

## Chair's Report 2023

The ethos behind the u3a movement is that it is run by members for members and every single one of us is responsible for its continued success.

The Committee's role is not to run our u3a, but to act as a facilitator enabling members to organise activities for themselves. I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their support during my time as Chair, in particular those who have come to the end of their term, Lindsey and Karen, and also those who have put their names forward to replace them, namely Robert, Jane & Ted. Thank you also to Roger for agreeing to take on another 3 year term as Treasurer, to Stuart for stepping up as Chair and to Sue for agreeing to be Vice Chair. We could not function without other key members who support our organisation and I am grateful to Carole, our Membership Secretary and to Frank, our Beacon Administrator, for their continued support.

Thanks go to Janice for continuing to update our notice boards and slide show and to Stephen for taking over the management of our website. Stephen had a baptism of fire when he took on the role, as Sitebuilder, the national web provider crashed, leaving the majority of u3as across the country without a vital resource. However he calmly and efficiently repopulated our site with photos & documents from various sources. What came to light was that between us we have a wealth of knowledge, memories and resources which have accumulated over the last 17 years and it has been suggested we might put together an archive to capture the history of Mawdesley u3a - perhaps something to think about in time for our 20th anniversary in 2026.

Throughout the year there have been numerous opportunities to get out & about and September was no exception. Not only did we see holidays to the Cotswolds and to Mallorca, but also members took part in a series of heritage walks during u3a week. If people did not come forward with ideas and suggestions, or offers of help, then we would not be in the strong position in which we find ourselves today. Whether it's putting out chairs, making and serving refreshments, volunteering on a table, organising classes, booking trips, arranging speakers or supporting events, it all contributes to our success.

Our organisation thrives on cooperation and mutual respect and the Coronation Afternoon Tea which was the highlight of the Spring, epitomises that spirit. Our thanks go to Joan and Kay for coming up with the idea and to all members who made it such a huge success, especially the gentlemen who served the tea and Prosecco with such finesse, also Beryl for organising the table decorations and Audrey for her stunning cakes.

The whole event ran like a well oiled machine and it would be impossible to thank everyone by name, but we often don't see what goes on behind the scenes and I want to say a special thank you to Stuart and Pat who worked tirelessly all afternoon, up to their elbows in hot water, when the dishwasher let us down.

Music seems to have been a recurring theme this year and in December we welcomed back Phil Shotton and his Big Band.

January saw 20 members 'Giving it a Go' at a Steel Drumming workshop with the Milnthorpe Steel Band and thanks to one member's suggestion, some of us had the opportunity to try church bell ringing.

We also borrowed some hand bells from a neighbouring u3a and enjoyed it so much that we have purchased a set, so we now have a Hand Bell Group.

Often the public perception of u3a is that we sit around playing Beetle or Bingo, but not here in Mawdesley. A group of dare devils went sky diving earlier in the year, some tried out the Zip Wire and others settled for the more sedate challenges such as Willow Weaving. Thanks go to Karen for coordinating these activities and for putting Mawdesley on the map when we featured on the National u3a blog in June. She was also interviewed recently for a u3a podcast.

No organisation remains static and change is inevitable. This year saw the end of an era for our Geology Group which has thrived for 10 years. Field trips have been organised across the north west, along with talks and presentations covering the earth's fascinating history. Our thanks go to Chris for her time and effort and also to all those who have contributed by sharing their knowledge. Our Line Dancing Group said goodbye to Neil, who has taught the group for the last 15 years, but this is not the end of the line thanks to Carole and several long standing members who have stepped in to keep the group going. The Family and Social History Group have been running since 2006, the inaugural year of our u3a, but have now decided to call it a day with their research, however there is an open invitation for members to attend meetings of the Family History Research Group whenever they wish to do so.

As one door closes, another opens and this year has seen the development of several new groups, including Politics - a friendly chat, where members can discuss current affairs. We also have a new Play Reading Group, we have reintroduced Tennis on our list of regular activities and following on from last Autumn's Origins of WW2 sessions, our History Group has just started. Earlier in the year we had two very successful sessions on the life and works of Jane Austen and one of our newest members has recently started running some Basic IT sessions. Thanks once again go to those members who put their time and effort into researching and presenting these sessions for the benefit of the rest of us.

We have continued to support several charities during the year. Last October saw the return of our Bling and Buy Sale raising money for Children in Need and the jewellery which was left was donated to Heart Research via Beaverbrooks the jewellers. We held another successful Macmillan Coffee Morning in September and have made several collections of food items & clothing for International Aid.



Following a visit by representatives of Friends for You, a local charity supporting people who live on their own, a couple of our members have trained as volunteers.

We have forged links with a number of local u3a groups as part of the Douglas Valley Network and Terry who runs our Pickleball Group has been involved in introducing the game to other u3a groups in the region.

All these activities, along with countless photos and articles from members have been captured in our weekly newsletter and our thanks go to Sam for agreeing to continue as editor, at least for the time being.

Apologies to anyone I haven't mentioned by name, but it would be impossible to single out every individual who has contributed to our continuing success. It has been an absolute pleasure and a privilege to be Chair of such a fantastic organisation and I thank you all for your continued support.

Christine