

## **BURTON JOYCE AND DISTRICT U3A**

### **Chairman's Report 8th September 2020**

Yes, it has been said before: how many of us would have thought almost a year ago at our last AGM that we would now be living in a surreal world created by the dreadful coronavirus pandemic? Consequently we have not been able to hold monthly or interest groups meetings in the usual way since March, when the outbreak began. Not to be defeated, Zoom meetings have been held by some groups, This will also include our AGM, so I am hoping there will be a goodly number of members present so we can conclude the AGM business at the first attempt. I look forward to seeing you there. Unfortunately there will be no strawberry tea and socialisation at the end of the AGM, as there usually is, unless you are able to treat yourselves at home!

I know so many members cannot wait to return to some form of normality and I look forward to welcoming you again as soon as possible to our monthly meetings and the return of interest groups activities.

### **The Committee 2019-2020.**

Again, it has been a privilege to work with such a talented and supportive committee during the year since our last AGM in October. Before the virus struck, we held meetings until January. From March everyone was in lockdown, so no further meetings were held until our first Zoom committee meeting in May, since when we have successfully held two further meetings.

The AGM is the time when the committee stand down with some members leaving and not seeking re-election. This year, Sue Hollings, who has been our New Members and Visitors Welcomer for the past two years, is not standing for re-election due to family commitments. I would like to thank Sue for her help and the cheerful manner in which she has received new members and visitors to monthly meetings. One nomination has been received for the new committee, from Keith Bowker who was previously our Website Manager, during which time he transformed the site to a simpler U3A Site Builder format. Subject to election, Keith will take over from Sue as New Members and Visitors Welcomer.

We have a true working committee, each member having a role and everyone getting on so well. Members report to the committee on their role before meetings, so we are acquainted with information in advance, thus saving time and usually resulting in little or no debate or discussion, unless the subject demands it. Usually meetings begin at 10am, lasting two hours, with each agenda item given a time limit. This ensures meetings do not go on for too long, unlike some committees on which I have served.

## **Beacon.**

This is an on-line facility unique to U3A nationally, enabling any U3A to join and manage their membership, finance and groups information easily and efficiently and, most importantly, Beacon can be a big time saver for those committee members and group co-ordinators using it. With more than 1000 U3A groups nationally, the system continues to grow. Presently, 450 U3As (45%) across the country use the Beacon system and during the past year 33 of our interest groups co-ordinators and committee members used the system successfully. A new version for the future is being developed by National Office, to be implemented gradually over the next 18 months. My grateful thanks go to Anna Moore, our Beacon administrator, for her most efficient supervision of Beacon and assistance to those members using it.

## **Groups.**

My grateful thanks again go to David Falkner, Groups Facilitator, for the efficient and enthusiastic way he looks after our 70 or so interest groups and thanks also go to the Group Co-ordinators who lead the groups in their activities, without whom groups would to exist.

Unfortunately, since March groups have been unable to meet in their conventional ways, due to the virus, although some have met by holding Zoom meetings. A few others have met within the social distancing rules, including outdoor meetings by groups which would ordinarily meet indoors. There is however disappointment by the absence of communication with David, in responding to his encouragement to hold meetings during the virus limitations within the rules and to his requests for information.

Co-ordinators are the backbone of our U3A and I must give my sincere thanks to them all for leading their groups, ensuring the smooth running of their activities, year by year. Without them groups would to exist.

## **Membership.**

Caroline Roberts continues to administer our membership with apparent ease, for which the committee is grateful. Presently we have 415 members. Annual renewal of membership was due at the end of August, the membership year commencing on 1st September. In view of virus restrictions, resulting in monthly meetings and interest groups activities being cancelled, the committee decided to continue membership without a renewal fee. When monthly meetings and other activities re-commence, the committee will consider whether to request a full year's membership fee, or charge a pro-rata subscription to the next renewal date of 1st September 2021. It will depend on developments with regard to the relaxation of virus restrictions. Members will have received our Business Secretary, Alan Comerie's email of 2nd July last regarding this and the AGM. Members not on the internet were sent a copy by post.

## **Outings.**

Before the virus struck, a visit was arranged by Chrissie Marrows to the World of Wedgewood at Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, but unfortunately it had to be cancelled when virus restrictions were imposed. When restrictions are further relaxed and coach travel is again permitted, this popular visit will be re-instated.

Further outings will be arranged including a proposed exciting trip abroad, once once conditions permit. So, there will be a lot to which we can look forward.

## **Money.**

There has been little activity in our bank accounts due to virus restrictions, limiting their use. A copy of the accounts for the year can be seen via the September Newslines. I want to pay tribute to and pass on the committee's grateful thanks to our Treasurer, Ann Hegarty, for her efficiently in keeping a constant watchful eye on our finances. We are fortunate having such a proficient Treasurer, producing, as she does, not only the annual accounts, but also monthly accounts in advance of each committee meeting, so that members are informed beforehand.

## **Monthly Meetings.**

When the virus arose, monthly meetings had to be cancelled and that remains the case now, until we can get back to re-introducing them, together with interest group activities. The committee is guided by Third Age Trust National Office and also Government advice. Consequently our booked speakers had to be cancelled too. I am hopeful that in due course we shall still hear them at subsequent monthly meetings. In fact. The good news is that two of the cancelled speakers will be joining us on Zoom for what would otherwise be our October and November meetings, so we shall have the pleasure of hearing them then. Further details will follow.

Of the Speakers we were able to hear at meetings this year, Steve and Carol Robson from County Durham, entertained us with their "Fools Gold" multi-instrumental acoustic duo performance with a mix of songs, stories and tales, fun and audience engagement. In February, we had a most interesting talk on Big Cats by Barbara Meyer from Lincolnshire, followed by a salutary "Drive-On" Driving Awareness presentation at our March meeting by Steve Stevenson and his colleagues from Nottinghamshire County Council Road Safety Team. A big thanks is due to Christine Shepherd our Speaker Finder, for re-arranging these talks and another in December and looking after speaker bookings.

## **Newsline.**

Our Newsline is our lifeline between the committee and members and is, in my view, still one of the best U3A newsletters I have come across, thanks to our Editor Colin Simm. Reliance is placed on our members to send Colin material to publish.

The problem is that since the virus arrived, Interest Groups reports have ceased, apart from the small number who have recently re-started. This has resulted in a big reduction of material. A number of interesting articles have appeared, but more are needed by Colin each month. Can I ask groups and individual members, seriously, to give thought to putting together anything of interest you have experienced, seen, or read about, or photographs you have taken, during the virus restrictions and send them to Colin for publication.

### **Website.**

We would like to put more material on our website for all to see, so rather like sending material to Colin for publication in Newline, group co-ordinators and members are invited send similar material to him for the website, including photographs and information about groups activities. This enables the website to become more interesting and fresh.

Also, why not add the website to your favourites to keep in touch with what is going on in our U3A. The internet address is [www.bju3a.co.uk](http://www.bju3a.co.uk)

### **Welcomers.**

The first impression given to new members and visitors coming to our monthly meetings is of the group of Welcomers by the entrance doors. I know from what new members say, that we are a most welcoming and friendly U3A and the reason why some will pass other U3As to join us. That speaks volumes. Welcomers are also at the signing-in desk just inside the hall. I am most grateful to the team who help each month. When monthly meetings re-start again, we may be looking for more welcomer helpers. The commitment is about half an hour before the meetings begins, so please contact Keith Bowker to add your name to the rota when meetings re-start. You do not have to help out at each meeting!

I have already mentioned in the committee paragraph that Sue Hollings is standing down from the committee and from being the Welcomer Co-ordinator and thanked her for carrying out that role. In Sue's place, subject to election at the AGM, I shall be pleased to welcome Keith Bowker and thank him for volunteering to do so.

### **And Finally:**

There are other members to thank for their contribution to the running of our U3A. All are equally important and I thank them in no particular order.

Elaine Bass, our Social Secretary, organises refreshments at the drop of a hat at our monthly meetings, including recruiting her team of helpers each month. She also provides refreshments at committee meetings and coffee mornings for new members, so a big thank you to Elaine.

Ann Whitfield has represented our U3A on Gedling Seniors Council, which was launched and supported by Gedling Borough Council, but independent of the

Council, in 2017 with the aim “to combat loneliness and isolation.” My grateful thanks go to Ann for her commitment and interest, including the articles she submits to Newslines on the Seniors Council’s work, to keep us informed.

Then there is Grenville Shepherd, our Safety Officer, who before each monthly meeting checks the Hall and looks after our safety at all times, including, in his inimitable style, instructions and procedures to follow in case of emergency at those meetings. Thank you Gren. Your input is appreciated and necessary.

Philip Allsop has been our Independent Examiner of Accounts, so he checks our accounts submitted by our Treasurer, Anne Hegarty. Thank you for doing this Phillip. You have seen the light and become a member of our U3A, so welcome to you as a new member. This means Philip can no longer examine our accounts. I am pleased to say Clive Rogers has kindly agreed to take his place and will stand for election in this role at the AGM.

Then there are members who arrive early before monthly meetings to set out the chairs and those who help clear them away afterwards. These are most important tasks and done almost anonymously, so thank you to those who do so.

There must be other members I have not mentioned, who carry out tasks quietly, so thank you and long may you continue to help our U3A.

Alwyn Foster,  
Chairman,  
8th September 2020.