

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2019 AGM:

I can look back on my first 12 months as Chairman of Ealing U3A on what I think has been a most successful year. We are now "well embedded" at Ealing Green Church after two and a half years, and have excellent relationships both with the Administrator, Sarah Hunter, and the lovely kitchen staff ably led by Helen Harper. I can also report that the Church is allowing us to use their address as our postal address, so we are now established with a proper address, not just that of the home address of the Chairman or Secretary.

I think what has been the biggest plus for the last year has been the attractive range of Thursday talks, which is for a number of members their only point of contact with Ealing U3A. The Thursday meetings have drawn sizeable numbers of members each week, often requiring extra seating. A number of our Speakers have commented favourably on the large size of the audience and the excellent quality of the questions asked.

But of course, we need to give considerable thanks to those who have put together the programme of speaker engagements, Yvonne Hughes up to the end of 2018, and then from January 2019 onwards Marie Todman. Both have done wonderfully well. I have reported elsewhere that at the U3A National Conference in Nottingham last autumn other U3As were amazed that we were able to have 40 talks each year which enables members to have regular contact with each other. This compares most favourably with most U3As who have only one meeting each month. "How on earth do you manage that?" was a fairly routine question, to which I always say "We have a brilliant, totally dedicated Speaker Organiser". Thanks also are due to Barbara Kinn and George Martin who helped us organise the 3-talk Summer Programme, which was on the theme of Women's Suffrage.

Mention of our Thursday talks can't be made without acknowledging the valuable contribution of those who meet and greet and otherwise assist; Sue Sotheran gives an initial smiling welcome to everyone as they arrive, Margaret Proctor and Mary Hamilton are on hand at the interval to speak with New Members and answer any questions they might have, and we have a grand Thursday team who take turns by rota to deal with putting out and removing the chairs, looking after the sound and IT setup. We are grateful to them all.

Our groups continue to function well, and I'd like to thank all Group convenors for their efforts. Our Group Co-ordinator, Ann Marie Tighe, has now stepped down (thank you Ann Marie for all you have done) and we seek a replacement for her. This is a position of prime importance, which involves being in touch with Group Convenors, and keeping a record of where there are vacancies, and where there are people who want to join a Group. If anyone feels they would be interested in this job, please let me know.

We hope that some new interest groups might take off. At the recent New Members Coffee Morning, which was well attended, we produced information to stimulate thought for some possible new groups and await to see how that might develop.

I have been most fortunate in having a very active and supportive committee helping run Ealing U3A. Phil Broomsgrove has acted as my deputy and Derek Atkinson has proved both effective (and also popular) in making the announcements when I was

forced to be absent. Jill Thumpston continued to work on our Membership, and Barbara Kinn as our Treasurer, assisted for the last few weeks by Sue Peach who is to succeed her. Sylvia Stirling has proved a most able and reliable Secretary, and Margaret Proctor, Sue Sotheran and Linda Ward provided sound advice in Committee. I extend my thanks to all of them.

I am most grateful to Phil Broomsgrove and his Team (Ed Baker, Jurek Narozanski, Lyn Duffus) who are editing and updating our website. Please do look at it! Phil has also introduced generic email addresses, so that anyone wanting to get in touch with the Chairman can now use the email: Chairman@U3AEaling.org.uk, or Secretary@U3AEaling.org.uk, and these email addresses won't change, even when there is a change of Chairman or Secretary.

I need to make an additional point here about the Committee. For some years Ealing U3A has "done its own thing" as regarding the length of time that Committee members may stand, regardless of our Constitution, and I know we are far from alone in doing so! However the U3A Trust, which oversees the running of U3As, issued a strong recommendation to all U3As that best practise is for Committee Members to stand for only 3 continuous years, at which time they should step down, (although there is no formal limit to the length of time that someone can be co-opted on to the Committee). And so this year we have three members stepping down formally, Barbara Kinn, Jill Thumpston and Sue Sotheran, each of whom has served for a number of years and huge thanks are due to each of them.

Jill Thumpston, although no longer on the committee after today, has kindly agreed for the time being to continue to maintain our Membership records which, for all the 30 years of its existence has been kept on spreadsheets. However, during the coming year, we will to adopt the Beacon Membership computerised system which is already widely used by many U3As, and a team will be formed to take this forward. This will be led by one of our newer Ealing U3A members, Jill Winter. Once the necessary membership database is in place, Jill Thumpston will then, after many false dawns, finally be able to lay down her Membership responsibilities and we hope that Jill Winter will take over.

Our Finances are extremely healthy. As anyone who has been a member going back to our Town Hall days will know it was felt necessary to increase members' annual subscription from £25 to £30 because of the increased costs of rent at Ealing Green Church and also to purchase necessary equipment. But at the start of this year we were able to reduce the subscription back to £25.

This year we were delighted to offer Life Memberships to two past Chairmen, John Deighton and George Martin in gratitude for their many contributions to Ealing U3A over a number of years.

I have greatly enjoyed my first year as your Chairman and, assuming your continued vote (!) look forward to serving you in the coming year.

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