

Chairman's Report

First of all, a big thank you all for coming today. It is wonderful to hold our AGM live after the last 3 years. This is my 4th AGM as your chair, and only the second one that is live! Please be tolerant if we are a bit rusty with procedural matters!

At the conclusion of the AGM, we will be gathering for some refreshments, which I am sure you will agree is better than being put into Zoom breakout rooms! However, you will have the same opportunity that you had in our Zoom AGM's to take the chance to talk to any member of the Committee about any issue that you would like to raise with us about the u3a.

My main duty today is to thank my committee who work tirelessly on your behalf to make Caterham u3a a success. And what a success it has been. Membership is up, the number of groups have increased significantly, we continue to run a great programme of monthly talks, and we have continued to offer an increasing number of social activities. Despite the pandemic, our finances remain in good shape.

Of course, we are not an island. We are part of the wider UK u3a movement, and try to keep you informed on the wide range of opportunities that are available for learning through the courses and seminars that they offer, as well as the Surrey Network study days.

So let me start by thanking my Committee, and a growing number of helpers. Perhaps, as I mention their names, they will stand so that you will recognise them.

Firstly, my Vice Chair and Publicity Officer - Paul Knight. I did not have a Vice Chair until this year. Not having one was a big mistake! As we have grown, the number of functions has grown. I like to support them all, but this is just not possible, so Paul volunteered to share the work, which has been an immense help to me. Paul has also managed our publicity very effectively, and will tell you what has been done in his report, but I must mention the Open Day, which was a Triumph.

Our Secretary, Ray Jessop, has done an outstanding job, particularly running this AGM. When he started the job, we had our AGM's on Zoom, so he had to master all the technological challenges. Just when he had done that, we asked him to ask you our members whether you wanted live AGM's again, and you did, so he then had to learn how to run a live one!

Ray handles all the admin work meticulously, and we do get numerous requests from the Third Age Trust for action, all of which are dealt with very efficiently, and our records are exemplary. More to the point, Ray can always locate any item that we need to refer to!

Our Treasurer, Ken Johnson, keeps a close eye on our finances, and ensures that we comply with u3a financial guidance. We have to be mindful of the fact that we are Trustees of your money, and ensure that it is spent wisely and in accordance with our Constitution and Charity Commission rules. On a personal note, I have to say that Ken is always the first to volunteer for any task. I don't think that Ken can have been in the army, as I think that they are taught never volunteer !

As our u3a has grown, so have the need for new groups. Our Groups Co- Ordinator, LizWhittaker, has responded by helping a large number of new groups get established, but has also continued to support the existing ones. Liz also volunteered to lead the Anniversary Walk, which involved 16 of our members walking part of the London Loop, in support of a

wider u3a project to mark the 40th anniversary of the movement. When I was last able to look at the website I saw that over 27 reports that have been posted by Group Leaders about the year's activities for their groups. If any of you tried to follow up on the email from Ray about the AGM, you will be aware that there are some technical hosting issues which has caused a large number of u3a's websites to be unavailable. My apologies to all those group leaders who took the trouble to complete the reports. I hope that the website will soon be available again.

I would like to couple my thanks to Liz with a grateful thank you to all the Group Leaders who do such a wonderful job. We are indeed fortunate to have such a lively set of group leaders, although just like Oliver Twist, we still keep asking for more!

During the year, we changed our Social Secretary. Penny Kingsmill had to stand down for personal reasons, but she remains fully committed to her role, by remaining on the Social committee, and has also become one of our helpers, by taking on the liaison role with a local initiative called "The Friendship Project". Joyce Jessop volunteered to take over, as Social Secretary, and has thrown herself into the job with imagination and enthusiasm. I am very grateful to all the Social committee who are doing a great job. Check the Newsletter regularly to see what is happening on the social front in our u3a.

As Joyce was previously our Network and Third Age Trust Link Officer, we needed a replacement, and found one in Elizabeth Collins. Elizabeth has had experience with other u3a's, which has proved really helpful, as we continually need to ask ourselves "could this be done better", or "is there more that we can do?" Elizabeth has already made some valuable contributions on this score. Once again, check the Newsletter as well as the TAT website to see what opportunities are open to you.

I mentioned the growth of our u3a. This continues to keep one of my longest serving committee members - Alan Kingsmill - busy! We have made some improvements to the process of joining our u3a, but the volume of new members does require a lot of work, which Alan manages very efficiently. Do remember to keep Alan informed if your personal circumstances change. We rely on our membership database to keep information flowing to you. Unfortunately, Alan is on holiday at the moment, no doubt preparing himself for the annual renewal of membership exercise.

There are a number of jobs that need doing to run a u3a, and we have been very lucky to have the support of a number of our members who are willing to give something to the u3a, and not just expect to take. Philip Lawson took over as webmaster from Phil Singleton this year. Our Website is a valuable marketing tool, as well as a source of information for us. However, it needs to be kept up to date, and only the members can provide Philip with the means to do that.

The other main source of information about what is happening in our u3a is our Newsletter. Lynn Barlow produces a wonderful document once every 2 months. It is easy to read, and gives you all the information that you need. However, Lynn edits the Newsletter. She does not write it. If she does not get input, it will be even easier to read, but not very informative. So if you want a newsletter, think about what you can contribute. The website and the Newsletter are 2 aspects of communication that we run. We also have 2 Facebook pages (we are keeping up with the times!) but Paul will say more about that.

Throughout the last 3 (actually nearly 4) years, we have been dealing with COVID. This has brought into sharper focus our need to care for the welfare of our members. Even as we emerge from COVID, that need remains. We need to be an inclusive and compassionate organisation, which looks after the welfare of our members. Sheila Frost has performed that

role in a dedicated and exemplary manner. I have personally been very grateful to Sheila for the work that she has done.

The growth of New Members has not only kept Alan and Liz busy. It has meant a lot of new members meetings for Margaret Smith to organise. We have been doing this on Zoom, but are now trying live meetings over tea and coffee. Both have their advantages, but live meetings do give the opportunity for social interaction. They also involve more work! However Margaret has done a great job with both live and zoo meetings, and continues to do so. In fact, we have one tomorrow.

Our programme of monthly talks continues to be very successful. The speakers and the subjects have been interesting, and entertaining, and we intend to maintain the standard of the talks, even though costs are rising. We had much larger attendance when we held the talks on zoom, (although the talk on the Bayeux Tapestry was an exception - we very nearly ran out of chairs!) so if you like live talks, do check your newsletter, emails and the website, and go along on a Monday afternoon, once each month, listen to an entertaining talk, have tea and biscuits and a chat with your friends. All free! Thanks, Lyn Robinson Jones for your hard work putting on such a great programme.

Finally, I need to thank Andrew Harper, who is our guru on Beacon. It is our main database and communication tool. Those who take the trouble to work out how to use it find it invaluable. It is vital to us. So even if you are a group leader who does not want to use it, please help us to keep it updated.

So a huge thank you from me to all of them. Please will all the Committee members and helpers stand, and please will the members show their appreciation to them.

Before I hand over to Ray to run the business part of AGM, perhaps I should report three successes that I have been actively championing, and 2 initiatives which we have now launched. Both with Welfare implications.

We have successfully launched a foreign holiday next year. I was very keen that we should try this, and am delighted that nearly 50 members are going to Northern France next year. All the work was done by one of our new members - Debs Skinner - who volunteered, and is not actually going on the trip! I should have mentioned Debs in my list of helpers, so thank you Debs.

Secondly, we have successfully launched a regular coffee morning. Again, one of our new members Katy Psaltis - ran a pilot for new members that was very popular, so Joyce Jessop is now running this as part of our social programme, and I think that it will now be a regular feature.

Finally, we have continued to co-operate with the local Probus organisation, and have been invited to join some of their outings. I am exploring another area of co-operation with another local organisation which I hope to share with you as it moves forward. This is the type of cooperation which the Friendship Project focuses on.

We recently launched a new programme of first aid tuition. Some years ago we ran a series of workshops with the aim of ensuring that every group had at least one member who had taken a basic first aid course. We are now going to repeat this exercise, and are also arranging a talk which will be given live to as many members as want to attend, but will also be recorded, and a link put on the website.

We also thought that it was quite important that we had a record of as many emergency contact numbers as possible. We appreciate that not everyone has an emergency contact, and not everyone wants to record it, but we also think that some members simply forget to record it, or to check that it is accurate, so we are checking our records and are contacting everyone to make sure that we have them recorded when members are happy to provide it.

Both of these initiatives require work, and we have been fortunate to obtain the services of Patricia Barnard, who is running the First Aid programme. Andrew Harper, who I have already mentioned will be running the Emergency Contact Programme.

This does show the importance of volunteers, but at the moment, the pool of volunteers is empty! We think that our Membership Secretary could do with some help, as a large part of his job is done at the same time every year. So I am asking for a volunteer to act as Assistant Membership Secretary. This will not be a Committee position, and will give one of our members a chance to learn about Beacon. I will be repeating this request in the newsletter and in my mini Newsletter.

I would like to say a few more words at the conclusion of the AGM before we adjourn for refreshments.

So, I am now going to sit down, and let Ray do all the work!