

Chairman's report, Chester u3a 2021/22

By the AGM of Nov 2021, we were back to face to face meetings. Tuesday lectures were live, simultaneously streamed to those who could not attend in person and a few days later, the lecture was available on line (Youtube). This arrangement has worked extremely well and on occasions the total attendances have been well above the 150 plus who could have attended in the lecture hall. This Tuesday lecture pattern is likely to continue. The topics covered in the lectures have ranged from the Singing Ape to Art Forgery to Libraries to Changing attitudes to Medical Practice—no discernible link between them other than that they were all of interest to our members !

We re-started the Thursday meetings at St Columba's church in April 2022. Talks there tend to be more light hearted and of practical relevance e.g. on Assisting Vision impaired persons, or a performance from a storyteller. The audio-visual facilities are not as good as in the Festival church and we do not have a facility of recording the talks and making it available to members later. Numbers vary from 30 to 60 on occasions. The easy car parking is a draw for some members.

To try and give prior warning of the content of meetings and appeal to more members, we have set up a Speaker Team that will set out a varied programme for some months ahead. The team is in its infancy but is working on a scheme.

Our Groups Co-ordinator (Stuart) and Margaret, the Business Sec were the drivers behind our first ever time limited course in autumn 2021. The theme was Explore the Tidal Dee and studied various aspects of the Dee starting with its source in Wales and its course, human activity and buildings of interest along its course and wildlife and plants linked with it. Many of the lecturers were our members. There were two outdoor sessions exploring parts of the Dee. The final exhibition of material and posters drew a good crowd to the Festival church in March 2022. We had comments like *"I think I know much more about the area now, thank you"*

We are looking forward to the next themed course in 2023, possibly on Salt and Canals.

The Chester Times has continued to be a source of delight—loads of interesting articles from special interest groups, with lovely illustrative photographs, humorous clip art insertions, reports on trips and book reviews—all evidence of a lively membership. Long may it continue.

I express some sadness we were not able to stage a commemorative event in Chester for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the setting up of the u3a in the UK. This was due to a lack of volunteers.

This year the Chair, Communications Sec, Groups Co-ordinator and Minutes Sec are stepping down. I thank them for their efficient and unobtrusive service to the Chester u3a. As ever, we need other members to step in if we are to survive as a self help organisation.

I record my thanks to the previous Chair, Jenny, for her support in my early days as Chair when I was ignorant about basic responses and to the Treasurer, Gary, who has been a source of support and wisdom all along. There are many others I cannot name here who have helped when suddenly called upon e.g. welcoming at the door, making refreshments and washing up, laying out and packing away the chairs at meetings at St Coulmba's church

Our own 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary is next year and I hope we will be able to make a suitable and lasting contribution to Chester in 2023.

To all, may I wish continued flourishing of the Chester branch of the national u3a.

Ben John

20 Nov 2022