

u3a Guernsey - 2021 Annual Report

Annual General Meeting - 27th August 2021

u3a Guernsey is flourishing! Whatever we are doing, we seem to be getting it right, as despite the continuing pandemic, the rise in our membership numbers continues unabated. Very shortly we will be welcoming our 1,000th member (up from 850 this time a year ago); an amazing growth given that some u3as in the UK are losing members due to the impact of their rather more severe lockdowns and restrictions.

But such continued growth does produce additional strains on everyone organising our groups and our events. So, I am pleased to report that new active volunteers have come forward to share the load across the organisation, so that we can cope with the influx of new members.

In this regard, I would like to mention just some of the members who have come forward over the past 13 months to organise activities for members:

- Pat Kettlety, who started up our second Sunday Lunch Group
- Wendy Guille, who started up our third Sunday Lunch Group
- Jenny Grundy, who started up the new Sew & Create Group
- Wendy Anthony, who convenes the new Darts Group
- Gwen Rothwell, who runs our first Skittles Group, which became so popular that
- Glenis Seal, agreed to set up our second Skittles Group, followed by
- Sandy Le Poidevin, who now convenes our third Skittles Group
- Bob Thompson, who convenes the new Gentle Walks Group
- June Le Poidevin, who started up the new Chair Exercise Fitness Group
- Angela Hockey & Joan Rouget, who between them now convene the new Rummikub Group
- John Gillson, who started up the new Folk Dancing Group
- Marion Richards, who started up the new Guitar for Beginners Group
- Elizabeth Mitchell, who tried very hard to start up a Chess Group (and is still hoping someone will come forward to teach her and other members interested in learning chess)
- Shelia Brown, who started a new Drawing for Beginners Group called imaginatively "I can't Draw a Straight Line!"
- Bob Perkins, who started our second Euchre Group (as well as the first Euchre Group!)
- Karen Pickles, who convenes our fourth Padel Tennis Group
- Martin Belcher & Jeanne Langford, who have started our new Pastel Painting Group
- Mike de Carteret, who started our new Family History Group
- Clive Simon, who took over the Philosophy Group from Wendy Byrom
- Ian Jowitt, who took over from myself as Newsletter Editor
- Peter Langford, who set up the new Theoretical Minimum Group (which is all about how little you need to know to learn about physics, and I'm told that at least five of our members know that much!)
- And Mary Brogan, who started up our first Viewpoints Discussion Group and then after she got overwhelmed with members wanting to join the first one, she set up a second Group!

With now around 90 interest groups, I could be here all afternoon reporting all of the activities. But some of the highlights have been:

- The Creative Writing Group - whose short stories have become a popular read in the *Guernsey Press*
- The Creative Stitchers Group - who made an enormous Christmas Tree, which was silently auctioned at our Open Day and raised £100 for GROW
- The Woodworking Group - who applied to our Community Projects Fund for materials to build tables & benches for the *Bright Beginnings* Children's Centre, the family support charity

- The All Things Felting Group - who exhibited at the Guernsey Eistedfodd and received a First Class certificate
- The Quizzers Group, whose quiz in November raised £100 for the Guernsey Cheshire Home, as well as making a surplus of £75 to support other u3a activities
- Frankie Billington of the Metalwork Group, who at the age of 94 had one of her sculpture pieces exhibited in the Guernsey Arts Open Exhibition
- Shelia Brown of the Drawing for Beginners Group, who had two of her paintings accepted for the prestigious JJ Fox International Art Competition
- Following our last AGM in July last year, Molly Thompson and the u3a Choir featured in the national u3a magazine, *Third Age Matters*, as probably the only choir to have performed at any u3a AGM in whole of the British Isles since the first lockdown earlier in the year.

Our speaker programme was rather disjointed over the past year due to the covid restrictions and lockdowns, but we still managed talks from:

- Dr Nicky Brink MBE, Director of Public Health, who enthralled over 150 members at the Performing Arts Centre in September
- Adrian Sarchet, Guernsey's own Sea Donkey and one of only 21 people in the world to have completed all seven of the great ocean swims, who spoke to 120 members over two dates in May & June at La Villette Hotel
- The Digital Eagles team from Barclays Bank who helped members avoid online scams & fraud with various online video sessions which we plugged into.

I am glad to report that June Le Poidevin volunteered to take over the vacant Speaker Secretary role and I know that she is keen to get a regular programme of speakers organised over the next twelve months.

On the social front, I must take this opportunity to thank Kathy Corbin, who stood down as our Social Secretary after the passing of her husband, Bernie Corbin, who was also a founding member of the original u3a Guernsey Steering Committee. As it was not possible to replace Kathy's industrious efforts with just one person, we decided that we needed two members to take over from her. In this regard, I would like to also thank Gill Slimm and Mary Brogan for coming forward as Joint Social Secretaries. Here are just some of the activities & events that they and others have organised for members:

- As part of our post-lockdown activities, we organised a series of Quirky History Tours of St Peter Port on board Le Petit Train, which were enjoyed by almost 100 members, which followed on from some 50 members scaring themselves on the water with a series of trips on the Island RIB Voyages!
- In August, we participated in the *Guernsey Together* event at Sausmarez Park with over 100 people visiting our stand and showing interest in u3a Guernsey activities, as well as a cake bake by members raising £160 towards our funds.
- Commemoration of our 5th Anniversary came in October with the planting of a walnut tree in the Victoria Tower Gardens donated by Roger & Wendy Moore.
- Also in October, we organised tours of Saumarez Manor, which attracted 50 members
- Several tours of the new Waste & Recycling Centre at Longue Hougue were organised, when 120 members were able to satisfy their curiosity as to where all our rubbish goes!
- The Annual Christmas panto organised by Margaret Moffat was "Robinson Crusoe" with Cannibal Queen (Wendy Clamp) and Blackbeard (Kate Parkin) being as scary as ever we have seen!
- Less scary were Le Petit Train tours of the Christmas Lights which attracted 110 members.
- Over 80 convenors and other active volunteers attended our annual *Thank You* party at Les Cotils in December
- The Christmas Lunch had to be moved from La Grand Mare to Les Cotils, which limited it to only 120 members. As the demand for this popular event is so strong, we have already booked St Pierre Park for this year which has the potential to accommodate as many as 300 members

- The 60s Retro Disco at Wayside Cheer on Friday 22nd January was terrific fun with more than 140 members dancing the night away!

But we were all left with rather more than a hangover the following day, when we heard that Guernsey was to begin its second lockdown from Saturday 23rd January. However, we coped with the lockdown as best we could with lots of zooming, teaming and other on-line video get-togethers for the two months that the restrictions lasted. In late March, we were finally allowed to re-schedule the following events that had had to be postponed from earlier in the year:

- Defibrillator & CPR training sessions, which had been scheduled for February finally took place in May and June attended by more than 100 members at KGV Centre.
- More recently, our tours of the Victorian Walled Garden followed by lunch attracted 90 members over three dates, as well as a full page write up in the *Guernsey Press*!

In April we moved our monthly coffee morning venue from Rovers Football Club, which had been our effective “home” for the past four years (but which we had grown out of), to the St Pierre Park Hotel. I must especially thank Wendy Clamp who behind the scenes paved the way for us at the hotel.

During the year we also saw the re-branding from U3A (in capital letters) to u3a (in lower case). This move is aimed at attracting younger retirees to the organisation. In addition, it was decided nationally to drop the name “university of the third age” from all of communications, which is probably not a bad idea given that there is no university as such, nor are there qualifications required of members or given to members.

But our standout event of the past year was our Open Day at St Pierre Park Hotel on 2nd June, which attracted around 400 people - members and the general public - when we were able to celebrate the National u3a Day and showcase many of our interest groups and their activities to a wide range of people from politicians to professionals in education and health, as well as many would-be members.

Finally, thank you to all of members of Executive Committee for supporting me over the past two years as your chairman and also for all of the other active volunteers who make u3a Guernsey “tick”! Of special mention is Karen Winter, who not only is a convenor of several groups, she was for much of the past year our Media Team Leader. However, she like myself has new family commitments which has meant that she has had to stand down from this position on the Committee.

And I need to record that Pat Child, one of our founders and our first Interest Groups’ Coordinator, was awarded the BEM in this years Queen’s Birthday Honours List. Pat, without you and Sue Knowles leading the way, u3a Guernsey would not be where it is today.

Whilst I am standing down as Chair today, I will still be here in the background as I will be taking back on the role of Media Team Leader and will continue as a convenor for our metalwork group.

As some of you will know, I have a long standing connection with New Zealand and I would like to leave you with this Maori saying:

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

“Success is not the work of an individual, but the work of many.”

Long may u3a Guernsey be successful in bringing lots more learning, laughing and living to all of our members in our third age of life.

Ian Daish - Chair, u3a Guernsey