

## Bicester U3A Chairman's Report AGM 2019.

The Chairman's report provides an annual opportunity to thank U3A members for their contributions to Bicester U3A. So, in keeping with tradition – here goes....

U3A provides valuable service for us older folks. It has over 1000 branches in the UK with interest groups into the hundreds, if not thousands; covering subjects from art to zoology and most things in between.

The heart of the organisation is formed by local U3As and Bicester U3A plays its part.

Our current membership stands at 284. We have 86 men and 198 ladies. Our web site now lists 38 interest groups from Advanced French Conversation through to Wine Appreciation. We've seen some changes in our groups during the year. Some group leaders have been unable to continue. In some cases, others have stepped in to save the day. There are still opportunities for aspiring group leaders to come forward. Areas of interest are currently Cinema Group, History, Play Reading and our second Book Group. 'Singing for Pleasure' is currently on hold after the group leader contracted a serious illness. We wish Irene well with her continued improvement. And, I should mention Bridge Beginners which is also on hold due to the ill-health of Hugh White. We wish Hugh well for the future.

To redress the balance, we have seen a couple of new groups starting up, Camera Group 3 and Any Type of Good Music.

For the groups that have closed. Thanks to those who have supported their activities over the years. And for the New Groups, thanks to those who have started up the new groups and allowed our U3A to broaden its horizons.

Let's not forget to mention the rest of our group leaders. Thanks to them, their group activities continue to thrive due to their concerted efforts. Whilst I appreciate all of our groups, I've most enjoyed relaxing afternoons with the Blues Group, I've been impressed with the success of the Table Tennis group, Wider Horizons group, our Bridge group, our Bridge Improvers group, our Sunday Lunch group, our Camera groups, our Music groups..... In fact, let's just say, whenever I've had reports from our groups, I've been impressed with them all. Our Group leaders should be proud. And, of course, the interest groups would not be successful without the support of our members. So, a big thank you to you all.

Our monthly meetings continue to be well-supported.

In 2018, we had another interesting bunch of speakers. Thanks go to Ray Thomas for organising the programme and ensuring that each month went along smoothly.

We ran a number of outings this year. Ray Thomas organised a visit to the Royal Mint, Peggy Penfold organised a residential outing to Torquay and surrounds, and Denise Thornton organised a visit to the Winchester Christmas Market. All events were well-received by our membership. A big thanks to those three for their efforts.

Part of the success of Bicester U3A is due to our welcoming of new members. Initially, Alex Sharpe and her helpers welcome new members at monthly meetings. This is followed up by a New Members coffee morning, again organised by Alex, where committee members welcome new members with coffee and cake and a friendly chat. A big thank you to Alex and her helpers.

Alex also deals with our correspondence, and keeps our notice board up to date, and acts as minutes Secretary. So, thanks to Alex for doing that.

Mike Luff has spent the year getting to grips with our web-site after taking over from Denise. So, thanks to him for his work here.

We also need to keep our finances in shape, and this is where Audrey Luff excels in keeping a tight rein on our expenditure. Audrey handles the membership monies, deals with monies related to outings, group start-ups, liaises with travel companies, forecasts expenditure and a whole lot of other things besides. A big thank you to Audrey for her efforts.

I must mention the huge amount of work that Denise has put in getting our new membership administration system (Beacon) up and running. A similar effort from her saw the implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulations. Another big thank you here.

I'd also like to mention Hazel Jones and Sandie Stevenson. Both have made, and continue to make, valuable contributions to our U3A. I sincerely thank them for all that they have done for us.

And then we have Peggy Penfold. To my mind, Peggy is still the face of Bicester U3A. She is the Oracle to whom I refer when I'm at all uncertain about U3A matters. She has been membership secretary longer than I can remember and is for many the first point of call for Bicester U3A. A big thank you to Peggy for her huge contribution to our U3A.

As you may know, Peggy is stepping down this year after 13 years in office. But more of that later.

Yes, 2018 was a challenging year for our U3A. As U3As get bigger, we can no longer operate as a 'friendly little club'. We have to obey the edicts of U3A National Office and those of the Charity Commission. This year we have had to deal with a new constitution, new financial instructions, the new General Data Protection Regulations and Beacon, our new membership administration system. We have also had to deal with matters which could potentially bring our charitable status into question. All this work requires considerable expertise in both professional and technical matters. And I am glad to say that my committee rose to the challenge admirably. I am hugely grateful for what they have achieved. The bulk of the work fell on Denise and Audrey. So special mentions for both of them.

Of course, the U3A would not function as successfully as it does without significant others who volunteer their services on a regular basis. Monthly meetings are a case in point. Special thanks go to Pauline Smith and her helpers who ensure that we get our refreshments at the monthly meetings. Pauline will be stepping down from her role of Refreshments Organiser during 2019. So, we will be looking for a successor as the year progresses.

Another special mention goes to Janet and Alan Marshall who continue with their excellent job of running our monthly raffle. I need to mention Eileen and Geoffrey Iredale who step in when the Marshalls are away. I need to mention the committee members who take on a number of roles on the day to keep things running smoothly. And then there's the folks who help us to set up the hall and put things away afterwards. A big thank you to all concerned.

Our photography competition is another regular event where thanks are due. Mike Luff continues to impress with his presentation and organisation. And, members continue to impress with their photography skills. It has been suggested that our Painting and Drawing group sponsor a similar event.

Our annual Christmas party was held at Kirtlington Golf Club where approaching 100 members enjoyed a 3-course meal. Thanks to Audrey, and Peggy for ensuring all went smoothly again. Thank you to Marion Evans, who organised a challenging quiz. Thank you to Janet and Alan Marshall for organising the raffle. And, thank you to Ray Thomas for taking over as 'Master of Ceremonies' after a delayed hernia operation stopped me from attending.

On a personal point, 2018 was a challenging year for me, with health issues, family issues and U3A issues. I thank all of those who have given me the most wonderful support. And I would also mention Ray Thomas as being the best vice-chairman a chairman could wish for.

Right, that's me done. Hopefully, I've covered most of our activities and have given thanks where they are due. If I've missed anyone out, I do apologise. But please accept that your contributions are greatly appreciated and a quick reminder to me will ensure that your contributions are properly recognised in the next chairman's report.

### **David Thornton**

**Peggy Penfold** – Peggy was elected as Secretary at the 2006 AGM. So, as I said before, she's been in office 13 years. During this time, Peggy has acted as Membership Secretary, Minutes Secretary, Business Secretary, Welfare Officer, Christmas Party Organiser, Group Leader, Group Member, and Residential Outings Organiser. And, I'll bet she's done a whole lot of other ancillary tasks along the way. But now it's time for Peggy to relinquish the Secretary role she has held for so long and hand over the reins to another. I shall miss her words of wisdom in my times of need, but I'm honoured that she has contributed so much to our U3A and for so long.

I'm happy to say that Peggy wishes to remain involved with our U3A and is actively looking at this year's residential outing with the help of Audrey Luff and Mary Herbert. As you probably know, due to injury Peggy was unable to go on the Torquay trip after doing so much of the organisation. This year she's hoping to see things through. And, we are hoping that too.

I would like to present Peggy with a basket of flowers to say thank you for all she's done. And, I'm told that Peggy is partial to a drop of red wine. So, Peggy, here's something to sample as you reflect on your 13 years in office. Thank you from all of us. Peggy.