

u3a Newsletter July 2026

Swindon



**Welcome to our July newsletter keeping you connected
with the Swindon u3a community**

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Chair's Message

Isn't it hot?

Perhaps not by the time you're reading this.

As I write, though, I'm sitting through another spell of weather where the temperature has climbed above 30°C. Yet I know from experience that by the time you read this newsletter, the heatwave will probably have become just another memory. We may even be wondering if that was all the summer we're going to get!

It's a curious thing, that in my memory, the summers of my childhood were always endless days of sunshine. Then I look through old photographs and discover grey skies, and a disturbing number of raincoats and jumpers. Our memories have a remarkable way of polishing the past.

Perhaps we do the same with getting older, but in reverse. For years I thought of growing old as something to be endured rather than enjoyed. But Robert Browning wrote, *"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be,"* and I always assumed he was being hopelessly optimistic. Now, maybe I'm beginning to get it.

I still smile at those T-shirts that say, *"It's strange being the same age as old people"*, and there's more truth in them than I care to admit. But one of the unexpected pleasures of getting older is discovering just how much I did in fact learn without really noticing.

Of course, health can sometimes make life more difficult, and none of us can ignore that. But I wonder whether the greatest limitation is my own assumption that it's too late to try something new. Maybe you've always had a passion for tending roses and that's what you really enjoy now, but I'm discovering so many things I didn't know I didn't know about. And I feel very blessed that together, we have a great opportunity to explore some of them.

And one of the most enjoyable things about u3a for me is recognising that we all have something to offer. Whether it's a lifelong passion for walking, an enthusiasm for history, a practical skill, or simply a willingness to listen and encourage others, every gift becomes more valuable when it's shared.

So, as this latest heatwave fades into memory and we wonder what the weather will do next, perhaps it's worth looking through the list of groups and activities once again. And as you look to the autumn coming round the corner, you may find something you've always wanted to try - or discover that something you've known for years is exactly what someone else has been hoping to learn.

After all, perhaps Browning was right, maybe the best really is yet to be.

Pete Cook

Swindon u3a News

OPEN DAY



2026

Our Open Day is on Saturday 29th August.

It is the most important single event in our u3a year. Thank you to all those groups who have signed up to have a table this year but I still have less than half of our groups who have responded. The date may seem a long way off, 9 weeks away, but there is a lot of organisation involved and it would be good to know how many groups to plan for.

Please don't hold back because your groups are full or because the Group Organiser can't be there. We can always create waiting lists (which may become new groups) and any member of your group will be able to welcome a visitor to your table and explain what the group does.

Our Open Day is as much about celebration as about recruitment. We want people to know about our wonderful organisation and the amazing number of activities we have on offer. We also want to meet and say hello to members we don't see very often. Most of all we want to celebrate and be proud of the work we do in bringing people together, learning new skills and enjoying life in later years.

To book a table please contact me (Gill Brain) on: publicity@swindonu3a.org.uk or madelinegillianbrain@yahoo.com

Monthly Meetings

Monthly Meeting Report – June

For our final meeting of the term, Ann and John Ford, who were dressed from the era, entertained us with Morris Minors in the Media, covering a period of 25 years when they provided Morris Minors and other classic cars to the film, TV and publishing industries.

Prior to the second World War, cars were very utilitarian. After the war, William Morris wanted to celebrate with a brand-new design. He dismissed the early sketches by Sir Alec Issigonis as looking like 'a jelly mould' but after some tweaks the car was launched at the 1948 Earls Court Motor Show with saloon and convertible versions. Sales were boosted by the GPO purchasing vans and the Police using the Morris Minor as their Panda cars.

By 1960, one million sales had been achieved and to celebrate, Morris produced 350 special edition versions in a distinctive lilac colour displaying 1,000,000 badges instead of the standard 1000. In 1989 John fulfilled a dream of buying one to add to his collection of Morris Minors and while at a classic car rally, was approached by an agent asking if he was interested in hiring them out for film work.

Their first film was **Shadowlands** starring Anthony Hopkins. With additional padding, John became the actor's double when driving the car.

Next came **The Borrowers**, produced by Planet Hollywood, which needed a fleet of 32 cars, including a stretch limo version, which was eventually created by modifying a Morris Oxford.

Despite being invited to pre-production tests for **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone**, as we all know, it was a Ford Anglia that was finally chosen.

Ann and John have been involved in TV programmes such as **London's Burning** (with a Morris Traveller), the **Antiques Roadshow** when Ann drove Fiona Bruce around Oxford in a Morris Minor convertible, and studio work with Jeremy Clarkson and Joanna Lumley. Commercials have included one starring John Cleese and one that featured a live tiger standing on the car roof!

Since giving up film work, Ann and John have provided cars for some unusual weddings and charity events and in 2006 were honoured to represent the year 1958 by driving a Morris Minor along The Mall as part of the 80th birthday parade for Queen Elizabeth.



Upcoming events

Please note there will be no Monthly Meetings in July and August.

The programme will recommence on **Monday 14 September** at 2.00 pm when we will be hearing from Paul Mumford, a Director of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, on the history of the canal and the current work being undertaken regarding its restoration. He will also be sharing the Trust's plans for the future.

Book your place

If you plan to attend, 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. Telephoning 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 let the people on the welcome desk know, so that you can be introduced to the u3a Volunteers Team.

1. Go to the website www.swindonu3a.org.uk (just log in and click on u3a-wide events).
or
2. Telephone the office on **07345 162117 or 07823 722812**.

Group News

RWB U3A Scrabble Group - New Members Welcome

Love words? Enjoy a friendly challenge? Come and join our warm, relaxed Scrabble group.

All abilities welcome — beginners to seasoned players

- * Gentle, friendly games
- * Chat, and plenty of laughs
- * No pressure, just enjoyment

When: On the first Monday of every month, 2–4pm

Where: Royal Wootton Bassett Council Offices, Community Room 2.

There is a small cost for hiring the venue.

Come along and try a game — you'll be warmly welcomed. For details: Please contact John at eastleaze@aol.com or 07831858381

Photos Please!

“A picture paints a thousand words”. The Publicity Team are refreshing our Exhibition stands ready for the summer publicity events. We need some group photos – preferably showing our members having a fun time enjoying their various activities! Have you got any or could you take any in the next few weeks?

Please ensure that all those shown in the photos are happy to have the photo shared on our stands. If you have any or can take any at your forthcoming meetings, please send to me. We would love to use them publicity@swindonu3a.org.uk or madelinegillianbrain@yahoo.com

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 are only £4.50, free tea and coffee is available just before hand in the foyer. Performances begin at about 11.30am.

Here’s what’s coming in the next few months:

At Cineworld Shaw Ridge in July there are three weeks of Cine Senior showings:

- Wednesday 1st July “**Project Hail Mary**”, a science fiction movie
- Wednesday 8th July “**The Magic Faraway Tree**” a family movie
- Wednesday 15th July “**Fuze**” a British crime thriller.

We will be holding a u3a publicity stall at this showing, so come along and say hello. After that, the school holidays are underway, so no Cine Seniors until September. If you like the look of any of those films, why not come along? Showings start at 11.30 and include tea or coffee and biscuits, all for £4.50.

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.

5	+ 28	× 7	- 39	50% of it	1/3 of it	+4	Square root of it	×12	=
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Anagrams

Unscramble the letters to identify two UK actors and two UK musicians born in July:

- Sir Twerp Attack – Shakespeare meets Star Trek!
- Mr Inner Heel – think Queen!

- I Ban Army – think Queen!
- Shake Tub – “I’m Cathy, I’ve come home.”

History in July

What year was the inaugural lawn tennis tournament played at Wimbledon?

1877	1875	1879
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Which King died on his journey to Scotland to fight Robert the Bruce?

Edward II	Edward I	Henry III
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In what year did parliament pass the law banning the sale of alcohol to under 18s in the UK?

1920	1922	1923
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Missing Vowels

If you’re missing RIAT this year, find the missing vowels to complete an aeroplane and manufacturer.

Example: CNC RD = CONCORDE

- SP RMR NSP TFR
- WRG HTF LYR
- AV RLN CSTR
- HW KRH RR CN
- AV RVL CNB MBR
- HW KRS DD LYHR RR
- DHVL LNDC MET

Who spied it?

Which author said “I was a spy because I was a writer, and I was a writer because I was a spy.”

Graham Greene	John Le Carre	Ian Fleming
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Which actor said: “I wasn’t a spy. I’d have been spotted in five seconds. Yes, I was in intelligence but that covered a multitude of things.”

Alec Guinness	Christopher Lee	Peter Cushing
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Which James Bond actor said: “The Bond situations to me are so ridiculous, so outrageous. I mean, this man is supposed to be a spy, and yet everyone knows he’s a spy.”

Daniel Craig	Roger Moore	Sean Connery
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Word of the Month

If you see an unusual word, please do share it and we will feature it.

Lethologica - the temporary frustrating inability to remember a specific name or word. “*I know it, it’s on the tip of my tongue*”.



Life in a poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

Another wonderful poem by Seamus Heaney for you this month.

The long school summer holidays are nearly upon us and I wonder, if like me (defying warnings from parents!!) you ever ventured up on to the railway embankment with your friends to experience the thrill of the trains passing by?

In the "**The Railway Children**", Heaney explores themes of childhood imagination and the innocence of youth. The poem focuses on childhood interactions with the railway and the imaginative world they create around it.

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

When we climbed the slopes of the cutting
We were eye-level with the white cups
Of the telegraph poles and the sizzling wires.

Like lovely freehand they curved for miles
East and miles west beyond us, sagging
Under their burden of swallows.

We were small and thought we knew nothing
Worth knowing. We thought words travelled the wires
In the shiny pouches of raindrops,

Each one seeded full with the light
Of the sky, the gleam of the lines, and ourselves
So infinitesimally scaled

We could stream through the eye of a needle.



Swindon u3a Contacts

Chair	Pete Cook	chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
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Office

Swindon u3a Office, Gorse Hill Community Centre, Chapel Street, Swindon, SN2 8DA
(entry is by the middle door on the right-hand side of the building)

The u3a office is currently closed for JULY & will re-open middle of August (date TBC - on a Monday from 10am to 12pm) ready for your 2026/2027 payments.

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 **August** newsletter is **August 28th**.

QUIZ ANSWERS

Mental maths

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Anagrams:

- Shakespeare and Star Trek actor Patrick Stewart was born 13 July 1940.
- Helen Mirren, who has played Queen Elizabeth II on film and stage, was born 26 July 1945.
- Queen guitarist and astrophysicist Brian May was born 19 July 1947.
- Songwriter and singer Kate Bush, whose debut single Wuthering Heights went to number 1 in the charts in 1978, was born 30 July 1958.

History in July

- The inaugural lawn tennis tournament was played on top of the croquet lawns at Wimbledon on 9 July 1877; Spencer W Gore won the men's singles title.

- Edward I, died on 7 July 1307 on his way to Scotland to fight Robert the Bruce.
- 13 July 1923 saw the bill passed to prevent alcohol being sold to under 18s in the UK.

Missing Vowels

- SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE
- WRIGHT FLYER
- AVRO LANCASTER
- HAWKER HURRICANE
- AVRO VULCAN BOMBER
- HAWKER SIDDELEY HARRIER
- DE HAVILLAND COMET

Who Spied It?

- Graham Greene
- Roger Moore
- Christopher Lee