills levels
- Percussion small instruments and extending your uke as a percussion instrument.
- Opportunities open to uke players.



Venue Challenge

Members Challenge !!!

Hello,

I'm Chris & I look after the venues for Swindon u3a & as you may know we are spending about £58,000.yr. We appear to be living through a high inflation period & the venue costs in the coming year will no doubt increase significantly. So here is my challenge to you as current members

Can you do a "survey" and look around your local area to see if you can find suitable **but** lower cost venues.

My ambition here is to develop a listing of new locations that could help reduce our costs & in turn hold down the memberships subs.

Please contact me by clicking on my name:

[Chris Ockwell](#)

The Arts Society Kennet & Swindon

Please join us for our illustrated lectures at 11am on the third Monday in the month at The Ellendune Centre, Wroughton, SN4 9LW.

We are a friendly group for anyone in the Swindon and Marlborough area who enjoys learning and understanding more about the Arts and meeting new people.

Our annual subscription of £45 was from May 2021-April 2022, however guests are very welcome at £7 per lecture. We meet from 10am for coffee and the lecture starts at 11am.

For more information check our website: theartssocietykennet.org.uk or contact our Membership Secretary Judi: info@theartssocietykennet.org.uk

The March lecture on the 21st is 'A Potted History of Britain' - a history of every day ceramics by Julian Richards. 10.30-11am we will hold our AGM followed by the lecture.

The April lecture on the 11th April is 'The Festival of Britain' - a Nation celebrated Art, Architecture and Design by Matthew Denny.

We look forward to seeing you.

[Sue Gray](#)
Chairman



Concert Goers

It is hard to believe that the last Swindon U3A concert was back in October, 2019! But now we are back and have provisionally reserved 30 tickets for the Anvil, Basingstoke on the evening of Wednesday, June 8th. We have decided to restrict the numbers to 30 so that we can spread out a bit more in the coach.

Concerto Budapest Symphony Orchestra will be performing:

Bartok: Concerto for Orchestra

Mozart: Piano Concerto no 23

Beethoven: Symphony no 5

See <https://www.anvilarts.org.uk/whats-on/event/concerto-budapest-symphony-orchestra> for further details.

The cost will be £48 per person to include concert ticket, return coach travel from 3 locations in Swindon, and the coach driver's gratuity. We will be leaving Swindon at 4.30pm as there is a free pre concert talk at 6.30. We should be back in Swindon by 10.30 - 11pm.

If you would like to come please send a cheque for £48 per person, made out to Swindon U3A. Please include your name, phone number and where you would like the coach to pick you up (Downs View Crescent, Bus Station or Ashington Way.) Details can be obtained by sending a message to [Cindy Matthews](#) or [Nina Stimson](#) by clicking on one of the names.

SWINDON FILM SOCIETY screens the best new film releases from around the world as part of a programme of films shown between September and April each year. Our films are screened on Wednesdays at 7.45pm at the Arts Centre in Devizes Road, Old Town, Swindon. The guest price is £9 per film, discounts for members are available.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood

Wednesday 30th March

A moving film about friendship and forgiveness.

Full details of all this season's films can be found on the SFS website:

<http://www.swindonfilm.org.uk/> . This link also can be found on the Swindon u3a website under the Diaries dropdown, website front page: (Diary of Local non-u3a Events for Swindon u3a)

Pétanque at Broome Manor



Players arrived at Broome Manor last week expecting to play pétanque as usual but found that, over the weekend, one of the large conifers had blown down onto the piste . The grounds staff had many other branches and trees down on the golf course but said that they would get around to us as soon as possible. Unfortunately it was towards the end of the week when it was finally cut up and moved off the piste. What a good job it didn't happen when we were playing!

Bob Carvey

List of Email Addresses

Chair	Gill Brain	chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
Vice Chair	Linda Young	vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
All members of committee		committee@swindonu3a.org.uk
Accommodation	Chris Ockwell	accommodation@swindonu3a.org.uk
Data Protection		secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk
General enquiries		office@swindonu3a.org.uk
Groups' Coordinator	Linda Young	group.coord@swindonu3a.org.uk
Health & Safety		secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk
Membership Liaison Secretary	Jill Kelly	membership@swindonu3a.org.uk
Newsletter contributions		newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk
Office manager	Sylvia Alexander	office.manager@swindonu3a.org.uk
Office administration		office@swindonu3a.org.uk
Secretary	Sue Carvey	secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk
Speaker organiser (Monthly Meetings)		vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
Treasurer	Graham Reave	treasurer@swindonu3a.org.uk
Treasury Team for		treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk
Accommodation		
Banking		
Visits		
Webmaster	Alex Cranswick	webmaster@swindonu3a.org.uk

Office

Swindon U3A Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swindon, SN2 8DA

(entry is by middle door on right hand side of building)

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

Telephone : 01793 614629

(Answerphone operates when the office is closed)

Email : office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Web : www.swindonu3a.org.uk

Charity Number 298853

Copy Dates

Items for the April Newsletter must be received by

1st April

Items for the May Newsletter must be received by

29th April

All contributions must be sent to the Editor using the Newsletter contributions e-mail address:

newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk

Geoff Bryan

The Editor reserves the right to amend or abbreviate any entries submitted. We should also like to point out that any views expressed are not necessarily those of the organisation or of the Editor.