

learn, laugh, live

Life in a Poem

submitted by Lesley Basu

This month, another of Brian Bilston's wry poems for you. I expect many of us have grown used to the unnerving presence of the all-seeing, all-knowing "Alexa" lurking in the corner of family living rooms; if only communication were that straightforward...!!

Alexa, What Is There to Know about Love?

Alexa, what is there to know about love?

What is there to know about love?

A glove is a garment that covers the hand
for protection from the cold or dirt and –

Alexa, how does a human heart work?

How does a human heart work?

Blood is first received in the right atrium via
two veins, the vena cava superior and inferior –

Alexa, where do we go to when we die?

Where do we go to when we die?

Activating Google Maps. Completed activation.

Would you like to start from your current location?

Alexa, what does it mean to be alone?

What does it mean to be alone?

It is the silence left by words unsaid,
the cold expanse of half a bed.

It is the endless stretching of the hours,
the needless tending of plastic flowers.

It is an echo unanswered in a cave,
the fateful ping of the microwave.

It is the fraying of a worn shirt cuff,
and the howl – Stop, Alexa. That's enough.



Chair's Hello

Mid-February – a time when the snowdrops and early buds remind us that Spring is just around the corner bringing warmer days and more chances to undertake outdoor activities. It's almost time to put that hot water bottle away! Looking back to this time last year I am reminded that we were just emerging like chrysalises from the confines of Covid, and quite a few groups had not yet restarted. How lucky we are this year to feel almost back to "normal".

However, as we look forward to our Spring and Summer, we need to remember those, both in this country and abroad, who have little to look forward to this year whatever the weather. I would like to think that our u3a will contribute in its own way to help and support others in need. In particular, I am keen to widen our publicity this year to ensure that people in and around Swindon, know more about what u3a has to offer in terms of support, friendship and new opportunities. I am hoping we can have more of a presence at some of the town events with a stall and a display. If you can help with this do get in touch with me. We have welcomed over 140 new members in the past year and I'm sure more could benefit from what u3a has to offer.

The Committee is working hard this year to ensure as smooth a transition as possible in the summer/autumn to our new model. This not only includes working on developing and strengthening our financial systems under our new Treasurer, Andrew Hancox, but also beginning the development of our new web-site, a major task headed up by our new IT Manager, Dave Todd. In addition, our Monthly Meetings, organised by Sue Cook, have really got into their swing and we have had some interesting talks – February's even included a taste of wine! In March we have a talk on "Archaeology – It's not just digging" which looks really interesting. I hope to see you there. If you have any ideas for speakers or events, please let Sue know.

I am keen for our u3a to try out some new ways of doing things. We are a very special and unique organisation but we mustn't get stuck in a rut. Society and culture move on and we need to be aware of this and sometimes, not always, move with the times. I was reading recently of a u3a which was trialling what they called a CAMEO group (Come and Meet Each Other). One which was less about doing an activity together but about making new friends and sharing ideas. If you have any good ideas for activities we could try out do let us know.

Meanwhile, look forward to the longer, warmer days, keep safe and well, and continue to enjoy your u3a interest groups. With warm wishes....

Gill

Monthly Meetings

Monday 13th March 2023 - 2.00 pm - Coleview Community Centre

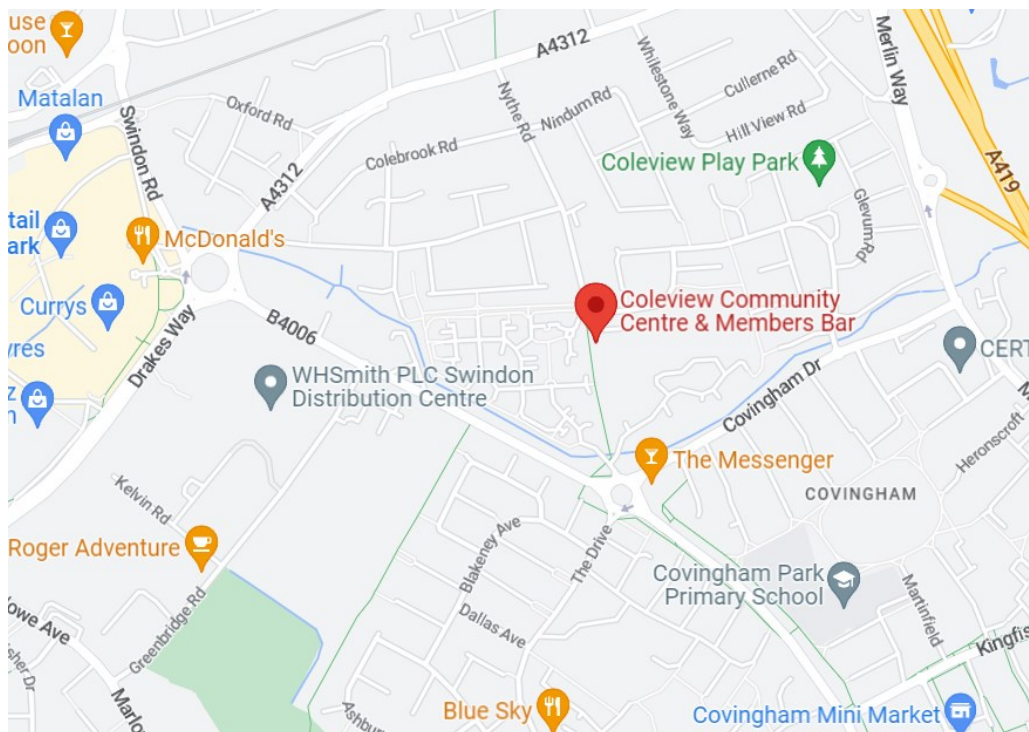
Archaeology – It's not just digging: Postponed from last October, a multidisciplinary team from Wessex Archaeology will present an overview of how heritage is brought to life using ecology, art, science and technology. They will demonstrate the diversity of skills needed to interpret heritage in the 21st century. Short talks and demonstrations will be followed by opportunities to handle artefacts from 10,000 BC to the Second World War and members will be invited to step into a virtual reality experience where they can explore a Roman Villa, Anglo Saxon Hall or Second World War Aircraft Wreck.

Monday 17th April - 2.00 pm - Coleview Community Centre

Matt Holland will be talking about the Swindon Festival of Literature, the role of literature and reading in life, and a little about the role of Lower Shaw Farm.

If you are able to book online, this is really helpful and gives us a guide for numbers attending. However, if you just turn up on the day, you will be very welcome.

Sue Cook



Coleview Community Centre

Towcester Road

Swindon. SN3 4AS

From Greenbridge take the A4312 (Oxford Road) and turn right at the traffic lights into Nythe Road. The community centre entrance is opposite when you get to the sharp bend at the end.

February Monthly Meeting

The monthly meeting in February was a workshop on The Art of Ageing with Cat Attewell, Community Engagement Officer, and Toby Kirk, Business Development Manager, from Home Instead.

They provided two wines for us to taste with the challenge of deciding which was the older and whether it was better than the younger. In the end it just came down to personal taste.

On that theme, they compared the bottling process to ageing. The nature of the grape was the person, the conditions of storage equated to a person's lifestyle, and the care taken in bottling, a person's mindset.

The 'art' of ageing is unique to each person, but as with developing any skill it takes time, dedication and learning from others.

We looked at tips for ageing better, e.g. watching what you eat and drink, staying active, making the most of your doctor and taking all available tests, sorting out your sleep and staying in touch.

Key points to keeping healthy included coping with change, finding meaning and joy wherever you are, staying connected, getting active and keeping your mind sharp.

Discussions followed around what strategies worked for each of us with, of course, u3a membership high on everyone's list!

For information, Home Instead publish The WOW (What's on When) Guide of events and activities that are helpful to those with dementia or conditions such as Parkinson's, Stroke or to seniors in general. For a copy telephone 01793 232585.

Sue Cook



The Swindon u3a Committee

I am often surprised when members ask me for information about the Committee so here is a potted description of our Swindon u3a Committee. All u3as have a Committee of Trustees who oversee the running of the organisation. Unlike most other charities, u3as have no paid 'managers' and as a result the Trustees must often take on some managerial roles in addition to their main trustee role. However, whatever other tasks they undertake, or groups they belong to, when the Committee members are meeting as a Committee their first and foremost role is ensuring the overall health, welfare, and future of the whole organisation. For this reason, at the beginning of every meeting I, as Chair, ask members to declare any "conflict of interest" as it is vital that they leave any special personal interests or representation of particular members or groups at the door. This does not mean that we disregard what members tell us (it is important that we listen), but we must put these individual or group thoughts into an overall strategy for the whole u3a.

Who is on the Committee? This can only be totally correct at a point in time because all Committee and Team members are volunteers and people may join or leave throughout the year. Those who join during the year are 'co-opted' until their position is ratified at the next AGM. There are no formal job contracts or set periods for working out resignation notice.

The Committee can be of any size between 5 and 15. The central 4 core members must be in post or the u3a cannot continue. These 4 posts are: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. In addition, the u3a can add additional members, usually to undertake particular duties. In most u3as these might cover such roles as an IT/Website Manager, Group Co-ordinator, Membership Secretary, Publicity Officer.

Currently we have 7 members of the Swindon u3a on the Committee. As we have great difficulty finding volunteers, it is necessary for some of our Committee members to carry out more than one role.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Chair: | Gill Brain (also chairs the <i>Events Team</i> and <i>Publicity Team</i>) |
| Vice-Chair: | Linda Young (also <i>Group Co-ordinator</i> + chairs the <i>Cost Committee</i>) |
| Treasurer: | Andrew Hancox (chairs the <i>Treasury Team</i>) |
| Secretary (Acting): | Chris Ockwell (also manages our <i>venues</i>) |
| IT/Web Manager: | David Todd (Chairs the <i>IT Team</i>) |
| Membership Secretary: | Jill Kelly (supports <i>new members</i> and <i>Focus Groups</i>) |
| Office Manager: | Sylvia Alexander (manages the <i>Office Team</i>) |

N.B. As in every Newsletter I will send out a plea for more people to come forward to help on the Committee. It can be interesting, rewarding, even FUN to be on the Committee. Current members are very overstretched trying to fulfil multiple roles. We have a particular need currently for a **Secretary**. If you think you might be able to help us please get in touch with me or any Committee member.

Gill Brain

Assets Manager – Could this be YOU?

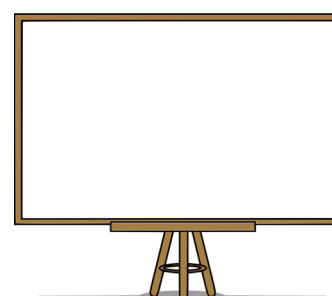
Yes, we have assets! In a large cupboard, deep in the Office at Gorse Hill, there lies a veritable treasure trove of items which belong to Swindon u3a and can be borrowed by members/groups for u3a use. They include amplifiers, projectors, flipcharts, laptops, extension leads, screens, speakers, card cutters and much more.

Our Assets Manager is Tony Hill, who possibly holds the record as the longest card-holding member of Swindon u3a. Tony has done a magnificent job – some of you may have seen him helping to set up the amplification system at our bigger meetings such as the AGM. He will be leaving a pretty ship-shape system for his successor. He is now getting ready to hang up his boots and hand over the job to someone else. Could this be you?

Before you dismiss the idea – Tony is happy to have you as an “apprentice” to learn the system alongside him until you are comfortable with going solo. Much of the job is already done but needs maintenance e.g. keeping the register of assets up to date, checking the booking in and booking out of items, labelling and storage of new assets, safe keeping of instructions and checking that electrical items are regularly PAT tested.

Can you spare a few hours to help us with this? You would be a member of the Office Team and always have someone to turn to for advice. To explore this further get in touch with me or the Office Manager (*Sylvia Alexander*) by clicking or tapping on one of our names who can then introduce you to Tony and the wonders of asset management.

Gill Brain





Barn Dancing

Monday 22nd May 2023 2.00 pm - 3.45 pm

at Liden Community Centre, Barrington Close, Swindon SN3 6HF

Caller: Mike Courthold

After 3 years absence, we will be holding a barn dance on Monday 22nd May. Mike will kindly call again from his extensive record collection. The purpose is to establish interest in starting a barn dancing group from September 2023.

All dancers welcome, plus callers and potential callers. You do not need a partner. Wear flat shoes or trainers and bring water. Refreshments will be provided. Please arrive by 1.45 pm to register with your membership number.

Please advise by 12th May if you can join us. You can do this by clicking on Rosie's name or by clicking on this link to book. [Book for Barn Dance](#)

Rosie Jarvis

Folk Singers

Just thought other u3a members might like to see what the Folk Singers get up to at their fortnightly meetings. This picture shows one of the organizers getting into the spirit of the theme, celebrating Robbie Burns birthday when we sung many, many songs from Scotland. We do not always have themes but it does cause us to investigate different songs and the history which can run through the song. We do have a couple of spaces for new members if anyone is interested. Please contact Rosemary by clicking or tapping on her name.

Rosemary Prior



Jazz Appreciation Group

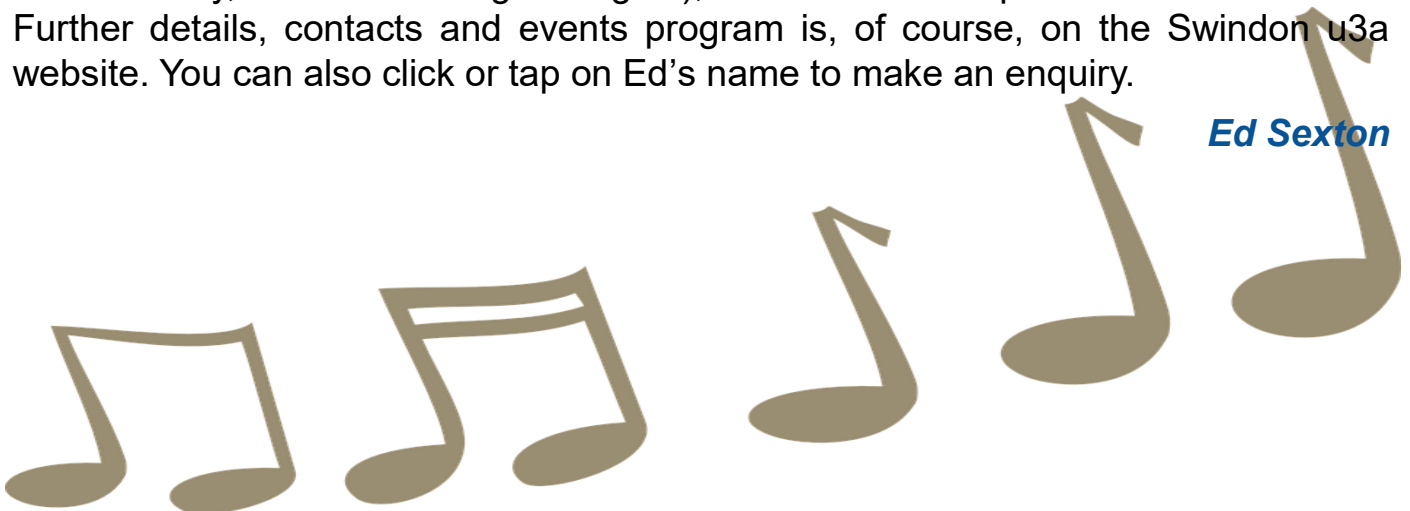
Following the loss of our entire leadership team, and their jazz knowledge, during the Covid period (all to non-Covid related illnesses) Alan Rothwell and Ed Sexton (myself), with much appreciated help from David Day, Len Morphey (Swindon 105.5's 'Jazz Break' DJ) and Colin Curtis, picked up the baton and are (we hope) running well with it.

We have, in the last few months, had presentations on the topics of 'Fusion Jazz', reviews of members' visits to New Orleans and (less exotic but fun nonetheless) the Bude Jazz Festival, had a fun Christmas jazz quiz, and enjoyed live jazz from Len's Delta West Sax Quartet.

Forthcoming presentation topics include: Miles Davis, Scott Joplin, Pat Metheny, Bonnie Raitt and a 'live' workshop on 'jazz chords on the guitar'. So, a good mix of subjects around jazz and blues.

The group meets every 4th Friday of the month (except December and July when it's 3rd Friday, and no meeting in August), between 2 and 4pm at the Liden centre. Further details, contacts and events program is, of course, on the Swindon u3a website. You can also click or tap on Ed's name to make an enquiry.

Ed Sexton





Travel group G holiday to Glasgow

03/09/23 to 09/09/23

Cost £690 per person single supplement £120: Entrance fees not included.

Staying at Courtyard by Marriott, Glasgow Airport.

3/09/23 Day 1 Travel to Glasgow with a stop at Leven Hall.

4/09/23 Day 2 Robbie Burns birthplace and museum then Culzean Castle, both Scottish National Trust, possible coastal drive.

5/09/23 Day 3 Blue badge guide on coach tour Glasgow a.m. with free time p.m. making own way back to hotel. Driver's half day off.

6/09/23 Day 4 Local coach to take us to transport museums on riverside free entrance. Our driver will pick us up after lunch, then onto the Falkirk Wheel with boat trip and the Kelpies.

7/09/23 Day 5 Hill house S.N.T., then to Loch Lomond with optional boat trip, possibility of a Distillery visit.

8/09/23 Day 6 Kelvingrove Museum free and Botanic gardens.

9/09/23 Day 7 We wind our way home via Jodrell Bank.

Deposit by March 20th and balance due by July 10th

For booking form and further details contact [Sue York](#) by clicking or tapping on her name.

Bookworms Group

The Bookworms Group is looking for a new member. At the moment we have only one man in the group and he would appreciate some company. We read a wide variety of books and the library mostly provides them for us.

We meet on the last Friday of every month at the Lawns Community Centre in the mornings.

Please contact Wendy Hall, the Joint Group Organiser by clicking or tapping on her name if you are interested in joining us.

Wendy Hall

Joint Bookworms Organiser



Chair Yoga

u3a run a Chair Yoga class every Wednesday morning during term times at the StoweAway Centre, East Wichel Community Centre, Wichelstowe.

Chair Yoga Leader required, alternating Wednesday mornings 10.15 - 11.15, at The StoweAway, Wichelstowe.

We are now looking for someone to join us in leading our sessions once a fortnight although u3a philosophy is to encourage active contribution from all members to the session.

Yoga improves health, strength and flexibility and gives a sense of calmness. Most of our poses are carried out seated.

If you think you might be interested please contact Julie Pullen, Group Organiser by clicking or tapping on her name.

Julie Pullen

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 | Sharon Finch | dpo@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 | Chris Ockwell | secretary@swindonu3a.org.uk |
| Speaker organiser (Monthly Meetings) | Sue Cook | speaker.organiser@swindonu3a.org.uk |
| Treasurer | Andrew Hancox | treasurer@swindonu3a.org.uk |
| Treasury Team for | | treasuryteam@swindonu3a.org.uk |
| Accommodation | | |
| Banking | | |
| Visits | | |
| Web Manager | Dave Todd | |

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
19th March

Items for the **May** Newsletter must be received by
18th 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.