

EPSOM AND EWELL U3A – 2019 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Committee Review August 2018 – July 2019

The year started with a celebration of Epsom & Ewell U3A's Thirtieth Anniversary. At a lunch on 19 September 2018 at Epsom Downs Racecourse Regional Trustee, Bob Duckmanton, joined 168 members in celebrating this milestone. The talent of the groups was demonstrated in entertainment provided by members of the writing groups reading their own works, and Singing for Pleasure 1 invited guests to join in singing popular songs. Another event was a tea arranged at the Woodlands Park Hotel for those who were no longer members but who had contributed to the establishment of the U3A.

Administration / Governance

The Committee has met six times during the year. Unfortunately in the New Year Ted Morrey had a serious fall and, with subsequent developments in his health, felt he could not continue as Secretary. Ted died on 10 September 2019. Our thanks to Ted, and to Tony Brewis who stepped into the breach to serve the remainder of Ted's term of office and is now standing for election.

A Code of Conduct and a Complaints Procedure were drawn up and have been published on the website. Summaries of Insurance and Licences have been made available to members and groups.

Membership

Having transferred all the data from our old database to Beacon, we are now up and running. As members are now aware, the new membership cards produced by Beacon are business-card size and only show the barest minimum to identify members as in keeping with the General Data Protection rules. For those who joined after May 2018 your membership numbers will have also changed, as Beacon automatically generates the numbers and cannot be altered. You will also note that emails you receive periodically are generated from Beacon. As mentioned in the renewal letter, members can now pay their subscriptions by bank transfer.

Our numbers continue to grow, largely through word of mouth recommendation. There are now 1,129 members. This compares to 1,054 in 2018. At Open House in May, 40 new members joined on the day making a total of 91 new members this year. Although there have been some resignations (mainly due to ill health or moving from the area) new members continue to join at an average of 2 per week.

Especial thanks are due to Wendy Clubb who was responsible for overseeing the data transfer and implementing Beacon. This proved not entirely without its problems. We hope that the developments being proposed for Beacon will resolve those issues.

When new members join we invite them to a Coffee Morning. They appreciate the opportunity to meet the Committee and to learn about the U3A and how to participate in its various activities. This, we believe, enables them to get the most benefit from their membership.

We have an average of 120 members attending the monthly meetings on Monday mornings. The topics have ranged from the Plight of the Bumblebee, Women in Aviation, Volunteering in Malawi, and the Weird and Wonderful World of the Law. We also had talks from Mission Aviation Fellowship and there was a record attendance for the presentation from Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance.

We thank Terry Caddle for liaising with the speakers and Bourne Hall to ensure that the Monday morning arrangements run smoothly.

Groups

We now have a total of 149 groups. Four groups closed during the year. Nineteen new groups were started, mainly as a result of the large numbers signing up at Open House. The majority of the groups meet in members' homes. This limits the size of the group. Therefore new groups covering the same subject are set up. Around 40 group leaders represented about 110 different sorts of groups, showcasing the wide variety of interests we offer our members.

Among the new group activities are Beer Tasting, Belly Dancing, History Post Roman Britain, 20th Century European History, and Calligraphy.

Around 70 group leaders attended the annual group leaders' meeting with Roger Cayzer presenting 'A Different View of the National Trust'. For the second year running Irene and Dennis Moore and their helpers provided an excellent lunch for which we thank them.

We thank the Group Leaders for their time and commitment to running the groups which are the lifeblood of the U3A movement.

Communication with Members

Two paper Newsletters were sent to all members in November and May. We thank Ann Norman for her help in producing these. Epsom & Ewell U3A News has been emailed monthly highlighting forthcoming events and topical news. This is in addition to the national monthly bulletin from the Third Age Trust to which members can subscribe. Currently 88% of our members have email addresses but we know that not everyone reads their emails in a timely manner and sufficiently regularly to be able to rely on electronic communication for booking events.

Our lovely new blue display boards have been a real focal point at various meetings and events this year. We have displayed forthcoming events, letters of thanks, photos of outings and other events members can attend. Members have commented on our displays and enjoy looking to see what's on offer and, of course, having a chat.

Another on-going project this year is to recruit new people to shadow existing committee members, ready to take on a new roles at the AGM in October or to become a "Helper", to assist with all the behind the scenes jobs that need doing, to run our successful and ever growing U3A.

Social Activities

Rosie Cooper and Sue Wood have been busy working together arranging an interesting and varied social programme. Their 'Walks and Talks' have proved to be a popular innovation with visits to the Royal Albert Hall and the Oval Cricket Ground and following the path taken by The Great Fire of London. Coach trips have been made to Windsor Castle with a talk on its restoration after the fire. There have been three outings associated with locations used in TV programmes: Midsomer Murders, Call the Midwife and Downton Abbey. All outings have been sold out soon after going on sale and the waiting lists have been long. A lot of new members have been welcomed on these days out.

Theatre visits by coach have been made to Brighton, Guildford, Richmond and Woking with a varied programme which included comedy, drama and musicals. A visit to The Mill at Sonning Theatre which included a buffet lunch was introduced into the theatre programme. Our thanks to Hazel Bamford for organising these and to Joan Brown who arranged two ticket-only performances in London.

Only one holiday was arranged in 2018. In September a group of 34 spent five days in South Wales. The holidays are arranged through tour operators who specialise in group holidays; the U3A acts as coordinator.

Publicity

Publicity traditionally meant advertising in magazines and newspapers, with posters, and via direct mail. We practise all three, with inserts in the local Connections magazine, our leaflets displayed on noticeboards in libraries, day centres and medical centres, and mail-outs to our membership. Our recruitment figures and annual Open House attendance suggest that the message is getting through but, with time, electronic media will grow in importance. So we also ensure that our website is kept up to date – Site Builder makes this very easy, and the Beacon database will be of growing importance in keeping members informed.

Surrey U3A Network

Epsom & Ewell U3A was represented at the meetings of the Surrey U3A Network held in October 2018 and March 2019. These meetings are a useful forum in which to exchange ideas. Many of our members attend the Study Days organised by the Network.

In addition to those mentioned earlier we would like to thank Lynda Jennings and those on the Helpers' Register who assist us at the monthly meetings and coffee morning particularly. Also Veronica Wheeler, our Welfare Officer, who sends out cards to those who have been in hospital or suffered a bereavement.

The Future

We have been fortunate to have volunteers to take on the roles of Membership Secretary and Group Coordinator. As yet we do not have a Vice Chairman or replacement for me as Chairman for you to vote in but we are working on this and hope to have someone in post soon. In the meantime, I have reluctantly agreed to remain as Chairman for a fourth **and final year** - as permitted by our Constitution - with assistance from some additional members whom we have persuaded to join the Committee to take on specific tasks. Epsom & Ewell will no longer exist unless more of our over 1,100 members step forward to take on the future running of the U3A. It is vital that we keep refreshing the Committee. Next year we will be looking for Social Secretaries to succeed Rosie Cooper and Sue Wood so it would be good to have people shadowing them this year. We always appreciate hearing from anyone interested in joining the Committee.

In conclusion I would like to thank the committee members for their hard work and support throughout the year. With a strong and enlarged Committee in the coming year I will be stepping back. This will be welcomed by my husband, John, who is very supportive and whom I would like to thank publicly.