

November 2023



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From the Chair

We are getting well and truly into festive mode now – Halloween, Guy Fawkes Night, and then inevitably Christmas. There is no escaping it so we might as well give in and enjoy it.

I hope there is no burning connection but soon after Bonfire Night we have one of the most important events of our u3a year –



Swindon u3a AGM.

Monday 13th November 2.00pm at Ellendune Community Centre

I fully understand that this doesn't fill you with the excitement of a jolly knees up but we really do need you to be there. U3a is a member-led organisation and it is important that your Committee keep you up to date and give you key information about activities over the last year. It is a legal requirement that we have an AGM and that we have a quorum of members there, but just as critical is the importance of good communication within our organisation. So please, please make every effort to attend.

After the excitement of Open Day and welcoming new members into our activity groups, October has been a calmer month of getting back into the social routine. New members continue to join however, and as Jill Kelly reports below we have had 190 new members join since the beginning of Registration in August. During the month we also held another successful Monthly meeting in which members were encouraged to reconsider the issues of 'Fat' and a special meeting for our wonderful Volunteers – both current and prospective ones.

The Third Age Trust, our umbrella organisation for all u3as in the country, held its own AGM this month. It is good to remind ourselves sometimes that we are part of a national organisation made up of over 1,000 u3as with nearly 400,000 members.

I hope all our members, new and old 'Learn, Laugh and Live' in our Swindon u3a.

With warm wishes,

Gill

What's On

- **Swindon u3a AGM** 
13th November 2.00pm Ellendune Community Centre
- **New Members Meeting**
25th November 10.00 -12.00am Coleview Community Centre
- **Christmas Party The North Swindon Big Band are back!**
11th December 2.00- 4.30 pm Ellendune Community Centre

If you would like to attend any of the above sessions, please book in for them so that we can plan the refreshments, the number of chairs and meet health and safety regulations. You can book in by:

- *Visiting our website, logging in and going to the Events section.*
- *Phoning the Office to make your booking : 01793 614629*
- *Emailing office@swindonu3a.org.uk to make your booking*

Membership News

Facebook: u3a chat page

Our Facebook 'chat' page now has over 170 members and has been growing fast recently. It is a 'private' group, which is only open to Swindon u3a members. People are increasingly using it to share information and ask questions. Recent posts have included ideas for new groups, news from existing groups, plus shared thoughts and information likely to be of interest to members. Why not join the conversation? There is a link from the Homepage of the website.

New members

Although the new u3a year is now well underway, people have continued to join in recent weeks. Our members continue to come from a wide range of areas in and beyond the town. Over 190 have signed up since we opened for new registrations.

Our **New Members' Meeting** will be held on **Saturday 25th November** 10.00-12.00am at Coleview Community Centre SN3 4AS. This will be a

chance for new members to meet each other, ask questions, share ideas and learn more about Swindon u3a.

Invitations will be sent to all who have joined since last year's New Members' Meeting.

As with all events, please let us know if you intend to come so that we can plan accordingly. You can do this in any of the following ways:

- **Logging on** and signing in via the relevant link on the website Homepage
- contacting the office on [01793 614629](tel:01793614629)
- e-mailing : office@swindonu3a.org.uk

Jill Kelly Membership Liaison Secretary

Volunteers Event

Jill Kelly writes: Our Volunteers' Event brought together a good mix of 'old hands' along with some established members who are thinking of getting a little more involved and some recent joiners who came along to find out more.

We were able to celebrate and acknowledge all the work that goes on behind the scenes to enable our many activities to take place week in, week out.

Linda Young helped us all to further our understanding of the different teams and roles and how they all fit together.

A quick quiz helped us share our u3a knowledge about the history and workings of the u3a both locally and nationally. A 'just for fun' challenge to come up with an alternative slogan to: Learn, Laugh, Live brought some thoughtful and interesting responses. 'Enjoy, Engage, Enrich' proved a popular alternative!

Talking to each other about our roles, asking questions and making suggestions led to some interesting and useful discussions on a range of topics.

Thanks to everyone who helped and took part.

The need for more volunteers remains a constant and it was encouraging that a few people have started to step forward to help ensure a strong future for our u3a. Several gaps remain in key areas and we will be continuing to appeal for help.



VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Volunteer support for Swindon u3a urgently needed

Can you help us with joining one of our teams? Everything we do relies on members volunteering to help with jobs that need to be done, even if you can just spare a few hours from time to time please get in touch. You do not need to be an 'expert' – there is a lot of help and support. If you need further information or an informal chat, please make contact.



.Job Share is an option that we would love to try as it helps to lighten the load - remember the more the merrier!

Publicity Team we need people with positive, creative ideas, to work with our publicity team of volunteers, helping with any of the following: internal and external events, press and media liaison; publicity publications (such as the Newsletter); social media and public website pages. Contact : Gill Brain
chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Data Protection Officer A person with some knowledge of, or willingness to learn about GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and help us to ensure policy compliance and regular review and monitoring. Contact: Linda Young
vice_chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Newsletter Team Someone to receive articles and other information from Committee, Activity Groups and individual members and help put these together to create our lively, monthly Swindon u3a Newsletter. Contact: Gill Brain
newsletter@swindonu3a.org.uk

Committee Roles

We have three Committee roles which will become vacant shortly. Two of these roles (Chair and Treasurer) are essential roles in that the u3a cannot legally continue without them. It would be beneficial to have people willing to work alongside the present incumbents to allow a gradual handover. Job share is a possibility. The Committee work together as a team and you would have full support.

Chair

Gill Brain's tenure as Chair of Swindon u3a comes to an end in March 2024. She would love to work together, over the intervening months, with someone who would eventually take on the position next March. If you are interested get in touch for a chat and maybe even a trial period. Contact: Gill Brain chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Treasurer

Our Acting Treasurer is due to step down shortly and we need a replacement as soon as possible to head up a strong team of volunteers and Committee members helping with our finances. Again this is a role that is part of the Committee team and will have full support. If you feel you could oversee the finances of our u3a organisation please get in touch. chair@swindonu3a.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Jill Kelly will be leaving her role in a few months. This role involves supporting our members, especially our new members so that they can make the most of their u3a experience. Contact: Jill Kelly membershipsecretary@swindonu3a.org.uk

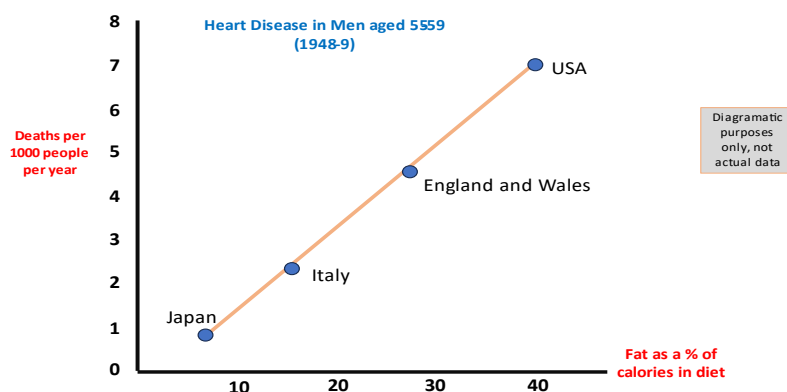
Monthly Meetings

The **November meeting** is replaced this month by our **AGM** – all welcome – please attend. **Monday 13th November - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton, SN4 9LW**

The **December Meeting** will be our **Christmas Party** – come and join in the fun! Back by popular request, the North Swindon Big Band will be entertaining us. There will also be an opportunity to sing Christmas songs with our u3a Singing Group and enjoy tea and cake! **Monday 11th December - 2.00 pm - Ellendune Community Centre, Wroughton, SN4 9LW**

October's Meeting : A Good Lot of Fat ... or a Fat Lot of Good? Our programme continued in October with an entertaining talk from Ned (Neil) Kelly, who is now retired after 40 years in the pharmaceutical Industry, and who helped lead us through the maze of dietary advice.

Ned talked about the diet/heart hypothesis and a graph (below) showing heart disease in men demonstrated a huge difference between Japan and the USA. A later study also showed that Japanese people moving to live in the USA and adopting a western diet, had developed increased levels of heart disease.



Traditional thinking has been that fat from meat is bad and the risk can be reduced by eating more polyunsaturated fats. But more recent analysis shows there is no significant evidence that dietary saturated fat is associated with a high increase in heart disease - although a switch to more polyunsaturates and cutting out trans fats may help with a small reduction in cardiac disease.

More recent studies have shown that it is not so much to do with fats, but rather missing out on the benefits from what you are not eating. Many people eat far too much salt and sugary foods but are short of the healthy things. We looked at examples of 'bad' foods versus a healthier Mediterranean diet with far less red meat and fatty foods (below).



Mediterranean Diet

People need some cholesterol as the body uses it to make a range of hormones and nearly all of this is manufactured by the liver, not from the fat you have eaten.

Ned described LDL (bad) cholesterol as a fly tipper – it lays down cholesterol in your arteries and leaves it there. On the other hand, HDL (good) cholesterol picks up the excess and takes it back to the liver for recycling.

**LDL (bad)
cholesterol**



**HDL (good)
cholesterol**



As statins work by interfering with the production of cholesterol in the liver, they are able to successfully lower total cholesterol levels and studies have shown a subsequent reduction in the risk of heart disease.

It was a great talk, with Ned able to clarify some of the jargon we regularly hear around cholesterol, fats and dietary advice.

Sue Cook

Group News

What is your group up to? Send us some news.

New Rock Music Group?

Are there any U3A Swindon members who would like to meet up, possibly monthly, to discuss and possibly playback recordings of their favourite music in the Rock Music category? There are many genres related to Rock Music so if anybody is interested, please contact me to discuss your favourite genres.

Provided there are enough interested members, we can meet up to decide the format. I would be open to any views, but I am thinking about having a theme for each meeting.

Contact: Colin Gore cj.gore@btinternet.com

Jazz Appreciation Group (JAG)

The 23/24 'academic year' started well for JAG. In September we had presentation on 'Ukelele in Jazz' with music by Diane Nalini, both with the Ukulele and "just singing" with the Ottawa Jazz Orchestra, and also uke music from Abe Lagrimas jr., followed by a presentation on pioneering jazz guitarist Mary Osborne. Both, I think, were well received by the audience.

October's JAG meeting was mostly dedicated to a presentation on Ewan Bleach - multi-instrumentalist, singer, bandleader, based in London and specialising in the early styles of jazz, ragtime, blues and swing. His projects include Cable Street Rag Band in London and Frog and Henry. He has also played with the New Orleans band Tuba Skinny. Additionally, there was a brief presentation on Ezra Collective, winners of this year's Mercury Music Prize.

Near future topics are: In November, Joni Mitchell and other artists from different genres of music who have crossed over to jazz, and then in December our regular and popular Bring Your Own Track session, at which group members bring a track to play (CD, DVD, vinyl etc.) and, if they wish, tell the group why the track is special or meaningful to them.

We also try to maintain a list of jazz and blues 'gigs' or events in or near Swindon. Such as: On Monday 11th December at 2pm the North Swindon Big Band (which used to be the U3A band) are performing at the U3A Christmas Party. Come and see us!

Contact : Ed Sexton ed.h.sexton@gmail.com



UKULELE GROUPS SUMMER GET-TOGETHER

On July 6th, forty members of the five ukulele groups, including the recently formed beginners group, joined together to entertain each other in a member's garden where there was a sound system and gazebo set up. Some members were in more than one group so had the opportunity to perform several times.



Each group performed three songs of their choice, which they had been practicing in their previous meetings and then led a song for everyone to join in. The weather stayed dry but it was extremely challenging in the wind which was strong and gusty at times. Plenty of pegs were required to keep the music sheets from blowing away. Despite the gazebo swaying and the music sheets blowing about each group 'carried on regardless'.



Bath tunnels and canals *with the Friday Walking Group*

It was 9am on Saturday 23rd September when 41 boarded our Barnes Coach near Pipers way roundabout in Old Town Swindon and headed to Bath. A brief Service station stop ensured we were completely ready to start our day on arrival at Bear Flat.

A brief descent down to the Somerset and Dorset railway line, now a well-used walking and cycle



way, and we left the glorious sunny morning behind and entered the first dark tunnel. Well truth be told the torch I had was completely unnecessary as it was quite adequately lit. Though the high vis jackets some had made us stand out well for cyclists of which there were a fair few. We had split into three groups for this part of the walk to make logistics though the tunnels easier and we returned to our school days and walked 2 abreast.

It was a fascinating and easy uphill gradient, as you might expect from a Railway line, and we soon emerged back into daylight.



There are plenty of information panels which supplemented our excellent pre-walk briefing sheet. After a short way we entered our second but longer tunnel.



The mile passed very quickly bringing us back to sunlight and we resumed as one large group.

We soon paused to admire Tucking Mill Viaduct then dropped down into Milford Valley and onto Monkton Combe. Pausing briefly at the home of William Smith, who is regarded as the Father of British geology and the grave yard where Harry Patch is buried, a WW1 veteran who died in 2009 aged 111. We also passed what looked to be a very well-funded private school.

We now joined the Somerset Coal Canal and made our way through the countryside to a Visitor Centre on the Kennet and Avon Canal where the facilities proved very popular. We admired the wide range of Narrow boats moored here and along this stretch of canal.



Our lunch stop was the Dundas Aqueduct, an excellent choice in the sunshine.



We then followed the canal to Bathampton with a very quick diversion to see Claverton pumping station. It was surprising how close you can be to Bath and yet be in the middle of the countryside.

This very pleasant easy walk brought us to the George Inn and completed our 7.5 mile journey. All that remained was to enjoy some leisurely refreshments and to await our coach for the return to Swindon.

An extremely smooth, well organised and successful day enjoyed by all. **Andrew Hancox**

A Good Day Out.



Under the guidance and typically efficient organisation of Ken Ivie, Swindon U3a Aviation Group left the circuit on Friday 27th October and visited the Royal Air Force Museum at RAF Cosford, near Wolverhampton. One of two RAF Museums, the other being at Hendon, North London the group is no stranger to either but I must say that for me, Cosford is better than ever and a clear winner.

RAF Cosford is an active airfield and training centre for young recruits particularly in the Instrument and radio trades, indeed my own grandson was trained there many years ago. The museum however stands alone and is simply superb, the main building, one of several housing various aviation interests is truly awesome, really almost beyond description. To behold it stretches the neck some seven stories high in an aerodynamic waveform manner, not at all like the more typical ex service aircraft hangar. Purpose designed and built it houses several magnificent full size V Bomber aircraft suspended aloft as if in flight, accompanied by various fighter aircraft typical of the Cold War period, including one hanging vertical and appearing to disappear through the roof. All in superb condition and accompanied by thorough and well displayed interesting descriptions.

Of course there is lots and lots to see, including some very rare research aircraft. The prone seating pilot Meteor for instance and the rocket assisted Saunders Roe experimental jet fighter joined others beyond this writers remit here to describe – one simply must visit for ones self!





The weather obliged, important because several aircraft are displayed out doors, of particular interest to some of the party were the VC 10 C.Mk1 and Hercules, well worthy of singling out.

Coupled with an acceptably pleasant café, albeit dominated occasionally by lots of small children it being school half term and seemingly a perfect free entertainment place for children, many far too young to have any interest in aircraft. However I love kids and aircraft both in their right

place, RAF Cosford Museum is the perfect place for some very special aircraft and talking of resting, now in my 91st year I much appreciated the large number of seating placed around the hangars, I even found a black leather settee which I graced for a short time, museum visits can be tiring.

The splendid day was completed by a seem less drive and arrival in Swindon on schedule, the coach driver using his skills to circumnavigate and avoid Spaghetti Junction which on a Friday tea time is not for the faint hearted! Altogether a good day out for which I thank all who made it possible.

Alan Smith



Life in a Poem

Clive James (1939-2019) was born **Vivian Leopold James** in Sydney. He changed his name to Clive after Vivien Leigh starred as Scarlett O'Hara. He studied Literature at Cambridge and subsequently spent much of his life in England. A multi-talented wit, writer and broadcaster, James is not usually associated with poetry. He wrote this beautiful and poignant poem about a tree that his daughter had bought him for his garden when his health was in serious decline. (Lesley Basu)

Japanese Maple by Clive James 2014

Your death, near now, is of an easy sort.
So slow a fading out brings no real pain.
Breath growing short
Is just uncomfortable. You feel the drain
Of energy, but thought and sight remain:

Enhanced, in fact. When did you ever
see
So much sweet beauty as when fine rain
falls
On that small tree
And saturates your brick back garden
walls,
So many Amber Rooms and mirror
halls?

Ever more lavish as the dusk descends
This glistening illuminates the air.
It never ends.
Whenever the rain comes it will be there,
Beyond my time, but now I take my share.

My daughter's choice, the maple tree is new.
Come autumn and its leaves will turn to flame.
What I must do
Is live to see that. That will end the game
For me, though life continues all the same:

Filling the double doors to bathe my eyes,
A final flood of colours will live on
As my mind dies,
Burned by my vision of a world that shone
So brightly at the last, and then was gone



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Copy Dates

Items for the Newsletter must be received by the Editor by the 20th of the preceding month