

BICESTER U3A CHAIRMAN'S REPORT. AGM 2022

You are probably wondering why I have been Acting Chairman since the sad death of Nick Morse in October. As we did not have a Vice Chairman, the task fell to me as one of the other two "Officers" of the Committee.

I think everyone had high hopes of returning to something like "normal" life during 2021, but it was not to be. However, our U3A continues to thrive, attracting 16 new members during last year, with two more already having joined us in 2022. At the end of 2021 we had 257 members.

Our group leaders have been outstanding in their commitment to their group members. Some groups are still meeting on Zoom, some are now meeting face to face and others are mixing the two. A big thank you to all of you.

Some of the groups have closed for various reasons but the leaders do deserve our thanks for all of their efforts over the years. 2021 saw the start of The Murder Mystery Book Group by Mary Herbert. Hopefully there will be opportunities for other start-ups during 2022, or perhaps members will step forward to take the reins of some of the popular groups which have folded.

We did not manage any day trips during 2021 but we did have the residential holiday to Suffolk in October. I had the dubious pleasure of organising the trip but judging by the smiles on the faces of the passengers and the camaraderie we shared, it was well worth it.

We also managed a welcome return of the annual Christmas lunch, beautifully organised by Mary and enjoyed by all who attended. Janet Marshall worked her usual magic with a raffle, ably assisted by Sue Wilde. Thank you ladies for doing that.

We had a face to face meeting in the Clifton Centre in November, as the speaker topic did not lend itself to Zoom. Numbers were necessarily depleted and we had no refreshments, but it was a good meeting and we all enjoyed it. The Committee will be reviewing the situation with regard to future monthly meetings, as the whole ethos of U3A is getting together socially and enjoying each other's company.

As you know, our Committee members are all volunteers and 2021 was particularly challenging, as our numbers were somewhat depleted in the second half of the year. We may not always get it right, but we do our very best.

Mary has an ongoing role keeping our membership up to date, dealing with enquiries from new members and regularly hand delivering paperwork to existing ones.

David (Wendlebury) Jones does an excellent job producing the quarterly newsletter which helps to keep our spirits up. His sense of humour may be somewhat questionable at times but the photographs he includes in his publications more than make up for that.

Mike Luff does his best to keep the web site up to date with News, Events and Group updates. He also once again organised the Photographic competition, assisted by the expertise of George Edmundson.

Dave Thornton has been exceptionally busy over the past year. He has kept group leaders up to date with the latest guidance on Covid from National Office and the government. He has done some sterling work preparing Risk assessments for group leaders to follow and also facilitated many Zoom meetings. He also had a big part to play in preparing the paperwork for the AGM and finalising the details of the Constitution.

In July, Diane and Steve Procopiou decided to resign from the Committee.

Diane did a great job as Business Secretary, preparing Agendas and taking minutes. She was our liaison with National Office and did a huge amount of preparation on the Constitution

Steve, in his role as Vice Chairman assisted Nick in many ways particularly on the technical side of things. He facilitated numerous Zoom meetings, and helped many of our members get to grips with the technology. He also introduced the concept of online forms.

Janet Baldry has decided to step down as Programme Secretary. Janet joined the Committee in 2020, finishing the programme for that year and preparing the speaker list for 2021 and 2022. This has been made particularly difficult as we have needed speakers who could present on Zoom. Janet has taken great care to provide us with an interesting mix of speakers, having sometimes to find a substitute speaker at short notice.

Lastly, I want to talk to you about Denise Thornton. As far as I can tell from my research, Denise joined the Committee in 2011. She was responsible for starting the Bicester U3A website which is so important for promoting our U3A to new members and keeping existing members informed. When I first joined

U3A in 2013, Denise was acting as the Welcomer/Liaison and organising coffee mornings for new members, helping them to get to know each other, find out more about what U3A could offer, and indeed, what skills the new members could contribute to our U3A.

In 2018, Denise prepared mountains of documents to move us onto the U3A Beacon management system, which has helped enormously with all aspects of our day to day running. She has continually offered teaching and support with Beacon to anyone who has needed it. She also prepared our Data Protection and Privacy policies, reviewing them annually and keeping us all legal.

More recently, Denise has acted as Business Secretary, taking on the preparation of the Committee Agenda and completing the minutes. She has prepared various online forms and done a great deal of work in preparing for this AGM.

Denise has also helped organise various day trips and regularly contributed ideas and advice during Committee meetings. She is stepping down and will be sorely missed.

On behalf of the membership, I should like to say a sincere thank you to all of our Committee members and a small token of our appreciation will find its way to those of you who have stepped down.

I think I'm almost done, thank you for your patience.

You may have noticed that Member's Proposals are missing from the Agenda. This is because we did not receive any but the request was included in the original AGM notice.

Finally I would like to thank you, our members, for supporting us through what has been a difficult time. I hope we can all get together in person soon.