



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

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Happy New Year

The beginning of the new year seems like a good time to reflect on our organisation. Many of us joined our u3a because we were interested in taking part in a particular activity and we threw ourselves wholeheartedly into enjoying that without really stopping to think about the organisation as a whole. So here's some potted information for you to ponder with your left-over Christmas pudding and cold turkey!

Did you know?.....

- u3a in the UK was **created in 1982** based on the idea of extending learning in its widest sense to the older generation - allowing those of the 'third age' to continue learning, developing skills, and sharing their accumulated knowledge with others.
- Originally entitled the '**University of the Third Age**', the word 'university' was being used in its original sense of 'for everyone' studying and learning together. But, a review of the title was thought to be off-putting, and sounded too formal for many older people and it is no longer used.
- The fundamental concept was that individual u3as were to be run **by** their members **for** their members. There would be no paid teachers. Older folk had a lifetime of experience, knowledge and skills and would learn together and from each other. **Teachers would be learners and learners would be teachers.**
- Each u3a is an independent charity with its own Board of Trustees answerable to the Charity Commission.
- However, there is a **national body** which supports, advises and offers services to individual u3as. For example, all u3as are covered by insurance from the national office. It also offers legal advice, on-line learning (see our web-site for details), branded goods such as T-shirts, diaries, lanyards, Subject Advisors to offer ideas and advice to Group Organisers, an annual week's u3a festival, training sessions, a quarterly magazine. Every u3a pays the national body a capitation fee per member (currently £4.00) to pay for the national services.
- There is also a voluntary **regional network** so that u3as in a particular region can get share ideas, activities and support each other. Because of its geographical position Swindon u3a actually belongs to the South West Network and the South East Network. See the advert below for a new SW Regional person if you are interested in getting involved.
- Every u3a is run by **volunteers** – no-one is paid. Here in Swindon u3a we have a wonderful group of volunteers such as our Committee, Office Team, Finance Team, Events Team, Publicity Team, IT team and a host of other tasks. Our Tea Team can be seen providing refreshments at all our events. The bottom line is 'no volunteers, no u3a'! ***Do think of volunteering.***
- Across the UK there are now over **1,000 local u3as and 400,000 u3a members in the UK. Swindon u3a is one of the largest u3as with about 120 interest groups and 1600 members.**

Current Vacancies - Regional

At the end of March 2026 there will be 1 vacancy for the South West Region on the Council, as Susan Parkers term of office has come to an end.

The dates for the election process will be as follows for the vacancy, and the elected candidate will become Council Representatives from the 1 April 2026 and join us for their first meeting on the 23 April 2026.

- 8 January 2026 - Nominations open
- 3 February 2026 - Nominations Closing
- 17 February - Elections Open
- w/c 2 March (TBC) - Hustings
- 24 March - Elections Closing
- 1 April - Newly elected Council Representatives start in post
- 23 April - First in person Council Meeting in London

In the new year there will be a link on the u3a website to where the information will be available.

Free digital skills training with AbilityNet.

AbilityNet charity's friendly team runs free digital training sessions to boost your skills with mobile phones, laptops, computers and tablets. All trainers are trusted and security-checked, training can be in groups or individual sessions and tailored to your needs. The charity also has a network of 450+ Tech Volunteers on hand to support with extra sessions and advice. For more information, visit abilitynet.org.uk/BTDigitalSkills or call 0300 180 0028.

Monthly Meetings

Report of Monthly Meeting – Christmas Party

Our party on 8 December got us into the festive spirit with another fun Christmas quiz from Chris Brooks, a picture quiz to test our knowledge of Christmas songs, Christmas bingo, a reading by members of A A Milne's 'King John's Christmas' poem plus time to socialise over tea and cake.

Thanks go to Gill Brain for arranging another fun party, to Ian Hartley for once again baking some delicious cakes, and to Monica Brian and her team for all the teas and coffees they have served us during the year.

The 2026 programme of Monthly Meetings will commence on Monday 12 January and I look forward to seeing you then.

Sue Cook

Upcoming events

Light in the Darkest Hour - Dunkirk's Little Ships Paul Barnett, Maritime Historian, Monday 12 January 2026, 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre. Set amidst the carnage of defeat, a flotilla of hope sets sail to assist in an Army's determined escape.

Pop on the Box - A History of Pop Music on British Television Jeff Evans Monday 9 February 2026, 2.00 pm at Ellendune Community Centre. Following Jeff's entertaining talk on the history of children's TV, he will be making a return visit. Freelance journalist and television historian Jeff Evans, author of *Rock & Pop on British TV* (Omnibus Press), tells the intriguing story of 60 years of music on television in this fully illustrated talk, beginning in the 1950s with shows such as *Six-Five Special* and *Oh Boy!* and continuing through the decades with programmes including *Juke Box Jury*, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, *Ready, Steady, Go!*, *Top of the Pops* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, as well as a number of programmes that you may just have forgotten. Expect lots of warm memories and more than a few surprises. And if you have any questions, just fire away!

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

Stretch and Balance group

The Thursday morning Stretch & Balance group, meeting at Lawn Community Centre each week from 9.30am to 10.30am, currently has five vacancies !!!

This is a Ladies-only group, and we do not get down onto the floor 🤸 - most of us would struggle to get up again !!!! However, we do work quite hard, and the class varies in content. We each only do what is **right for us** - it is definitely NOT competitive !! We're a friendly bunch, please email for any further information. (mrslm@aol.com)

Climate Change Group

Spring Term 2026 Programme

With extreme weather events continuing to increase in the UK and worldwide, it is no longer possible to ignore or downplay, as our mass media and authorities are doing, the gravity of the climate and natural world crisis. This situation was highlighted by a top-level conference held by the National Emergency Briefing on 27 November 2025 at which 150 MPs attended at Westminster. Unfortunately, our two Swindon MPs could not attend. The aim of the National Emergency Briefing organisation is to persuade government to take emergency action and to create a societal tipping point towards genuine emergency action on the climate and nature crisis.

The recent COP 30 UN climate conference held in Brazil was a disappointment despite wide international goodwill shown by most nations, key players such as the US and China did not attend.

To their credit Keir Starmer and Ed Milliband did. However, despite the high hopes raised in the UN Paris Climate Agreement in 2015 to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, these are still rising and we are getting nearer the critical 2c rise in temperatures from pre-industrial levels. COP 30 has still not made any guarantees for the bold mitigation and adaptation measures needed.

Swindon u3a Climate Change Group will holding 5 sessions on these critical aspects next term:

1. Food Security
2. Energy/power Supply
3. Transport
4. Housing
5. Economy, Finance (how are we going to pay for it?) Politics

All u3a members welcome. The meetings will be held at the Friends Meeting House 79 Eastcott Hill Swindon SN1 3JF.

Meetings will be held from 10.30 am to 12 noon on the following dates:

Tuesdays January 13th and 20th. Tuesdays February 3rd, 10th and 17th

Contact Bill Hughes Coordinator email bill.hughes1@btinternet.com or text 07933157419

The Short Mat Bowls group

The Short Mat Bowls Group certainly know how to enjoy themselves on and off the mat! Here they are having their Christmas dinner together on page 6.



U3a Travel group G

enjoying our Christmas lunch at the Blunsdon House Hotel. The carvery meal was scrummy. We thought Santa had come early when we first saw the sac! It's a posh rubbish sac!



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:

7th Jan I Swear
14th Jan Regretting You
21st Jan Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere
28th Jan Good Fortune

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

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----|--------|
| 26 | ÷ 13 | × 15 | 10% of it | + 57 | 2/3 of it | + 64 | ÷ 4 | Answer |
|----|------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----|--------|

Anagrams

Work out the January events from the following:

- Bright nuns
- Hype pain
- Pay nephew Ray

Who Said it?

Which of the following said: "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important things is not to stop questioning."

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Mother Theresa | Albert Einstein | Nelson Mandela |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|

January music

Which of the following groups sang January in 1975?

| | | |
|-------|-----|-------|
| Pilot | Mud | T-Rex |
|-------|-----|-------|

Along with January which month featured in a song by Bing Crosby in 1934 for the film Here is my Heart?

| | | |
|--------|-----------|------|
| August | September | June |
|--------|-----------|------|

What was the title of a song by David Gray released on his Lost Songs 95-98 collection of B-sides?

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| January Blues | Down and out in January | January Rain |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|

Comic catchphrases and famous lines

Which comedian had a character who said: "Ooh you are awful, but I like you"?

| | | |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
| Dick Emery | Stanley Baxter | Larry Grayson |
|------------|----------------|---------------|

In which comedy series did a character always have a "cunning plan"?

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| The Good Life | Black Adder | Rising Damp |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|

In which 1980's movie did we hear the famous line: "I'll have what she's having"?

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------|----------|
| Ghostbusters | When Harry Met Sally | Airplane |
|--------------|----------------------|----------|

General Knowledge

Which rock group was the first to play live at the proms on 13 August 1970?

| | | |
|-------|--------------|-------------|
| Cream | Soft Machine | Deep Purple |
|-------|--------------|-------------|

On January 10 1863 in which city did the world's first underground railway open?

| | | |
|-------|--------|--------|
| Paris | Russia | London |
|-------|--------|--------|

What was the name of Popeye's long term girlfriend?

| | | |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| Rosehip | Olive Oyl | Betty Boop |
|---------|-----------|------------|

Word of the Month

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

Kakistocracy - a government that is ruled by the least suitable, able or experienced people in a state or country. Do you think you might be likely to use that word in the near future?

Life in a poem

I read this at our last Poetry Appreciation meeting - Just right for the new year! (Gill Brain)



Ring Out Wild Bells

Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be

Swindon u3a Contacts

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

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 February newsletter is 19 January 2026.

Quiz Answers

Quiz Answers:

Mental maths

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Anagrams:

Burns night

Epiphany

Happy New Year

Who Said It?

Albert Einstein

January Music

Pilot

June

January Raid

Comic catchphrases and famous lines

Dick Emery

Black Adder

When Harry Met Sally

General Knowledge

Soft Machine

London

Olive Oyl