

**MINUTES OF HALF YEARLY MEETING OF THE COTSWOLD
LINK
HELD AT SAPEY GOLF CLUB, UPPER SAPEY, WR6 6XI
19 MARCH 2019**

The **Minutes** of the half yearly meeting held at Salwarpe Village Hall, Droitwich, March 22 2018 were accepted as a true record by a show of hands.

Matters arising – none

1. Chairman's remarks -Welcome again to our half yearly meeting and to our two regional trustees from the West Midlands and South West, Auriol and Jill, whom I'm sure need no introductions. Also welcome to Fran Walton, Education and Resources Manager at National Office who will update us on the revamped Resources Centre. I hope those of you present at our last meeting in Gloucester found it very useful in clarifying the information coming from National Office on recommended policies when Sophie Wellings, Advice and Volunteer Manager, updated Cotswold Link. And following queries on Beacon, it is welcome to know that National Office is working further on this area. At the last meeting the issue was raised on the subject of 'welfare', in this instance on dealing with the reporting or not of the death of a member. It was apparent that U3As operate differently and at present it doesn't seem that there is any specific advice from National Office on welfare as such, apart from advice on deaf awareness and disability. Perhaps you would feel it useful to have a separate meeting within the Cotswold Link for those interested in sharing good practice when dealing with these issues. Earlier this year I was invited to speak to a group at the Worcester branch of Sight Concern on the U3A and I was accompanied by the Accessibility and Inclusion Secretary from Worcester U3A. Sue's former employment meant she was very capable of understanding their issues but it did illustrate that we can be very inclusive as long as leaders are aware. I know that both regional trustees are keen to enable training and particularly within networks. The current list of workshops offered are – Running your U3A; Managing Growth; Financial Matters; Interest Groups matter; Communications; Volunteers and Volunteering and Keeping it legal' I believe Sophie covered most of the topics on keeping it legal last October. I attended a very good Financial Matters workshop held in Birmingham for the West Midlands region at the end of last year, and I'm sure we could arrange another one for the groups within the Cotswold Link. I am aware that committees change and new committee members are often worried about their responsibilities. So please let the committee know if you would welcome training on any of these issues. As ever, it is useful to be sent your newsletters, and via email is fine. I know several of you publish on your websites but with differing publishing dates for so many U3As it is not always possible for me to keep up to date. I know one U3A is not now distributing outside their own membership list. But after listening to the advice of Sophie at the last meeting, I feel it is taking the lessons of GDPD too seriously. Sophie said that like many organisations, National Office took the GDPD legislation extremely seriously last year, but as with most things, common sense should keep groups legal. And finally, we have arranged another Special Interest Day entitled "Engineering the Future" to be held on Thursday 11 July. We are using The Pavilion at Cheltenham again as the venue as it seemed to be very convenient last year for most people. We will have speaking Dr Claus

Goersmann from Johnson Matthey discussing future technology for controlling vehicle emissions to enable manufacturers to meet future government targets: Professor Moataz Attallah from Birmingham University talking on 3D to 4D printing to create a new class of smart engineering products. Our third speaker is Professor Lewis Darnell from the University of Westminster. Some of you may remember him speaking at a previous interest day held in Gloucester when he gave a fascinating talk on how civilization could rebuild itself after a global catastrophe. Professor Darnell has just published a highly acclaimed book entitled "Origins: How the Earth Made Us", and using this as his base he will show how the past will influence our future.

I admit I have a non-scientific background, but Jeremy has put together this programme which sounds absorbing and something for everyone. We have a poster on the interest day with all the details and, together with the application forms, will be going out to all U3As shortly via you as our contact. Please give this publicity within your group as interest days are open to all members and we rely on you to get details in your newsletter and mentioned at main meetings.

Next meeting will be hosted by Fairford U3A in Lechlade on 14 October 2019. Details will be circulated in the summer. The speaker – we hope – will be Stephen Dyer, the U3A National Genealogist Advisor so should be of particular interest to family/regional history groups.

2. Regional Trustees reports

Jill Nicholls, SW Region Trustee - Life in the South West continues to be very active and varied and I've only tapped into a small part of events. This is no criticism, but I would still like to know when I'm going to have to pay the bill!!

In the period since my last report I have attended Board meetings, network meetings and joined some groups for special celebrations. There have been two new U3As in Wilton and Chudleigh.

We continue to add new U3As to our numbers - I think we're up to 135, but am prepared to be challenged on that. I was delighted to attend Penzance's first AGM as it was wound up as not viable 2 years ago! Now it's thriving.

Wilton, near Salisbury, had its inaugural meeting and I am aware of other new groups in the offing: Tetbury, Stithians Worle and Teignmouth.

I've been seeking new volunteers to help out in the region (BECAUSE YOU KNOW HOW HUGE IT IS!) and to this end we had a meeting with Sophie Wellings in January. I am holding a follow up to this in April where recent recruits will have the opportunity to meet experienced volunteers and perhaps take the step towards training further. There's room for more.

Auriol Ainley, West Midland Trustee - I have been invited to a number of U3As for various functions – just telling them about the region as some did not know that they even had a Trustee - thank you lunches for group leaders, a birthday celebration tea and so on. There is a lot of interesting things to do. The only draw-back I have to talk!! Several U3As have held Open Days, it is hoped more will do so – there is a regional grant available for these events – approval to be given by the Regional Trustee.

The Coventry & Warwick's network is very keen to develop what they provide to their members, and are looking to use Cotswold Link as an example. Apart from Cotswold Link, one other network held a Study day.

We held a Finance Workshop in Birmingham which was extremely well attended. Please do let me know if you would like such workshops in your area, it is certainly beneficial to organise them through a network to maximise benefit to our members.

There will be the first Language Study Workshop in Birmingham next week, which will be most interesting. I did hold one with Evesham German group, and people have been asking for another, so I may be able to pick up some ideas for another one. Stourbridge have invited me to their Cyber fraud workshop – please do let me know if you are interested in holding workshops. It is also very important that a Regional Trustee is aware of what is going on in their region – so please let me know what you are up to!

We have held a Regional Team Meeting and the team is working well with its additional members always with a lot to discuss. There are no new U3As in the pipeline, so let me know if you have any thoughts of where there is no U3A presence. There have been very few troubleshooting issues, the National Office has dealt with legal issues. Most issues are relatively simple to resolve. It does show that belonging to a network is a very valuable asset, often worries/concerns can be shared over a cuppa, and no-one has ever asked a new question – someone somewhere has asked it before.

Our regional conference is next week – I had hoped that all 85 of our U3As would attend, and a large majority have already registered. It should be a most informative day on How to keep your U3A Vibrant and Lively!

The national Network Link is holding its bi-annual meeting in May, 1 representative from each network is invited, and the whole day is lively, informative and valuable.

CEO Sam Mauger's monthly email newsletter is proving to be extremely popular – you have to register to receive it, so I encourage you all, and your members, to visit the national website and follow the link. You simply have to provide your email address, which U3A you belong to, and hey presto! It arrives in your mailbox. We found it really valuable on the International committee as we were looking for an exchange group with Uppsala in Sweden – we had 11 interested U3As and 4 of them are in conversations with Uppsala to see how they can proceed.

It is good to be back in Bromyard as I attended its very first meeting with Carole Millin when you decided a U3A would be a good idea – well done on your success.

- 3. **Website** -The chairman reminded members that the website is there for their use in whatever way they wish - to advertise forthcoming events, sharing information that they think other U3A's and so on. David Barrett is the Link manager.

There being no other business the meeting closed.

Signed

Date

The next half yearly meeting is to be hosted by Fairford U3A in Lechlade on 14 October 2019.

4. Fran Walton– Education & Resources Manager, National Office

Fran began by explaining the current staffing and responsibilities at National Office. They have a small team of 10 full time and 2 part time staff an increase of 7% since 2009. The lead officers for each section are: Advice & Volunteering led by Sophie Welling; Finance led by Kevin Traynor and Education & Resources led by Fran. The office is supported by 300 volunteers with 4 volunteer trustees in the office during open hours.

Education and Resources, covers more or less everything which is not finance, advice or volunteering. Working with her are additional officers – Liz Drury (Communications which includes the Newsletter), Adam Walton (Beacon) and Julie Travers (Summer Schools).

They are responsible for:

- Production & distribution of TAM & Sources
- Third Age websites – workshops
- Conference websites – conference
- Summer schools
- Sources online
- Document advice policies
- Trust archive
- Online shop
- Database – design & updating/ annual returns
- Annual conference
- Mailings – email & print
- AGM – paper mailings
- Regional mailings
- National Subject Study day
- Subject advisors
- DVD library
- IT infrastructure ordinance
- Office & Building

Fran concluded by answering questions which included describing the process in which national advisers were chosen; that the trust uses external consultants for GDPR matters; grievance against committee as well as the suggestion to draw up grievance guidelines refer to Sophie Wellings;

Jane Flynn thanked Fran for her comprehensive explanation of the role of the National Office and particularly that of her department.

5. Airing & Sharing

- Jeremy Furtado (Gloucester) i-pad expertise
- Cheltenham – mentoring time in the library weekly
- Jeremy Furtado – difficulty getting on Summer schools – answered by Auriol Ainley & Jill Nicholls (regional trustees) explaining that it is organised through the web site but they would take the matter to the board.
- Maggie Conu (Cheltenham) – MOTO (members on their own) asked how many others had such a group – Pershore, Cam & Dursley; Stroud – just started a solo group
- Clive Egerton (Stroud) – virtual U3A £12 annually available for house bound members but only 79 signed up as software very poor. The regional trustees will refer to U3A +.

- Tony Natt (Cirencester) – could we have something on SLP next AGM; Lloyd Silverthorne (Bishops Cleeve)– workshop on IT & suggested computer buddies.
- Bill Hawthorne (Winchcombe) –Margaret Tully (Cam & Dursley) - the most FAQ on their website can we drop ‘University’ from U3A. Jill Nicholls said that national office plan to drop the strapline but U3A will still be the logo.
- Margaret Tully – how do we persuade people to volunteer? Graham Percival (Evesham) said that they are setting up sub – committees to help the committee members in the hope that it will create confidence.

6. Alan Russell: Worcester U3A - IT Security for your Computer

- Avoid opening .exe and .bat.scr files
- Always check the site you are using is secure (https//: or with a padlock image)
- Back up your files regularly and check that the back- up drive works.
- Don’t react quickly to messages such as: You have a virus
- Don’t respond to 0843 and 0844 numbers – they cost you a fortune
- Sign up with the telephone preference service to cut down on unwanted calls tps.org.uk
- Keep contactless cards in RFID wallets to avoid them being cloned
- If you use Windows 10 check that Windows Defender and Windows update automatically
- You can get advice about staying safe online by looking at the website cifas.org.uk
- Consider using a password manager to help you create and remember strong passwords
- Delete your cookies at least monthly (apart from important ones such as those linked to your bank (if you bank online)
- There is never any need to defragment if you have an SSD drive

Alan is willing to forward his slides to any Link member U3A –

email: chairman@worcesteru3a.org.

Jane Flynn thanked Alan.

The meeting closed at 15.45pm