

AGM at BCC – 16 September 2021. Chairman's report.

This has been a challenging and yet a remarkable year in our history.

Last September we could not have imagined that a year later we would just be emerging from lockdown but I am pleased to say that we adapted well the changes that were forced upon us.

With upwards of 90% of our membership on the internet, the vast majority of members have been able to participate in U3A activities to a greater or lesser extent.

We held our first on line monthly meeting with Zoom in June last year and we have continued to meet virtually since then.

Having held a Summer party using Zoom last year, we were anxious to invoke the party spirit again at Christmas. The main feature was a musical theme with a delightful performance by **Jennifer Parker Lummis** a young singer from Gosport. We were also entertained by **Paul** and **Alison Jerome** and **John Burch**. You will be pleased to hear that we have arranged for Jennifer to join us **in person** this Christmas.

We held our first Zoom quiz in March which was something of an experiment. We invited teams from **Emsworth and District U3A** to participate and I think that it is fair to say that it was very much enjoyed by all. The novelty enhanced our enjoyment and captured our attention. Our thanks to **Geoff Worthington**, who went to extraordinary lengths to master the intricacies of breakout rooms, and to **Peter Newman** who assisted him. Our thanks also to **Martin Owen**, who set the questions and ran the quiz.

Such was outstanding the success of the first quiz that we decided to repeat the experiment in May, when we invited groups from **Emsworth** and **Waterlooville**. I think that it would be fair to comment that the show did not proceed quite as smoothly as we had hoped, but was nevertheless much enjoyed.

As you all know, **Wednesday 2 June** was declared **National U3A day**. All U3As were asked to publicise the movement in the hope that a national concerted effort would do much to raise the profile of the U3A as a whole and address the loss in membership occasioned by the pandemic and the lockdown.

For our part, your chairman was interviewed on **Angel Radio** and his message was broadcast on 1 June, with some short follow ups broadcast later.

We invited the Portsmouth News to our Line Dancing group and a photographer took some photographs of **Jenny Bishop** and **Carol Cooper**. **Margaret Stanger**, our Treasurer, and **Fran McQueen** gave interviews to a News reporter and in the event, a feature was published, which included contributions from Waterlooville and Stubbington U3As.

We invited a magician to give a Zoom presentation to which members were asked to invite friends and relatives along to publicise the movement. It was a brilliant performance by **Steve Price**, a first class exponent of the art of magic and illusion. Those who were fortunate to have seen it, will have been amazed and were royally entertained.

Fran McQueen showed great initiative and enterprise in making some **22** wooden plaques with Havant U3A painted on them and then distributing them about Havant Park and near Tescos.

With the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, our outdoor activity groups were able to resume their normal meetings. The **Line Dancing** group was also able to resume its activity at the Bedhampton Community Centre, but with the group divided into two in order to comply with Covid restrictions. Many indoor groups were able to continue to meet on line.

We are hoping that those groups which have lain dormant over the lockdown period will be able to recover with the release of restrictions.

We will shortly be holding the Groups' Fair. **Bob Child**, our Groups co-ordinator has gone to great lengths to prepared particulars of the groups on offer and contact details. We are very grateful to Bob for all the time and effort he puts in to overseeing the groups, which has been a particular challenge over the past several months and as we emerge from lockdown.

We are about to publish a number of policy documents on the website and in particular, a policy relating to **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**. This is a policy prepared by the Third Age Trust and includes the appointment of an **Accessibility** officer whose job it will be to look after the interests of those of us with serious mobility or sensory issues. You will have noticed the inclusion of a number of tick boxes in this respect on our Subscription form. **Carol Cooper** has kindly agreed to fill this roll.

Moving on, we say good bye to **Ken Arkell** from the executive committee. He was our trips organiser before the lockdown, although in the event his wings were clipped by the Covid restrictions, but he was able to arrange a boat trip and afternoon tea as as thank you for conveners a few weeks ago.

I would like to thank **Margaret Stanger**, who is our treasurer and has maintained the finances in good order, as you will hear.

We are greatly indebted to **Alison White**, our membership secretary, who has run the **Beacon** communication system and has sent out messages to members regarding meetings and helped run the Zoom conference system. May I also thank **Pauline Freeman**, who has been our Information Officer and assisted **Alison**.

I say thank you to **Martin Owen** for running our quiz at Christmas last year and two subsequent quizzes, all using Zoom.

May I thank **Peter Newman**, our secretary, who has ably stepped into the not inconsiderable shoes of **Phillipa Gray** with great success.

Elizabeth Jorge, who is now on her second spell on the committee, and is our programme organiser arranged a varied and interesting selection of presentations, which were generally well attended on Zoom. She is a constant and invaluable source of helpful information. She has arranged our speakers for the coming year and we thank her.

Our particular thanks go to **Geoff Worthington**, our webmaster, for his considerable, untiring and enthusiastic efforts in maintaining the website and in publishing **Read All About It**.

He has spent a vast amount of time and effort in mastering the intricacies of Zoom and has played a key part in organising and running our Zoom meetings, our virtual Christmas party and the two quizzes I have mentioned. Thanks to his efforts, Havant U3A was among the first locally to embrace Zoom technology.

Val Worthington and **Alison Cook** have assumed responsibility for running our trips, in succession to **Ken Arkell**, but have so far been unable (because of Covid) to reveal their talents in this respect. We are, however, grateful to **Val** for continuing to undertake the role of welfare officer.

Many of our **Interest Groups** have adapted well to the changing and challenging circumstances in which we have found ourselves and have continued to operate virtually very successfully during the lockdown.

May I say a big thank you to all of our **group convenors**. They each put in so much time and effort in running our groups. The success of our U3A in no small measure depends upon them. I particularly thank those convenors who are now stepping down. Thank you for all of your efforts.

May I also make an appeal for new group convenors. With the release of lockdown, we hope that our groups will flourish with renewed vigour.

The U3A ethos is for members to volunteer. The running of groups and activities cannot simply be left to others. Inevitably, there will be those who lead and others who follow, but you can all help by supporting your group in its activities and participating as fully as possible.

If you have a particular interest, which is not currently catered for, please make yourself known to our groups co-ordinator, **Bob Child**, and if there is sufficient support, a new group can be established.

We at Havant U3A have a challenging but exciting and interesting year ahead of us, which we hope, with your support, will be very successful as we recover from the effects of the pandemic.

The strap-line of the U3A is **Learn, Laugh Live**. If you know of anyone who is lonely, mention Havant U3A to them so that they have the chance to develop their interests, make friends and enjoy themselves.

Thank you.

John West

