



## u3a Guernsey celebrating 1000 members

The Ukulele group was the 'raison d'être' for U3A in Guernsey. Sue Knowles was keen to start up a Ukulele group but was struggling to find like-minded people who wanted to play. A friend suggested contacting U3A to see if they had a group but, as there was not a U3A in Guernsey, that had to be sorted out first!

Meetings with Sue, Pat Child, Alan Chubb and Pauline Telford took place and the consensus to give it a go and see if there was any interest, resulted in an advert in the Guernsey Press. Numerous leaflets were distributed throughout Guernsey, giving details of an initial meeting on the 26th September 2015 at the Vale Douzaine Room. On the day, the room was set out for an optimistic twenty to forty people but, by the time the meeting was due to start, the room was filled to capacity. Parking was a problem for Bill Slimm and Derek Knowles with over two hundred people arriving for the meeting. A further introductory meeting was arranged at the Grammar School (as it had a big car park!), on the 29th October, attended by Marion from the u3a central office. The idea of Learn, Laugh and Live was about to be launched in the Bailiwick of Guernsey following the U3A movement principles of being non-religious and non—political.

At the October inaugural meeting at the Grammar School, the response once again was overwhelming and by the end of the afternoon, Guernsey U3A had enlisted 260 members each paying subscriptions of £15 into the newly opened bank account. Many were signed up to various interest groups in subjects from Bridge to Yoga. There was a strong emphasis on 'participation, closely followed by having fun while learning'. Hence, U3A Guernsey was established, run by the members for the members. There were many offers of help, with members volunteering to organise all of the activities and events.



At this same meeting a Steering Committee was established, following requests for volunteers. The volunteers were asked which positions they would be interested in and positions were duly allocated. The Membership would be asked to vote on these Officers at the first Annual General meeting, 12-18 months later. Sue took on the officer role of Chair, Alan took on Finance and Membership, Pauline agreed to be Social Secretary and Pat agreed to sort out groups. She was supported by Ann Good in the early days to recruit Convenors and gather information, via a questionnaire, on what groups members might be interested in. Further volunteers to the Committee were: Judy Dyke as Secretary, Kathy and Bernie Corbin as Social Secretaries, Diane and Michael Ward covering Media and Legal matters, Di Tooley supported new members and Gloria Deane also volunteered. Before too long Gill Slimm was recruited and took over Membership and Karen Winter looked after Media issues. The enthusiasm for Guernsey U3A was very much reflected in the Steering Committee who always stepped up to whatever new challenge occurred and there were many! It was a steep learning curve for all involved, a time of hard work and great fun as they worked on the Constitution and various procedures but finally in 2015 Guernsey U3A received provisional membership of the U3A movement (now known as u3a), becoming a fully-fledged member in 2016.

Today, in Guernsey, the organisation has grown to having 1000 members and around 80 interest groups. Many of the original convenors are still in post, seven years later! There are always opportunities for members to find new hobbies, return to past interests or simply enjoy making new friends by joining one of the many social activities: talks, lunches, coffee mornings, pantomimes, attend one of the activities or volunteer to be part of the Committee or start up a new group. Certainly u3a Guernsey continues to thrive while Learning, Laughing and Living.

### History - Interest groups

On the 29th October, 2015, at the Grammar school, members began to sign up to various u3a interest groups. Initially there were 21 groups, each led by a convenor. Although some were up and running straight away, others did not start until January 2016.

Groups which started in the Autumn included:

Calligraphy with David Fletcher, Drama with Margaret Moffat, Poetry Appreciation with Norah Gregson, Reading ( Book) Group with Julie Fletcher, Singing with Molly Thompson, Spanish with Mary Fuller, Tai Chi with Rick Fletcher, Euchre with Bob Perkins, Ukuleles with Sue Knowles and French Conversation with Simon Wood. I'm pleased to report that these groups, with the same convenors, are still going strong to this day.

Janet Parnwell (Bridge), Iris Maingard (French Conversation) and Diane Ward (Italian) are recently retired convenors and their groups were very popular.

Other groups and their convenors were also available to members:

Cake Club ( Linda Wilen), Creative Writing (Pippa McCathie), Foraging (Rachel Hockey), Local History (Jane Falla and Jenny Tasker), Photography (Liz Walton), Sewing (Jenny Mahy), Woodwork (Michael Ward), Photography (Anne Woodington) and Yoga (Judy Whitaker and Maureen De Jong).

The Walking Group met in November to discuss how they would operate and agreed to have walk leaders with a programme for the walkers to choose from.

This is more or less the way things work today with Bob Thompson agreeing to take on the role of convenor.

Pat Child and Ann Good supported the convenors by offering help and guidance as well as encouraging more convenors to start groups in the New Year.

These included:

Reading and Discussion (Isobel Cable), Sculpture from Scrap metal (Ian Daish), Euchre (Norman Dewey), Church Bell-Ringing (Phil Le Conte and Ann Dorey), Life Drawing (Simon Coombes), Water Colour Painting (Norman Dewey) and Gardening (Marion Morgan and Malcolm Cleal).

By mid-January, u3a Guernsey had 38 Interest Groups offering subjects as diverse as Scottish Dancing, Comparative Religion, Spanish, Philosophy and Travel. Convenors began offering short courses for a few weeks in Euchre (Norman Dewey), Bread Making (Eileen Davis), iPads (Penny Lythgoe and Sue Vermeulen) and Jam Making (Karen Winter).

The Travel /Ski group departed from Guernsey to Serre Chevalier in France on the 5th March. Their convenor, Marina Dobson, reported that the group enjoyed perfect skiing conditions and the trip was such a success that she planned to organise another trip in 2017. Other members of the Travel group enjoyed an organised trip to Herm for lunch and two walks.

On Wednesday, 1st June 2016 at St Sampson's High School, all members were invited to a social event to celebrate the success of the fifty or so interest groups. There were exhibits of work, photographs and performances given by the Singing, Ukulele, French and Drama Groups. It was a great afternoon and show-cased the wide variety of talent in u3a Guernsey groups.

The interest groups continue to be a vital part of Guernsey u3a and there are now nearly one hundred groups offering an amazing range of topics: some academic, some practical and others purely social. Details about the groups are shared to members via the website and a monthly newflash, providing updates and news items.



## History - Social events

### Coffee Mornings

The Committee was keen to hold a monthly event in order to engage members. The first Coffee Morning was held at La Nouvelle Maraitaine on 10th November 2015. Coffee Mornings were planned for the first Tuesday of each month and have continued ever since, although the venue has changed a couple of times. The first move was to the Vale Douzaine Room in April 2017, then in September 2017, to cater for increased numbers, they moved to the Rovers Athletic Club at Port Soif. They remained there until November 2021 when numbers had increased further so a bigger venue was sought. The latest move was to St Pierre Park Hotel which offered more parking, a larger room and the staff serve refreshments.

## Talks

The first talk by a member of the Guernsey Museum staff was on 'Roman Guernsey' held on 25th February at St. Sampson's High School. Further planned talks for later in the year were 'A Virtual Tour of Paris & Victor Hugo' by Zvi Chazanov and a talk by Captain Brian Nibbs of Trinity. Since those early days there have been numerous talks on a range of topics from willing volunteers including Dr Nicola Brink, Dennis Burns, Tony Spruce, Richard Digard and many more.

## Drama Productions

The Drama Group was one of the original groups with Margaret Moffatt at the helm. Since the first production of Aladdin on the 5th December 2017 there has been an annual performance to delight the membership at the Vale Church Hall. Each year Margaret writes a new pantomime and enthusiastic members with little or no previous acting experience learn words and songs, rehearse and perform a fun filled, locally themed Christmas play in early December.

## Other events

The first Boys' Breakfast was held on the 17th March 2016 and was very popular so the next one was organised on the 17th November. These were initially held to encourage men to enjoy a sociable event. The breakfast now occurs monthly with everyone enjoying a great cooked breakfast at Saumarez Park tea rooms. You can even keep fit using open air gym equipment at the park before you eat!

The first Christmas Social event was arranged by the Social Secretary, Kathy Corbin. This was held on 8th December at Les Cotils, with mulled wine or soft drinks and mince pies. The summer of 2016 saw a breakfast at Les Cotils and a lunch at The Wellington Boot, a Walking Treasure Hunt at Saumarez Park and a Hog Roast at the Hotel Jerbourg. Since this time there have been numerous events including trips to Herm, historical sites of interest, local attractions and the cinema. More active members have enjoyed crazy golf, archery, green bowling, barn dances and discos. Our brains have been challenged with Quiz afternoons and murder mystery events. The Social Team have certainly worked hard through the years to organise many sociable events for everyone to enjoy.



## Guernsey together

On the 22nd August 2020, u3a managed a charity stall at the 'Guernsey Together Celebration' event held at Saumarez Park. This event was held to encourage islanders to celebrate following the Covid lockdown. Busy u3a volunteers set up the gazebo on Saturday morning with display boards giving lots of information about activities and groups. A great many cakes were cooked by members of the organisation and sold on the stall during the day and made monies for future needs. Other volunteers manned the stall providing leaflets and answering questions to the general public. This was the first time u3a had been involved in advertised what the organisation does in the Bailiwick and it certainly generated a lot of interest. A number of new members joined following the days successful event.