

DARLINGTON U3A AGM - 2 FEBRUARY 2024

PROJECT AND DEVELOPMENT LEAD REPORT

It's been an interesting and challenging year as we've worked to build our u3a back to its former glory!

The first challenge was finding a **new home** for our Monthly Meetings when the King's Head was unwilling to continue hosting us. I think probably many of us were a little uncertain about the enforced move to the Dolphin Centre, but the combination of a light, bright room and helpful staff have helped us settle in very well.

We've started a number of **new groups**, some of which have flourished and others have sadly failed:-

- despite there being a lot of initial interest in our Jolly Fit classes with Liz Jolly, that didn't translate into regular and reliable attendance and the class folded after six months.
- similarly - and very sadly - Susan Walker has drawn a halt after her dance classes could not attract sufficient dancers to make it viable - and to justify Susan's time. So thank you Susan for giving us the opportunity to have a go.
- Tai Chi is continuing at the moment, but definitely needs greater numbers to make it viable, so if you could be interested give it a try!
- Wine Appreciation is continuing with reasonable numbers, but new members would be welcome, and finally
- Lunch Club attendances vary considerably - perhaps partially due to venue and maybe also cost being a consideration - we need feedback to make sure we develop the group in the best way.

If you feel you would like to start a new group please let us know; there will be people on the Committee or in the general membership who have the knowledge and experience to encourage and support you if your idea is viable.

We've run a couple of **day trips** with many of us utilising our bus passes; our first was to the Georgian Theatre in Richmond, and the second was to The Auckland Project at Bishop Auckland - both very much enjoyed with excellent feedback.

We've discovered how very expensive coach hire is nowadays, but If you have an idea for an interesting day out where we could use our bus passes or car share, please make some investigations and let us know what you have in mind.

Later this year some members are utilising Caledonian Travel to whisk them off to the Harrogate Flower Show in April, and Kynren in August. These aren't u3a trips as such, but by co-ordinating ourselves we get to enjoy the company of some fellow u3a members whilst taking advantage of the "mass rates" and organisation available via Caledonian.

If you have email you will know that each month we email you any **news from the Monthly Meeting**, together with booking information for Lunch Club and Day Trips. Hopefully this keeps most members up to date even if they don't or can't attend this meeting.

However, there are some people who don't come here and don't have email, so we have run a four month trial to try to improve communications to those members by sending information out via the Group Leaders. However, the consensus is that this has not been successful and has not been valued and so we will draw the trial to a close.

If you do know anybody who can't pick up information here [at the Monthly Meeting] and doesn't have email, please pass information on to them as and when you can.

The final event of the year was **Christmas Lunch** which - after researching the options - we elected to hold here. It was quite hard work, but everybody seemed to enjoy it and Sue and I were very gratified to receive so many generous comments from those who had attended.

Victoria Laing 2 February 2024