

# **Canterbury & District u3a: Chair's Annual Report 2023**

## **Introduction**

A steady increase in membership and a full programme of courses and events took place in 2023.

Executive Committee meetings were held on the second Monday of each month.

The Chair, and Vice Chair, attended the Third Age Trust (TAT) AGM in October. The Chair attended Kent u3a Network events; and participated in monthly u3a online Chairs' Forum meetings launched in August.

The University of Kent (UKC) partners Canterbury u3a, through a Memorandum of Understanding, as part of their commitment to engage with the public through its research, and to strengthen its links with the community. The arrangement supports the u3a Cinema Interest Group with film screenings in the Gulbenkian Arts Centre. Links were established with the Former Staff Association (FSA) at UKC. Links were re-established with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU).

## **Summary of main achievements**

### **Membership**

The numbers of members at the year- end was 1,100.

Joining Days were held on the first Friday morning of most months. These were hosted by the Membership Team and a band of volunteers to fully inform potential new members of u3a ethos and principles as well as explaining current courses and activities available. Refreshments were provided.

All new members received a personal welcome letter from the Chair and a copy of the latest Courses programme.

An Open Day took place in May to "showcase" activities within Canterbury u3a. Information and taster sessions were provided to attract potential new members.

### **Member Communication**

An Information card is produced annually; available after the AGM; listing key volunteer details and important dates including Monthly meetings.

A News Bulletin was sent out close to the first day of each month.

The Beacon email system was used to distribute the Courses programme and event reminders to the majority of members.

Our 8 Orange Street, Canterbury office facility was staffed most Wednesday and Thursday mornings offering photocopying resources and general query resolution. The Orange Street facility is used to mail out programmes and news bulletins to those without internet.

The Canterbury u3a website continued to be a useful platform to publicise details and course activities.

### **Courses and Activities Programmes**

We offer over one hundred courses and activities from September to April. The Summer Programme from May to August gives tutors and activity leaders an opportunity to run taster sessions in new subjects and ideas. During this period more outdoor activities complement the learning and social activities programme. A new courses' booking system was successfully launched in September.

Tutors, activity leaders, coordinators and hosts work hard to ensure members can enjoy a comprehensive learning programme and are being thanked with an annual lunch which, in 2023, included a lively discussion and many useful suggestions for the committee, some of which are now being developed.

### **Research**

The research group has been active since 2014, with 21 projects currently listed on the national u3a research database.

In December the group presented their most recent project, which explored the potential benefits to health and wellbeing of engaging in arts and creative activities by Canterbury u3a members during Covid-19 lockdown. From 173 responses to a validated questionnaire and 11 focus group transcripts they were able to identify a range of artistic creative activities which individuals had engaged in, with a variety of related health and wellbeing benefits being expressed. The full project report is available on request.

### **Monthly meetings and events**

We met on the second Wednesday afternoon of most months; the majority including an invited speaker. Course, Membership, and Events tables were hosted in the lobby to answer queries and facilitate easier access to information for some members. Refreshments are provided.

Other events included a Strawberry Tea, Autumn Quiz, Bring and Share Christmas Lunch, and Christmas Concert.

Two five day "history and heritage" coach holidays were organised; in May to Swansea and South Wales", and in September to Hampshire and the Isle of Wight".

Day Coach Outings were relaunched. The first "Hidden London" took place in April; the second in July to Romney Marsh and Rye; and the third in September to Sussex.

## **Finance**

Our U3A is supported through funds received from its members from subscriptions and course fees. These are used to fund our objectives through the hire of course venues, rental of the office accommodation at Orange Street, payment of speaker fees etc. A small sum is received as interest payments from the bank. In 2023 we took the decision to re-instate course fees, which had been discontinued during the Covid-19 epidemic. During that period, we had greatly reduced hiring of halls and general expenses. We have now fully recommenced our activities, and fees are necessary to ensure the financial viability of our u3a. The committee regularly reviewed financial reports during the year.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you to the Executive committee members for their diligent and time consuming work in ensuring that Canterbury & District u3a runs smoothly through-out the year. We are all volunteers and devote a considerable part of our time to promote and maintain the principles of u3a.

Canterbury & District u3a are participating in a consultation "Fit for the Future", launched by the Third Age Trust (TAT). This sets out a vision to give u3as more of a voice at national level. The TAT document is available on request.

I have participated in many activities during my second year as Chair and enjoyed my many conversations with members.

Thank you All

**Robin Terry, Chair**

05.03.24