

## BECCLES u3a TRUSTEE REPORT 2022/2023

I am pleased to present this year's Trustee Report as the Chair. It is a brief account of the year April 2022 to March 2023

Principles of the u3a Movement:

- Third Age
- Self-learning
- Mutual aid

### MEMBERSHIP

The membership grew steadily from 690 and reached 711 during the year. We are pleased that the organization continues to attract new members and meetings that were held were well attended. The electronic membership renewal form continues to prove popular with 198 forms completed, a total of 247 members using it by the end of March 2023. It is encouraging to see such a large number using technology in this way. Hand deliveries in nearby villages continues to be undertaken. This has been particularly important during the year with postage costs rising.

The Renewals meeting held in March 2023 was a great success with 17 groups exhibiting their talents and wares. Graham Evans also mounted a rolling Powerpoint presentation. We had a visit from the Mayor of Beccles and a performance from Beccles Handbells team which served to enhance the opportunity to meet and chat to members.

We continued to improve our sound communications base by increasing the frequency of newsletters. Angela Williams and Felicity Hillier have made the website even more user-friendly and updated it regularly. It is an excellent reference point for groups, monthly meetings and events as well as the latest news. Facebook for Members, facilitates day to day happenings with a forum for feedback. Jo also posts the occasion cartoon which makes us all smile. Thanks to you all.

We are all very grateful to Graham Evans, who joined the Committee in 2022 and has been rushed off his feet ever since! He is responsible for the newsletters which are colourful, informative and entertaining. I look forward to receiving mine each month. He is also responsible for all paper publications which are distributed around the Town on the Charity Noticeboards, in the Library and various venue sites to reach those who don't have access to the internet. Recently, his printer and laminator have been working overtime! Hopefully, we are reaching out to all our members more effectively.

## **FINANCES**

The Treasurer's report shows that we started the financial year with a total balance of £21,061.69 and the ending balance on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 of £19,578.73. These funds will be used to cover the Beccles u3a costs throughout the coming year. We have successfully changed banks from HSBC to Lloyds Bank enabling us to avoid the charges brought in by HSBC on all our transactions. Lloyds Bank is able to offer us much more in online facilities.

For another year, we are pleased to have absorbed the increase in costs and to be able to keep the membership fee at the same level and still retain sufficient funds in our bank account to provide financial security for the running of Beccles u3a. We were able to increase the grants to groups to £100 and to offer a startup grant for new groups. For the last financial year, the grants to groups totalled £815.57

Gift Aid is a significant contributor to our funds and thanks go to our Treasurer Lyn Wood, for attending to the onerous paperwork to ensure that we recover the qualifying fees from HMRC for 2022/23, and 2023/24

The overall financial health of Beccles u3a is secure.

## **COMMITTEE**

During the year, the Committee has worked hard supporting groups. With an increasing membership this does give rise to some issues. We want to encourage the setting up of new interest groups, but this means the need for more volunteers to come forward to help.

We have also reviewed all our Policies and our thanks go to Steve Blackburn who has managed this process for us. The Convenors' Handbook is being digitized as we speak, in order that it is kept up to date with all the latest information.

At the end of 2022, the Committee reviewed a report on our membership fees going forward. It was decided to maintain our fees at the current level, meaning that there has been no increase in fees since 2014.

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Attendance at the 11 monthly meetings has held steady at an average of 85 members per meeting. During a year of large changes in the economic and weather climates this demonstrates the popularity of the varied meetings and speakers, sourced by Mu Gurbutt.

April	Andrew Summers	Spanish Flu' 1918
May	Dr Twigs Way	Marion North
June	Who can forget 'Picnic in the Park' to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. There was a huge amount of work involved and we thank Mu for her efforts. Despite the rain, it was thoroughly enjoyed by all.	
July	Toby Capwell	Armour Through the Ages
August	David Bussey	George Skipper – Architect
September	Joy Hawkins	Medieval Conception and Contrception
October	Sarah Cassell	Angel Roofs of Norfolk and Suffolk
November	Mike Shuttleworth	Make Every Contact Count
December	Charlie Haylock	History of Spoken English
January	Taff Gillingham	Great War Huts
February	John Vigar	Leave No Stone Unturned
March	Mu Gurbutt	The Ship That Never Was

## EVENTS

Irene Squirrell continues her relentless quest to organize a wide range of interesting trips, some new ventures together with your old favourites. You support her well. Thank you

## **GROUPS**

The emphasis has again been on supporting our 57 groups to build their membership through the various methods of communication that we employ. Our 5 strong group support team help resolve any issues and encourage greater levels of interaction. We are involved in setting up new groups so watch this space. We have supported a number of groups with grants to facilitate learning as well as start up grants for several new groups. All equipment and other assets supplied in this way, remains the property of Beccles u3a.

Our annual thank you Convenors' tea was held in September with valuable discussions and feedback. The Committee is very keen to promote this interaction which is a key part of our work.

Thanks go to our Convenors, who have stepped up to the plate to enable all the groups to progress. Some Convenors have changed over the year, many thanks for the work they have done and to those who have taken over.

**Convenors are the lifeblood of this organization.** We welcome any suggestions or comments on anything regarding the work that we do.

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

## **WEBSITE**

During the year, the visitor numbers to the website had been recovering very well after the difficulties of the Covid Pandemic with a lot of activity on the Special Interest Group pages and the return to meeting together for the Monthly Meeting and Talk.

At the beginning of December 2022 all websites that used the u3a-provided editing software, SiteBuilder, disappeared and were replaced with a generic error message. We were then informed by the National Office that the issue was likely to be lengthy.

The web team found a free platform where we could rebuild an information-only site under a slightly different web address. This web address was then publicised via our Newsletter and the Monthly Meetings.

Some 6-8 weeks later towards the end of January 2023, a text only version of our long established website became available and within a week normal editing features were restored and we were once again able to add images and files. The site was brought up-to-date quickly and since then it has been working well and visitor numbers have returned to normal.

The flexibility of our website was put to test during March 2023 when members were being encouraged to renew their membership and new members sought. New Member and Renewal printable forms were made available via the website and we were also able to include the option for joining online.

At the start of this year, all u3a Webmasters were informed that SiteBuilder (our editing software) was going to be replaced by a new, more up-to-date programme. This is currently being developed and refined and by the end of 2023 our site will be moving onto this new software. The web team are keeping abreast of the developments and will keep the Committee and members up to date with the progress.

## **THANK YOU**

- Convenors, Co-Convenors and members who enable groups to function for the benefit of us all.
- Julia Warnes who came forward to be Business Secretary; Lyn Wood, Treasurer; Carole Moore, Membership Secretary and Graham Evans, IT Support.
- Our Group Support Team: Jo Howarth, Pauline Kettless, Barbara Lyons, Rosemary Kerridge and Steve Blackburn.
- Lizzie Wilson and Judy Lebanc and their team who organize and facilitate refreshments at the monthly meetings and other events.
- Angela Williams [Webmaster] who manages our website and Felicity Hillier who has provided much valued assistance.
- Graham Wilkinson. Gill Ryan and Rosemary Kerridge for acting as Meeters and Greeters at monthly meetings.
- Irene Squirrell who manages all our trips and to those who help and support her.

- Diane Dungate, our Minutes Secretary for producing excellent minutes and making sense of what is said.
- Public Hall Management who provide the venue and facilities and are flexible in helping us operate in the Hall.
- Finally, to you our members who support us in our work.

Please remember we are all volunteers. The Mantra of 'By the members, for the members' so please come forward to do your bit in any way you can.

Why do you do it? Who knows? There are many reasons - 711 Of them!

Thank you

Pippa Holliday

Chair Beccles u3a

June 2023