

BECCLES U3A AGM

16th September 2020

Beccles U3A Trustee Report 2019/20

I am pleased to be able to present this year's trustee report but with a difference. The lockdown in March caused the postponement of the AGM scheduled for June. We took the view that we would hold it in September hoping that Beccles Public Hall would be able to host us but that has proved too difficult so we are holding this meeting as a Live Stream through YouTube.

This report briefly sets out the annual year from April 2019 to March 2020.

The year ended with the spread of coronavirus, the cancellation of our March 2020 meeting, the uncertainty for the coming months and a concern for the health and safety of all of us. The challenges faced by us all will be covered in next year's annual report.

Membership

We started the year with 797 members and following the renewal process this dropped to 650 which happens every year.

The Renewals morning in March again proved to be very successful and was supported by a number of groups including Italian, Family History, French, Drawing and Painting and Art For Fun with English Country Dancing displaying their talents and Dog Walking displaying their dogs. We also had a stand explaining the virtues of being a Beccles U3A volunteer or Convenor. A massive thanks to all involved in making a successful day.

Committee

A number of committee members were standing down in June and so it was very pleasing that five people volunteered to stand for Committee as a result of the Renewals Day. Unfortunately one of those had to resign due to family commitments. These new recruits have put us in a good position for 2020/21 when another batch of committee members are due to retire so more expressions of interest are needed ... PLEASE!

Our priorities continued to focus on making ourselves available to lonely people and improving communications within the U3A and with the external community as well as supporting groups. To pursue these aims we have:

- Maintained the regular production of the newsletter.
- Distributed the newsletter to some outlets in the town.
- Maintained welcome meetings for new members.
- Introduced 'Meeters and Greeters' at Monthly Meetings
- Continuing to work with the NHS Social Prescribing agenda so that lonely people can be signposted to the U3A.

- Attended fetes and community gatherings to promote the U3A.
- Creating a handbook distributed to all members to provide an easy guide to Beccles U3A activities.

Monthly Meetings

The Monthly Meetings have been well attended averaging 120 members and guests, with the Christmas meeting peaking at 180.

The Monthly Meeting is an opportunity for members to view groups and events on offer, to be updated on any latest news, to network and to enjoy listening to a speaker.

Mary Wright took over temporarily from Mu Gurbutt as Programme Co-ordinator and continued to deliver up a full and varied programme of speakers who have been very interesting and entertaining. These included:

- Shirley Taylor (our very own) gave a talk on Artemisia Gentileschi, a 17th Century female Italian painter.
- Dawn Blunden wowed us with Cake Icing for Royal Weddings.
- At our June AGM we had Jenny Gibbs as a Turkish Shirley Valentine.
- Joy Hawkins returned to enlighten us further on More Medieval Medicine.
- David White encouraged us to watch Garden Birds.
- Ann Jillings and the delightful Varley the Dog talked about Dogs for the Deaf.
- Chris Greenhill then took us through his day Monitoring Norwich prison.
- Lionel Sims gave an enlightening and detailed insight into Decoding Stonehenge.
- Then it was Christmas with Mu Gurbutt and Lacey Baxter with an interpretation of A Christmas Carol(e). Aided by the Recorder Group, the Madrigal Singers, and Singing For Fun group with Diane on the piano, we had a runaway turkey and ended a packed session with music from the John Ward trio.
- Ray Simmons got 2020 off to a great start recalling his Life in Music.
- Mu Gurbutt delivered her much promised standby talk with a brilliant story about Exhibiting at the Chelsea Flower Show.
- Unfortunately our March meeting was cancelled at short notice due to the outbreak of Coronavirus.

Suggestions for speakers are welcomed so keep them coming

Events

Irene Squirrell continued to work tirelessly outside the committee in organising 12 Events which have been enjoyed by 168 members.

Notable visits over the past year included:-

Stonham Owl Sanctuary; Sandringham; East Ruston; Thursford; House of Commons and Westminster; Kirkstead; Heath Farm; St Peter's Hall and 4 trips on the Waveney Stardust.

A big thanks to Irene and to Carole Moore, our Treasurer, for her financial management of all the trips.

Groups

Led by Pippa Holliday our 5 Group Support people have helped groups with any issues arising and encouraged a greater level of communication with groups and helped set up new ones.

The emphasis has again been on supporting groups and trying to build their membership through publicity on the website, newsletters and the monthly meetings.

There have been limited new groups established this year due to the difficulty of getting convenors to administer them. The following have got started:

Art For Fun

Planting young trees

Yoga

Nordic walking—planned to start just as lockdown kicked in.

Not only do we need volunteers to sit on the Committee, we need members for the Really Useful Group (RUGs), convenors to help with new groups and volunteers to help as need be during the year. We welcome any suggestions or comments, positive or negative, on anything regarding Beccles U3A including Groups, Events/Visits and monthly meetings.

Remember this is your U3A, help shape it and make things happen.

Barry Darch was again busy, working with a small team on the history of Beccles Lido. Ron French published a book entitled *Odessa 1919: The Red Terror*. It is the story of his Mother's family's flight from the Bolshevik secret police 100 years ago. Ron kindly donated copies to our Christmas raffle.

The Nimble Fingers group once again decorated the U3A tree at the Hungate Church Festival of Trees with an amazing display. Hopefully the Festival will be able to go ahead again this year and that the Group will be able to show off their skills and talents.

We held one **Convenors meeting** on October 4th 2019 again at the Public Hall with a buffet from external caterers. Committee members were dispersed around the table entering into a questions and feedback session which went very well. Convenors, co-convenors and volunteers attended.

Finances

The Treasurers report on our finances is covered in item 4 of this agenda. We started the year with total balances of £15,899.71 and ended in March 2020 with £18,761.35. These figures reflect the successful renewals day in March. As the year progresses we tend to be paying out money rather than receiving it but our overall position is healthy.

Gift Aid is a significant contributor to our funds and a big thank you to our treasurer, Carole Moore, for ploughing through all the paperwork to ensure we recover 25% of qualifying fees from HMRC.

The Group Grant system which proved so popular last year has continued and a further 7 grants totalling £501.55 has been paid out.

External Representation

Committee members attended meetings of the Suffolk and District Network of U3A's during the year at Hadleigh U3A and Blackbourne U3A. Again useful networking opportunities.

Thank yous

- To the **Convenors, Co Convenors** and the members who enable groups to function.
- To **Glenys Westmacott** and the team who organise and facilitate refreshments at the monthly meetings and other events such as Renewals.
- To **Angela Williams** (Web Master) who manages our website and Felicity Hillier who has provided much valued assistance.
- **Vicki John** who reports on our speakers each month.
- **Peter Westmacott** for managing registration at the Monthly Meetings.
- To **Graham Wilkinson, Rosemary Kerridge and Gill Ryan** for acting as Meeters and Greeters at monthly meetings.
- To **Irene Squirrell** who manages all our trips and those that help and support her.
- **Eunice Price** for making sure our Handbook actually appeared!
- **Sally Greenhill** for looking after the Projector and DVD player and speakers.
- To the Public Hall management who provide the venue and the facilities and are flexible in helping us operate at the Hall.
- Finally to **Diane** (Dungate) our minutes secretary who produces excellent minutes of our meetings and makes sense of what is said.

If I have missed anybody out I sincerely apologise.

Please remember we are all just volunteers.

And don't forget "By the members, for the members" is the U3A movement's mantra so please come forward to do your bit in any way you can.

Thank you
Graham Jermyn
Chair Beccles U3A
August 2020