

Isle of Arran u3a: AGM 30 March 2023

Chair's Report

Thank you all for attending today and supporting the hard work that the Committee and Group Facilitators have carried out during the past year. A particular welcome to any new members who may be attending.

We had a very successful year, increasing membership numbers, and have been able to keep our membership fee at 15 pounds. The membership currently stands at 125.

We were however saddened to hear of the deaths of three of our members this past year: Dorothy Harris, Elizabeth McKellar and of course, Mark Brown who started the Fiddle Group when our u3a was first launched.

There has been a steady evolution in the list of our Interest Groups which now number 17. Practical Binocular Astronomy and Film are new additions; Outdoor Sketching and Tech Savvy were added last year, benefiting from funding awarded by North Ayrshire Council for projects that promote positive mental health and well-being and community-based adult learning. These awards were used to purchase Sketching and painting materials, 5 iPads and 9 iPad guides for Seniors, for the use of members.

The Book Group was featured in the first programme in the new series of The Big Scottish Book Club on BBC Scotland last October, when five of the members discussed Janice Galloway's first novel, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*. A second

Book Group has now been launched and plans are underway for a second Lunch Group.

The Gardening Group was out and about visiting the gardens at Brodick Castle and Culzean Castle last summer and is looking forward to visiting members' gardens this Spring. The Walking Group has been out in all weathers exploring the glens and hills of Arran and members of the Local History Group visited the excavation site of the Arran Cursus near Machrie Moor, where they met Dr Kenny Brophy of Glasgow University, who was also guest speaker at the Group's latest meeting in February.

The creative leadership of all our Groups ensures there is a full and enjoyable programme of activities and I would like to thank all our Group Facilitators for their enthusiasm and willingness to organise these activities and would urge members to offer them their practical support.

Members of this u3a also have the opportunity to take part in Interest Groups via ZOOM on the Online Across Scotland platform, which is run by u3a in Scotland. There are currently 11 active groups including Archaeology, Laughter Yoga, Philosophy of Science, Spanish and Poetry. Details of all groups can be found on the Online Across Scotland website.

The programme of speakers at the past year's monthly meetings has been eclectic to say the least and thanks must go to Mandy Lovejoy for putting together such a fine programme which has included local history, mountain rescue, recycling, whisky distilling and marine conservation. We were also lucky to have local sculptor and poet Tim Pomeroy and writer Alison Paige as guest speakers and there was a Laughter Yoga class, a Fun Bingo session and a

celebration of Robert Burns ably led by members of the highly talented Ukulele and Fiddle Groups.

Our two music groups also provided the musical entertainment at the Tea Party which was organised last Friday at Lamlash Golf Club. 50 members and their guests were treated to scones and cakes with tea and coffee – the china crockery making it really special – so a big thankyou to Duncan Heenan and his team. This event was funded by a Corporate Grant from North Ayrshire Council. The Isle of Arran u3a was chosen by Arran CVS as one of the beneficiaries of this grant and we extend our grateful thanks for their generosity. Our u3a is working closely with Arran CVS, as well as other organisations on Arran, to help realise the aims of the UK-wide u3a movement which are threefold: to keep members intellectually, physically and socially active in their retirement.

I'd like to express my considerable thanks to all members of the Committee who have provided excellent support for me as Chair – to Helen McIntosh, Groups Coordinator and Vice Chair, Alison Kelly, Secretary, Angela Ellis, Membership Secretary, Mandy Lovejoy and Maggie Howarth, Social Secretaries, David Scott, Communications and Sandra Bentley, who took over as Treasurer in September after the resignation of Joan Martin. Helen and Mandy are now stepping down from their roles so special thanks to them for all they have contributed over the past year.

I would also like to thank Joan Martin for her hard work and dedication while she was a member of the Committee.

We are a self-help organisation and members are encouraged to participate in many different ways – by serving on the Committee, being a Group Facilitator,

assisting with refreshments at monthly meetings or providing musical entertainment for other members at u3a events. We do need more people to put themselves forward to serve on the Committee or take on other specific roles such as serving on an informal Speakers subcommittee. It is important to have new people contributing their ideas and experience...there is a wealth of talent in this organisation so please consider what you can contribute.

We have enjoyed a very good year and there is much to look forward to in the year ahead. We are an organisation whose core ethos is about members contributing, sharing their enthusiasm, experience, expertise and zest for life and there is plenty of evidence in the past year to show this happening. I look forward to our u3a continuing to develop and grow in the year ahead, and to us embracing our strap line of *Learn, Laugh, Live*.

Karyn Wilson Hill

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