

u3a Newsletter Swindon **March 2026**



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

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Our New Chair

A year ago, I hadn't even heard of U3A and then...

My name is Peter Cook, and I am the acting Chair of Swindon U3A. What does that mean? Good question, I'm finding out the answer to that.

When we moved to Swindon (from Bristol) and I discovered U3A I was amazed by several things – the amazing diversity of the activities available, and the commitment of those who offer their time so freely as they share their insight and passion.

Unlike a normal university, there isn't the divide between experts who know, and the rest who listen. Most of the people who make this magic happen are ordinary people, made special because they are willing to have a go. When I heard of the need that U3A had for a Chair, I asked what that job involved. I'm still not completely sure, but it involves chairing meetings of the management committee, and I have experience of that as a newly retired Baptist minister, and before that as a teacher. So I felt that here was somewhere where maybe I could help.

I hope to meet many of you face-to-face, because I've already discovered so many interesting people, with wonderful stories to share.

I believe U3A is a great place to make new friends, but also a place where we can continue our "life journey" of learning and sharing who we are. Long may it continue.

U3a National News

u3a Summer Festival 2026

Wed 1st July to Fri 3rd July at the University of York



Did you know that there is a national u3a Summer Festival held each year on the beautiful campus of the University of York? Any u3a member can join in and there are a host of activities and opportunities to share your skills or to try out something new. You can buy a day ticket (£18) or a ticket for the whole 3-day event (£50). En suite accommodation is available to book on the University campus if you wish. You can be as active or passive as you want. Activities cover a host of musical events, sports and exercise, talks and walks, workshops and hands-on sessions. If you are interested in going and would like to know who else is going or make joint arrangements for travel etc. contact our Vice-Chair on: susanewigmorebond@gmail.com
Want to find out more details? go on -line to: u3a.org.uk/festival2026

Swindon u3a News



Volunteers' Meeting

Swindon u3a are holding a **Volunteers' Meeting** on **Sat 18th April from 10am to 12pm** in the **Alexandra Room, Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton.**

Swindon u3a relies on volunteers to make it function & without them, we wouldn't have this marvellous organisation.

Our volunteers work together in teams e.g. **Office Team, Finance Team, Publicity Team, Events Team, Group Buddy team**. You won't be working alone and it's also another great way of meeting new people, making friends and working together.

We do hope that you can join us and **if so, please contact me via the email below**, to help us with catering, numbers etc.

Rose Clarke
Membership Liaison
membership@swindonu3a.org.uk



Opportunities to help and support your u3a

Our Interest and Activity Groups are at the heart of our u3a but there are also a number of tasks that are necessary to support the smooth running of our organisation and to ensure we operate efficiently and legally. No-one is paid to do these tasks – we rely completely on members being prepared to volunteer to help. In most cases volunteers share these tasks in teams so a bonus to being a volunteer is that as well as giving a helping hand you make extra friendships too!

At the moment we need the following volunteers

General Secretary – this role is a committee role and involves

- helping the Committee in overseeing proper governance of our u3a
- Working with the Committee to a timetable of regular review and updating of policies and procedures
- Liaising, where necessary with the National u3a (The Third Age Trust) and with the Charity Commission
- Attending monthly Committee meetings.

If you would like to know more details please contact our present General Secretary, Monica King (her email is at the end of this Newsletter). Monica has to step down as General Secretary in July as her term of office will end.

IT and Website Support

Could you join the team that helps to keep our website up and running smoothly. If you think you could help, contact our IT Support person – Dave Todd who can fill you in with further details. Dave's contact details are at the end of this Newsletter.

Group Buddy

Group buddies work with the Group Coordinator, Linda Young, to support Group Organisers helping to communicate information and issues which may arise. Further details from Linda Young whose email is at the end of this Newsletter.

SWINDON U3A FACEBOOK CHAT

Do you use Facebook? If yes, are you a member of u3a chat? If not, go to our website and join up using easy steps. If you are already a member, remember that you can post on the chat group about anything you think our members would find interesting, including news from the groups you belong to. What have you been doing lately?

Monthly Meetings

Monthly Meeting Report – February 2026

Jeff Evans made a welcome return for our February meeting – this time to talk about ‘Pop on the Box’ and the history of pop music on television over the past eight decades. Living up to the BBC’s mission to ‘inform, educate and entertain’, Jeff did all three.

By the mid 1950’s rock and roll had arrived from America, but television was still showing the middle of the road crooners. All this changed in 1957 with the launch of Six-Five Special on a Saturday evening. Beginning as a youth magazine programme, under the influence of a young producer, Jack Good, it became a show with more music and film clips to inject some glamour, and even encouraged the audience to dance close to the cameras.

Wanting to produce a pure rock and roll show, in 1958 Jack moved to ITV to make Oh Boy! Airing at 6.00 pm on a Saturday, this got the audience back from the BBC and showcased stars such as Cliff Richard, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury. After just one successful year, the programme ended and Jack went on to produce Boy Meets Girls and then Wham!! By 1960 the initial buzz had dissipated and Jack decided to move to Hollywood, having earned the title ‘the Godfather of pop music on television’.

Meanwhile, the BBC was still trying to compete and in 1959 moved Juke Box Jury to a Saturday evening slot. With host David Jacobs playing snippets of records, panellists such as Diana Dors and Charlie Drake would vote records a hit or a miss. This ran successfully until 1967. The BBC had got its audience back.

ITV’s response was to launch Thank Your Lucky Stars in 1961, hosted by Brian Matthew. Television became important to the success of many groups, including The Beatles. During the Winter of 1963, having recorded a slot with their new record Please Please Me the previous Sunday, this was broadcast the following Saturday evening when the population was snowed-in. It was their big break.

Then came programmes such as Ready Steady Go! in 1963, presented by Cathy McGowan and Keith Fordyce. Top of the Pops, focussing on the singles chart, was launched in 1964 and broadcast weekly for the next 42 years. Following the arrival of colour TV at the end of the 1960’s, the programme had up to 20 million viewers every week during the late 1970’s.

In 1971 The Old Grey Whistle Test began to focus on albums. Broadcast at the worst possible time of Tuesday at 11.00 pm on BBC2, it went from strength to strength by attracting unusual bands. Elton John and Queen appeared, but by the 1980's audiences fell away because there was much more music on television, plus a fourth channel.

In 1982 The Tube started, presented live by Jools Holland and Paula Yates, but lasted only 4 years. Other programmes lasted only a season or two until Later with Jools Holland came along, which is still running today. There is hardly any music on TV these days and certainly nothing on terrestrial channels during prime time – something Jeff thought was very sad given the success of music programmes in the past.

Upcoming events

Moonies, Movers and Shakers - Monday 9 March at 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre - Graham Carter and Noel Ponting

An illustrated talk about *Moonies, Movers and Shakers*, a book that tells some remarkable (but previously untold) stories of leading Wiltshiremen, aka 'Moonies' (not the controversial cult). When local historians Noel Ponting and Graham Carter looked into the association for Moonies in London, they made some surprising discoveries, revealing a fresh insight into social life in the early 20th century.

The work of Prospect Hospice - Monday 13 April at 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre - Graham Biggs, Volunteering Operations and Recruitment Officer

Since 1980, Prospect Hospice has been part of the local community in Swindon and North East Wiltshire, dedicating itself to providing end of life care to local people. It brings care, comfort and confidence around the clock, every day of the year. Prospect Hospice is a registered local charity and the local community raises millions each year to fund all the services it is able to offer patients and their families free of charge.

Book your place

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

Join the U3A Royal Wootton Bassett Scrabble Group

Love words? Enjoy a friendly challenge?

Looking to meet new people in a relaxed setting?

Come along to our **Scrabble Group**, where games are light-hearted, the atmosphere is warm, and laughter is guaranteed. Whether you're a seasoned player or completely new to the game, you'll find a welcoming table waiting for you.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Friendly, sociable games
- A gentle mental workout
- Plenty of chat and good humour
- No pressure — just enjoyment
- A great way to make new friends

All abilities welcome.

COME AND TRY A GAME!

Bring your curiosity, your love of language, and maybe even your favourite seven-letter word. You might be surprised how quickly you settle in.

We meet on the first Monday of each month at The Royal Wootton Bassett Council Offices Community Rooms, between 2pm - 4pm. All equipment provided.

For more information on this group please contact John(Group Organiser) at eastleaze@aol.com

Travel Group J

Visit to Shoemakers Museum & Clark's Shopping Village
Street Somerset
Thursday 2nd April 2026

Step into Shoemakers Museum, Somerset's newest family-friendly visitor attraction celebrating the Quakers, the shoemakers and stories behind Clarks shoes in the place where it all began in Street, Somerset.

Find out how a family brand became a global story. A remarkable journey with over 100,000 objects to explore from fossils to factory machines covering 200 years of shoemaking history.

Free time to explore Clark's Shopping Village and discover style and superb savings with up to 60% off a wide selection of designer goods.

Departure times and pick up points:

8.45am Crown Hotel Royal Wootton Bassett

9.00am Wroughton Ellendune Health Centre Car Park

9.15am Coate Water

4.00pm Departure for Swindon

Cost: £ 29.50 per person includes coach, entry to museum and gratuities.

All members and friends welcome.

Contact; Rita Kemble on 07730 399242 or Daphne Maxwell on 01793 637817

Travel Group G



Would you like a holiday In Llandudno in September? Last few places available!
Travel Group G are organising another holiday. You are most welcome to join us!

Llandudno with Swindon U3A 7 Days - Tue 1st - Mon 7th September 2026

Price: £795 per person sharing a double or twin room.

Attraction admissions to be confirmed nearer the date of travel.

We leave Swindon early, calling at Chester for lunch, then on to the Marine Hotel in Llandudno.

Wednesday 2nd September 2026 Today we visit Caernarfon Castle with the possibility of a guided tour. There will free time afterwards in the town before returning to the hotel.

Thursday 3rd September 2026 A Day on Anglesey starting with time at Plas Newydd, a National Trust property. We then move to another site on the island where there will be a choice of visiting the Halen Mon salt factory or the zoo.

Friday 4th September 2026 Driver's Day off so free time in Llandudno and local area. Nearer the time we will provide a list of possibilities.

Saturday 5th September 2026 A visit to Portmeirion village, the site of filming of the Prisoner. We hope to have time to call in at Betws-y-Coed on the way back.

Sunday 6th September 2026 Another National Trust property at Bodnant Gardens with time later on in Conwy to visit the town and the castle.

Monday 7th September 2026 Our return journey will take in Shrewsbury for lunch plus a comfort stop, arriving back in Swindon in the early evening.

Your hotel – Marine Hotel is perfectly positioned along Llandudno’s lovely long promenade, which is within walking distance to the sops. Great Orme. All bedrooms are with private facilities. Hotel has bar and lounge area.

Holiday Inclusions -Price includes 6 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast and evening meal as well as coach travel throughout.

Please do phone or email me if you would like more information!

To Book please contact Jane Caudwell on: Email: philipbaylay@virginmedia.com
Mobile: 07471202507 Deposit payment of £40 to Jane please by: 2nd March 2026 or as soon after as is possible. Balance by 22nd June 2026.
Cheques to be made payable to Swindon U3A.

There are a few double and twin rooms only available.

Wednesday Walkabout

We're a very friendly, small group & generally walk about 3-4 miles, at a medium pace. We meet up at various locations & mostly within 20 miles of Swindon on alternate Wednesday mornings. Meet up at 10.15 & walk starts at 10.30.

We have a good variety of walks which we generally all share in arranging/planning. Walking boots/shoes & good waterproofs are advisable & we also car share where possible. Lunch is either a pub or café & is planned into the walk at the end.

Please email the GO if interested in a taster session.

Rose Clarke **07836 200027** 27rjclarke@gmail.com

If you have any questions, then please let me know. Many thanks & kind regards.

Swindon u3a Climate Change Group News March 2026

Climate change is not going away soon. The rain continues, the flooding continues as the BBC coyly warns more flooding is on its way. In February we looked at housing, transport and the economy as major factors that require attention.

UK housing is some of the worst in Europe regarding energy efficiency, gas heating contributing large emissions of the carbon dioxide causing global warming. A major programme of insulation and draught proofing is needed as a start. For the housing crisis major council house building is needed to as near passivhaus standards as possible.

Public transport needs to be improved and fares lowered to reduce car use. The transition to electric vehicles has been slow and problematic. Aviation should be reduced and no more airport expansion.

The economy is dominated by huge corporations such as the fossil fuel companies that lobby government and finance certain “think tanks” which unduly influence governments. Unrestricted economic growth should be restricted as the planet has limited resources and cannot be plundered indefinitely. Only governments can counter the negative effect of corporate power and initiate mitigation and adaptation measures needed. They have money creation ability and can spend within the limits of the resources available and are not the same as an individual household that has to balance income and expenditure and pursue the negative policy of austerity and budget restrictions. Investment is needed now as delay will only be greater later as the crisis deepens.

For more information and if you would like to join the group contact Bill Hughes
Coordinator: email bill.hughes1@btinternet.com

Visit to Bletchley Park - Travel Group J

On 19th February, at 830am on a grey morning, a coach load of intrepid u3a members set off for a visit to Bletchley Park. Several Milton Keynes roundabouts later we arrived at this historic site. Originally, a beautiful Victorian mansion house, this is now surrounded by a group of huts and buildings exhibiting the various important activities which took place here during World War 2. Here we found areas with examples of wartime vehicles which transported top secret intelligence material, where the first Enigma ciphering machines were made, where the Bombe machines were developed and where multi-skilled task force of around 9,000 personnel worked day and night on codebreaking. The whole complex is enhanced by exhibition areas with videos, with artefacts and exhibitions and is brought up to date with an exhibition of how AI impacts our daily lives.

A café, seating areas and rest areas provide a welcome break and in the warmer months a walk around the grounds, the picnic area and the children’s play area would all enhance the great day out experience. Many thanks to Ken Ivie for organizing this fascinating visit.





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:

- 4th March The Running Man
- 11th March Wicked: For Good
- 19th March Fackham Hall
- 25th March Avatar: Fire and Ash

On 19th March there will be a u3a stand in the foyer, so come and chat to us!

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

7	×8	÷4	×10	2/7s of it	-21	+4	Square root of it	+196	=
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Anagrams

Find the March blooms:

- Occurs
- I am lace
- Miss Roper

Sport

Which horse holds the record for the most consecutive Cheltenham Gold Cup wins?

Golden Miller	Cottage Rake	Easter Hero
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Which 2 colours do you need to add to the following list to complete the Olympic rings:

Black	Red	Green
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Which country won the first FIFA World Cup?

Brazil	Germany	Uruguay
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What sport is played with stones and brooms?

Lacrosse	Curling	Ice hockey
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Art Appreciation

Who painted The Hay Wain?

John Constable	J M W Turner	William Blake
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Which French artist became a full-time artist after his stockbroker business was impacted by the Paris stock market crash of 1882?

Camille Pissarro	Pierre-Auguste Renoir	Paul Gauguin
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Which UK Prime Minister enjoyed painting as a hobby?

Margaret Thatcher	Winston Churchill	Harold Wilson
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Advert songs

Match the advert song to the brand

Song	Brand
I'd like to teach the world to sing	Allied Dunbar
Let's face the music and dance	Cadbury's
In the Air Tonight	Coca Cola

Who said it?

Which technology pioneer, business person and philanthropist said:

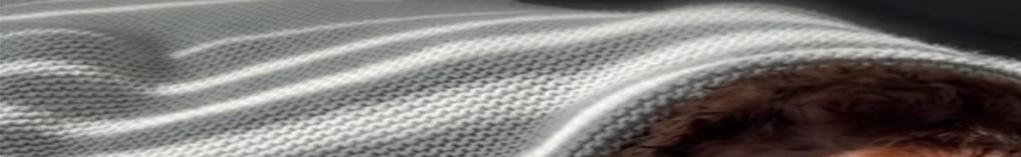
"We create our most lasting legacy not in what we leave behind but in the way we live."

Bill Gates	Dame Stephanie Shirley	Sir Tim Berners Lee
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Word of the Month

snerdle
Snerdle (SNUR-dl) verb
[English]

To wrap up cosily beneath the covers and hold off the day for a little longer; savoring warmth, comfort, and the slow moments before stepping into the world.



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



u3a Online Talks and Events - March 2026



Online Learning Events – free for u3a members

Events on Zoom sharing knowledge and skills

March 2026 Highlights

Exploring World Faiths: March

Monday 9 March at 10am

An *International Women's Day* event exploring the role and experiences of women across three different faith traditions.



London Thames bridges

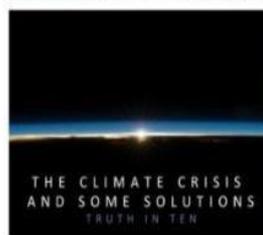
Tuesday 17 March at 2pm

Brian Cookson will talk us through the bridges in London, from Tower Bridge to Westminster Bridge, discussing their history and design.

The Truth in Ten: the climate crisis and some solutions

Friday 20 March at 2pm

In this talk with Brenda Ainsley, learn about local and global impacts of climate change, as well as what we can do to help create a better future for the planet.



Deafness and beyond: the tribulation and triumph of Ludwig van Beethoven

Thursday 26 March at 2pm

Chris Dowrick explores how Beethoven's distress was ultimately transformed into some of the most profound music ever written.

Book these and plenty more on [the events page of the u3a website](http://www.u3a.org.uk/events) (www.u3a.org.uk/events)
Queries to learning@u3a.org.uk



Life in a poem

Submitted by Lesley Basu

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, born in Portland, Maine in 1807, became the most popular American poet of the nineteenth century and, by the time of his death in 1882, he was a world-famous personality. Many of us will remember his work from our school days I'm sure. (*Who could forget the drumbeat of "The Song of Hiawatha"?!*) Longfellow was the first of a group of writers known as the "**Fireside Poets**," called such for their popularity with families all over the country who gathered by the fire in the evenings to read their work aloud. Longfellow published poetry over a forty-year period, and enjoyed public adulation in line with that of rock stars and celebrities today. I am sure you will recognise a much-quoted saying in this example of his work. (Little comfort to those living in flooded areas I know!!)



The Rainy Day

**The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.**

**My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.**

**Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.**

Swindon u3a Contacts

Chair	Pete Cook	chair@swindonu3a.org.uk
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Office General Enquiries	See below	

Office – office@swindonu3a.org.uk

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 open on Monday 10am to 12pm until March 2026.

Changes to our Office Opening Times

Please note that during April we will be opening the Office on three mornings a week as follows.

Monday 30th March

Wednesday 8th April

Friday 10th April

Monday 13th April

Friday 17th April

Monday 20th April

Friday 24th April if necessary

Monday 27th April then back to Mondays only.

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 April newsletter is March 31.

Quiz Answers

Mental maths

201

Anagrams:

- Crocus
- Camelia
- Primroses

Sport:

- Golden Miller holds the record for winning the Gold Cup.
- Blue and yellow are needed to make up the five Olympic rings
- Uruguay won the first FIFA world cup
- Curling

Art Appreciation

- John Constable painted The Hay Wain in 1821
- Paul Gauguin
- Winston Churchill

Advert songs

I'd like to teach the world to sing	Coca Cola
There may be trouble ahead	Allied Dunbar
In the Air Tonight	Cadbury's

Who said it?

Dame Stephanie Shirley, aka Steve Shirley.

Dame Stephanie founded the software company Freelance Programmers in 1959 with just £6 capital. She employed mostly women until the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act made it illegal. Her team programmed Concorde's black box among many other pioneering projects. She adopted the use of Steve Shirley to help her get ahead in the male dominated sector after realising that businesses did not respond to her letters of introduction because she was a woman.