

HADLEIGH U3A AGM 2023

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

For the year September 2022 to August 2023

With the now controversial lockdown a thing of the past, our member numbers have gradually been creeping back and we have welcomed a good number of new members, but we are still not quite back where we were before the pandemic. For this reason, along with the ever increasing costs of everything, we had to increase our membership subscription, but with careful budgeting we have been able to keep it to just one pound more. Less than some of our neighbouring u3a's, and still excellent value for money.

Our special interest groups have marched on and the proposed new ones are now up and running for Canasta, Play Reading, Mahjong, Scrabble the second Lunch Group. Many thanks go to the individuals who put in the effort to get them off the ground. One of our long standing groups – Creative Writing – decided they were unable to continue after the sudden sad loss of their driving force Les Selby. If any of our newer members has budding ambitions in this area I am sure you may well find others to help revive it.

We held 12 monthly meetings with our usual rich diversity of speakers, we had our usual Summer Party in the Guildhall and Christmas Lunch at Hintlesham Hall. We organised at least one external event every month, ranging from days out to other places of interest and theatre trips. This aspect of our activities has continued to be popular and Jill and her small sub-committee are now at planning stage for 2024. Extra help with ideas and organising support are urgently needed to keep up with our current record of once a month. Without more help we may need to cut down on the frequency of these, but obviously we don't want to. Members of this sub-committee do not necessarily need to be members of the main committee. We have volunteer one-off event organisers like Pat Simonet and Roger Young and this is a good way of helping Jill and her team, whilst getting to know more of your fellow u3a members.

This is not to say we do not need more members to come forward to help the main committee. We do. The role of the committee is not onerous but absolutely necessary. The committee are trustees of Hadleigh u3a, with the remit to keep us legal and financially secure, provide essential activities like our monthly speaker meetings, handle membership administration and recruitment of new members. We also liaise with other u3a's and the Third Age Trust, to which we are affiliated, when we need advice about anything beyond our experience.

The national u3a ethos is that 'all u3a members should be actively participating members, not customers waiting to be served'. This gives us the freedom to run our own affairs tailored to the needs of our particular membership but we don't have a paid staff and these things do not happen on their own. We are especially in need of a new Treasurer to replace Jean Jeram who wishes to retire after ten years in the job. There must be someone out there with basic book-keeping experience?

I am sure you will want to thank all the individual members who support us in so many ways. Jill Owers, Jean Jeram, Louise Daniels, Jill Skipper, Liz Ferguson and Tim Goodman on the committee of course whose unstinting work keeps it all on the road. Philip Fraser-Betts who ensures the technology at our speaker meetings go smoothly. And as I mentioned before Roger Young takes on the popular annual London event. And Pat Simonet who liaises for us with our nearest neighbour Stour Valley u3a, with whom we now co-operate for occasional events and holidays. This co-operation helps both u3a's fill coaches when a trip may not reach its breakeven numbers otherwise.

I must mention Kay Curtis who set up and managed our invaluable website which soon became the source of the majority of our new membership enquiries. Her sudden loss was a great blow to us all. We are so glad that Jeff Curtis has stayed with us and still regularly comes to meetings.

We are indebted to Louise Daniels who came forward to take over the running of the website, which included learning the whole process from scratch with advice from national office and now has it up and running. Thank you, Louise.

And finally this brings me to my own position. As I am sure you are all aware I have now been in the Chair for ten years and the time has come to hand over to someone else. At last year's AGM my plea for members to come forward to join our committee had the happy result of Rowan Cain volunteering and he was co-opted onto the committee as soon as he extricated himself from commitments in his previous area. He has now been working with us for most of the year and in a very short space of time we all felt he had the qualities and experience to make an excellent chairman. We needed to go through the formalities of today's formal election of Rowan to full committee membership and I am now delighted to hand over to him with the unanimous endorsement of the rest of the committee.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here and thank you all for your support.

Sue Witham