

We would like to thank Andrew Walmsley, who continued to work on financial issues, as the new Treasurer, Neil McQuillan and Deputy Treasurer, Tom Capper, settled into their roles, with help from Jim McDonnell, our Membership Secretary and Beacon Administrator.

As members of Belfast u3a are becoming more “virtually” and “digitally” literate, we encourage you to refer frequently to our Website for up-to-date information on all aspects of Belfast u3a.

We thank Liz Hunter, our Website Administrator, for her dedicated work in this area.

Regarding the Newsletter which is sent out to members bi-monthly and is also on-line, we thank Helen McGlinchey (Newsletter Editor) for her work in compiling the information she receives, from Convenors and Members, all of which enhances the interest for Newsletter readers – do continue to send your Stories, Poems, Recipes etc. to Helen.

During our Monthly Meetings, this year, we have experienced a wide range of Speakers all with very interesting topics, thanks to our ‘Speaker’ Organiser and Vice-Chair, Maria Curran.

So what other events have been happening since April 2022.

April 2022 – The Groups ‘Convenors Meeting’ was held at Holywood Golf Club, organised by Caroline Brown and hosted by Maria Curran.

Belfast has a wide variety of activities within its **53 Groups** -

Reading/Literature, Walking, Cycling, Bowling, Golf, Language Learning, Bridge, Photography, Pilates, Art Appreciation, Creative Writing, Film & Theatre, Wine tasting, Gardening, Discussion Groups and Swing & Jazz etc, etc.

With the addition of several new groups in the past year - Snooker, Climate Awareness, Science for everyone, Local History, and Mindfulness.

As our membership increases, we need more new activities, led by new Convenors, so please offer to lead a group if you have any ideas.

June 2022 - We met at Shorts Recreation Club, Holywood Road, organised by Caroline, for the ‘Picnic in the Park’, celebrating 40 yrs of u3a in the UK and of course 22 years of Belfast u3a.

There was a good turn-out on the day, but as usual, the weather is always unpredictable. The sun turned to rain and we gathered inside with our flasks and lunch. However, the weather didn’t deter or take away from the day, as we enjoyed chatting and enjoying the entertainment of Classical Guitar pieces as well as some Swing Jazz music, led by Caroline Brown and Guest: Victor Currie. A few Members decided to take to the floor for some dancing and everyone joined in the

Sing-along to a few well known songs to end the day.

Then it was the 'Summer Break' until September.

The Committee met early in **September 2022** to discuss possible events and plan the forthcoming year.

October 2022 – We held a 'New Members' Meeting at St John's Hall, Newtownbreda, organised by our Membership Secretary, Jim McDonnell – 40 New Members attended.

It was a casual event and it was good to meet and chat with all the New Members, to find out about their interests, answer any questions and explain what the varied Belfast u3a Groups could offer.

December 2022 - We held the popular 'Mince Pie Event' at Shorts Recreation Club, organised by Caroline. The weather was very cold and icy, but we had an excellent attendance. Many Members got into the Christmas mood and dressed up in Christmas outfits.

Maria Curran (Group Co-Ordinator) organised the delicious 'Mince Pies', as well as arranging the excellent performances from Members – Storytelling & Poetry. We also experienced wonderful Classical Piano pieces performed by Guest: Ivan Black. We all enjoyed the tea and 'Mince Pies', had a few laughs, while a few dancers took to the floor and of course everyone joined in the 'Christmas Sing-Along' led by Caroline, to complete the festivities.

January 2023 – Got off to a good start with an excellent attendance at the Monthly Meeting at Balmoral Hotel. Numbers have continued to increase at the Monthly Meetings, which is **GREAT!** we now have around 125+ each month. It is good to see Members chatting, circulating and speaking with the Convenors from each of the Groups.

February 2023 – The 'Convenors Meeting' was held at Holywood Golf Club, organised by Caroline. The event was hosted by Maria Curran 'Group Co-Ordinator'. The success of the 53 Groups of Belfast u3a is due to the dedication of its Convenors and the Group Co-Ordinator. It was a very useful and enlightening day, which allowed time for discussion and questions on several areas, including Finance, which Neil McQuillan (Treasurer) dealt with, while Jim McDonnell (Membership Secretary) answered questions on Membership issues and also supplied information on the up-dated use of the 'Beacon Management System', which is used by Convenors to assist with Group Finance and information emails to their Group Members.

Other aspects of Belfast u3a, worth reading, is the Annual Trustee Report which is on our Website and is due to be submitted in May to the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland together with our Annual

Accounts. These will appear on their public website eventually, but for the moment they are on our Belfast U3A website.

Here we are already in April 2023 - As of today, there are several changes to the Committee. The three top Posts will now be Vacant, as the current Committee Members Terms of Office are now complete.

We thank the hard work of the following who kept Belfast u3a going, during the very difficult time of the Pandemic.

Chair: Dr Pauline Prior who served an extra year to get Belfast u3a through the Pandemic. With Pauline's foresight and the help of other Committee Members, Belfast u3a was introduced into the world of 'Zoom Meetings'. This enabled Pauline to Chair Committee & Monthly Meetings and keep Members in touch during 'Lockdown'. We thank Pauline for her many hours of work, commitment and dedication to every aspect of Belfast u3a.

Vice Chair, Group Co-Ordinator & Speaker Organiser: Maria Curran also dedicated many hours to Belfast u3a – setting up and hosting Zoom Meetings; Researching and Inviting Speakers to the monthly meetings; Supporting Group Convenors, Hosting Convenor Meetings and helping run all events.

Business Secretary & Events Organiser: Caroline Brown Organised and managed the administration of Belfast u3a documents. Plus sourcing Venues, Organising Events, Financial outlay and Guest Performers.

*My I take this opportunity to thank to my 'Support Team' – 15 members who helped at all the Monthly Meetings – the Car Park, Sign-in Table, Meet & Greet, Tea/Coffee area and welcoming New members.

Also Adrian Ross, for his IT and Presentation Skills, plus assisting with the sound and set-up for Speakers at our Monthly Meetings.

We must not forget to thank Liz McKeown, our Minutes Secretary, who has taken the Notes at all the Committee Meetings and is stepping down in June.

**As these people step-down, I ask you to show your appreciation for the work, time and effort they have each given Freely to support your u3a*

So, what of the future!

The life of u3a lies solely with its Members, so where does it go from here?

April 2022 we had 839 Members

end March 2023 - Belfast Membership **Total had reached 900** and continues to grow!

Needless to say, Jim has been kept extremely busy – thank you Jim.

There is a bright new road ahead for Belfast u3a. We are pleased to welcome new people to the Committee for the coming year. We always need more Volunteers, so please offer to help as we know our members have many skills. We especially need more Group Leaders/Convenors to enlarge our Activities as our Membership grows.

Remember that the beauty of the u3a movement is, that we share our skills and through that, make new friends.

Perhaps when you get home, give a thought to those who have been working on your behalf to keep Belfast u3a going – or why not come and help? - so, if you have the time and energy, please contact a Committee Member.

As life starts to return to some normality after the Pandemic, hopefully it will be easier for everyone, to relax and enjoy Belfast u3a.

To conclude, the most important aspect of Belfast u3a is **YOU** its Members, supported by a strong Committee.

My best wishes to the New Committee and Convenors, who will take Belfast u3a from 'strength to strength' in the days that lie ahead.

(A copy of this Report is available on the Belfast u3a website until the end of May)

Thank you

Signed: _____

Date:

Caroline Brown BSc (Hons)

Belfast u3a Business Secretary & Events Organiser

