

Chair's Report, Market Drayton u3a AGM

Thursday 21st September 2023

Welcome to the annual general meeting in our 25th year and national u3a week (16th - 24th September). Thank you for attending.

Apologies - Vivienne + John MCVittie, any more.....

Introduction

- Over the last twelve months there have been quite a number of ups and downs as regards Market Drayton u3a, as most of you will probably know;
- We have managed to increase our number and range of our special interest groups;
- had excellent speakers at our monthly Festival Drayton meetings;.
- and celebrated our 25th anniversary with an enjoyable social event;
- Our website has also been upgraded and much improved over the year, thanks to Jill and Phil, Glover and thanks to them we now also have:
- our own facebook page.
- On the downside our total membership has reduced
- and economic pressures left us with no choice but to increase our annual subscription rates and revise our arrangements in relation to the distribution of magazines.
- We have also got to be concerned about the future of our culture visits following the recent cancellation of this month's trip to Salford Quays.
- Last but definitely not least four of our members sadly passed away during the year including two excellent former convenors.

Committee Changes

At the start of the year, however, there were some doubts about whether we could actually be able to continue as a Group given that we ended up at last year's AGM with an **under strength committee** and without out a **Treasurer** and an under strength committee. Under the Third Age Trust's rules, which relate to u3a's, all

groups must have a Treasurer (as well as a Secretary and Chair) and we obviously need someone to look after our finances.

Fortunately **Andy Shearer** very quickly came to our rescue as the new Treasurer in the wake of the AGM and he has been doing a great job since. Not long after Andy came on board we also gained **Sue Walker** as a committee member.

And during the year **Candice Danleigh** very kindly took over the reins as our contact with the **Shropshire Network of u3a groups**.

The majority of our present committee members are currently planning to remain in post after today's AGM but we are unfortunately losing **Pam Shryane** who was our treasurer up to the end of 2021- 2022 and our Programme Secretary, **Colin Barthorpe**, who has been arranging our monthly speakers and also liaising with the staff at the Festival Drayton Centre over our usage of the Centre for quite a few years. Our thanks go to both Colin and Pam for all their efforts on behalf of the Group.

Your existing **Magazine Editor** is also hoping to give way to someone else at today's AGM but has still got to find a way of leaving the Committee.

My thanks to everyone on the committee (despite their suggestions as regards what I should be wearing today.)

Unfortunately we have to mention the continuing problem that so few members seem to be prepared to volunteer time to help support the Group **with quite a number of people obviously having found they have pressing engagements this afternoon in line with previous AGM's. I may, however, be preaching to the converted.**

Membership Numbers

Twelve months ago I was able to announce that the pandemic hadn't appeared to have had a significant effect on our membership figures as we seemed to be making steady progress but sadly things stalled in 2022-23. Although we are still attracting quite a good number of newcomers our total membership is down on 2021-22 with 204 members at the end of this summer.

As a committee we are taking steps to encourage more members of the public to join us, hence:

the recent **widow display in MD museum** window organised by Jill and Phil again; the **posters** you will have seen about today's event around town.

Candice Danleigh and Jill Glover have also recently given a talk about us to some of the new residents at the Joules

Please don't forget though one of the most effective means of publicity is **word of mouth**. If you are enjoying being part of Market Drayton u3a please let others know about it.

One of the actions we are considering taking, subject to enough of your support, is introducing alternatives to speakers at monthly meetings, e.g. quizzes and other social events.

The holding of **occasional drop – in tea or coffee mornings** at a local venue is something else being looked at.

Losses during the year

As previously indicated four of our members sadly passed away in 2022-23: Mary Burt, Cliff Perry, Paul Bell and Arthur Barnett. Paul and Arthur did great jobs of running our Natural History and Line Dancing special interest groups for quite a while until ill health forced both of them to step down not that long ago. All four of them are deeply missed.

Increased Number of Special Interest Groups

We gained five new special interest groups in 2022-23 but also lost one with our recorder group simply having outgrown Market Drayton and moved on to bigger and better things as the Tither Recorder Ensemble.

I am pleased to say that both Brian McClelland, the convenor of our group, and his wife are planning to continue as members of MD u3a.

We have also got another SIG, 'Desert Island Discs, in the pipeline. Details are available from Mike Freed and Candice as well as our website.

Although unable to be here today as I've said Vivienne McVittie has told us there is room for more members in both the **Country Dancing and Drawing groups**. And, of course, we would love to see our **Natural History and Bridge** groups re-launched as well as the introduction of more groups.

Unlike quite a number of neighbouring groups we current lack a Languages group, etc. Please talk to a member of the Committee if you have a SI we aren't catering for at present.

In autumn 2022 we **thanked the convenors** of our SIG's by having an afternoon tea at the FDC, a traditional event up to the onset of Covid a few years ago. **I would like to express mine and the Committee's thanks to them again. They are in many ways the life blood of the Group.**

Festival Drayton Centre monthly meetings

As indicated we've had a really good line up of monthly speakers at the FDC over the past year thanks to Colin Barthorpe. Two of our original speakers were unfortunately unable to make it as planned but we found more than adequate substitutes to replace them, with one of them having been scheduled to come back next February (15.2.24) to tell us more about Chester.

Our Next Meeting – 20.10 'The Red Cross'

Our Finances

Most of you will be aware that we have had to make changes to our financial and administrative arrangements. As you'll know our subscription rate has increased from £12 to £16 per person per year and we've also had to revise the way in which members receive issues of the national Third Age Trust Magazine and our own in-house magazine, The Magazine. Hopefully you will all be conversant with these changes, which were forced on us by the sharp increase in the rate of inflation and the cost of living in the UK.

One other thing I must mention is that we have been unable to find an easy solution to how anyone without a current email address (and we assume lacking IT facilities computer) can obtain The Magazine in the future. Regrettably contact with our printers has shown it would cost us too much to get them printed. We are hoping you will work with us on this but we believe the best way forward is for anyone in this position to either nominate someone who can download the magazine for them and let us have their details or simply visit the Library to see the copies we are leaving there.

Culture Trips

Sadly we had to cancel our culture trip to Salford Quays at the start of this month due to a lack of member interest after we had just 13 bookings. As a consequence we are unsure about whether there will be any future trips. Our thanks go, however, to the members of the Culture Visits group for all their hard work in the past.

AOB

Ceilidh – 29.9, Adderley Village Hall, Tern Valley Tinkers

Organised by the Town Twinning Association, their presentation in November

Tickets from Hart to Hart - £12 (Dancing, Supper), 7.30pm start

Market Drayton u3a Committee Members 2023-24

Alan Cartwright	Chair
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Phillip Glover	Secretary
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Andy Shearer	Treasurer
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Judy Cowdale	Membership Secretary
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John McVittie/	Magazine Editor
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Vivienne McVittie

Kevin Read-Jones	Programme Secretary
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Sue Walker	Committee Member
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Jacqui Wright	Committee Member
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Jill Glover	Website Administrator
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Candice Danleigh	u3a National Office Contact
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