

Chair's Report to the AGM April 17th 2024

This year has seen some notable successes for Crediton u3a. We have the largest number of members since our foundation (we now have 321 members), our open meetings have seen excellent attendance with numbers back at pre-pandemic levels and, despite not putting up the 2023/24 membership and Open Meeting fees, our financial state remains healthy. Our total income for the year was £5960 and our Expenditure was £3810. At the year end we have a total of £7665 in our various accounts. Because our financial status is good, we do not intend to put up fees for 2024/25 either despite some increasing costs. Membership will remain at £12 and attendance at the Open Meetings will be £1.50. So do rejoin either online or in person. Continuing the good news, the monthly Coffee Mornings are well attended. Please do come along if you have the time, there's no need to tell anyone in advance, just turn up at Mole Avon on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10:30. Our Christmas Lunch was also well attended with over 90 people meeting at the Waie Inn for an excellent meal. Many thanks go to Fenella Rundell and Carole Thomas for their efficient organisation of the event.

We have introduced some innovations this year to try to improve your membership experience. Firstly, we are aware some people don't come to the Open Meeting because they would find it difficult to hear or see the talk. So, we have reserved some seats at the front for them. (Don't worry, there's always a seat for the partner next to the reserved seat!) They are there on a first-come, first-served basis and so do feel free to try one. Also, we are aware that it can seem rather intimidating or unfriendly to come into a large room where you know few people, and, with the chairs arranged for a talk, there's no space to chat. Firstly, please feel free to chat to the 'greeters'. There are normally two of us near the entrance to do just that, so do make our lives worthwhile! We are also introducing an extended meeting every 3-4 months, where we serve refreshments after the talk as well as before the talk and we hope to have tables and chairs arranged in a more informal, social setting. We held our first one in March and this seemed to go very well.

Of course there's always a downside. We have over 25 active special interest groups at present but this year we have regretfully lost a few including Photography and Mindfulness. Many groups have a 'natural life' and about 5-7 years appears to be about that. Often a group is sustained by the group leader, and when they develop other commitments or feel they have 'run dry' of ideas, these groups fail. This is a shame and I hope groups currently looking for new leaders will find people to take up the challenge. I personally found that being a group leader helped me to develop friends that I may never have otherwise known and it has been a great pleasure. Remember that the committee will support group leaders and that responsibility for a group need not fall on one person alone. I would like to thank all group leaders, past and present, for taking on the role and look forward to new groups coming forward as people develop their interests further.

Under our constitution, the committee must seek re-election each year. We also have some spaces to fill. Robin Kear and Sandra Ragalsky have regretfully had to stand down. I would like to thank them both for their work and hope some of you would like to join us in a friendly and relaxed committee that works for the benefit of us all.

Finally. I would like to leave you with the thought that in these internationally very challenging times, it is heartwarming that people in and around Crediton can take the time to expand their horizons and join in fellowship and friendship.

Liz Ouldrige (Chair)