

## Chairman's Report for 2022 – 2023

I would like to begin my report by paying tribute to our late Chairman, Geoff Wadge, who led Midhurst U3A during the latter stages of the Covid pandemic from May 2021, when Committee Meetings, our monthly talks and some of our groups, met via Zoom. He was re-elected as Chairman at our 2022 AGM, which was held in the hall after a two-year absence, but unfortunately he had to resign due to ill health in July and very sadly some of us attended his funeral in September. Geoff also led the Outings Sub-Committee both pre and post the pandemic, organising many interesting visits. We miss him.

In his Chairman's Report at last year's AGM, Geoff thanked the three Committee members, who were standing down, namely David Ratcliffe, David Barlow and Malcolm Hutchings. As I was unable to attend the AGM, I would now like to add my thanks to them, for all they did for Midhurst U3A during their time on the Committee. I would also like to thank Jeannine Murphy, who took over from Pat Bryant as Membership Secretary, Ian Woodhams who became our Social Events Organiser and Philip Watts, who became Vice-Chairman and PR/marketing guru, for joining the Committee. Philip stood down after our U3A Day in September, due to pressure of work.

I would now like to introduce each Committee Member.

As Membership Secretary, Jeannine responds to enquiries about membership, maintains up to date membership data, ensures up to date information is available to new members and is responsible for registration at our monthly talks. She also sends out publicity about Midhurst U3A via Facebook. Thank you, Jeannine.

Ian Woodhams develops and promotes a programme of social activities throughout the year, he also organises refreshments at different meetings and is responsible for setting up the hall for monthly meetings, health and safety checks and making sure the hall is left tidy and secure at the end of meetings. Thank you, Ian.

After an appeal to members to help Penny, Pauline Guppy volunteered to take the Minutes at Committee Meetings and subsequently she has joined the Committee. Thank you, Pauline.

Carol Brinson is not only our Treasurer, but also the editor of What's On? our twice-yearly magazine. She is also producing our 2023 – 2024 Programme of Activities with Odette Marshall. In the absence of a Communications officer Carol has taken over promoting Midhurst U3A through local publications,

posters etc. assisted by other members of the Committee. We really do need someone to take on this vital role. Please volunteer. Carol is also organising the welcome return of our annual Study Day in October. Thank you for all that you do, Carol.

Denise Barre originally came to Committee Meetings as the leader of the Outings Sub-Committee. She subsequently joined the Committee, taking on the role of Speaker Secretary as well. Thank you, Denise.

Odette Marshall, our Groups Co-ordinator, has responsibility for keeping the groups posters and other information on the boards at the back of the hall on display at our monthly meetings, up to date. She supports Group Leaders and oversees the formation of new groups. She also acted as Speaker Secretary, until Denise Barre volunteered to take on the role. Odette has also recently become Vice-Chairman. Thank you, Odette.

Dave Widdup became web editor and provided technical support at our monthly talks. When he stood down in November, we were very pleased that Val and Pete Carver and Bruce Kirby, volunteered to take over running the AVA system at the monthly meetings. Unfortunately no one came forward to offer to be our website manager and so Penny Holland had to take on yet another role. Thank you to Pat Hallifax for helping with web editing, but surely there must be a member willing to take the lead in this important area?

Lastly thank you to Penny Holland for all she does for Midhurst U3A, liaising with the Third Age Trust, keeping our policies and procedures up to date, helping Odette to revise the Group Leaders' Handbook, sending out e-newsletters, updating the Pearl and Dean notices ready for each monthly meeting, organising the delivery of our various publications and in so many other ways.

Before the Pandemic we had a full Committee of ten plus two co-opted members. Now we are short of at least two Committee Members, so do come along to one of our monthly Committee Meetings to see what goes on behind the scenes to make Midhurst U3A as successful as it is and see what part you can play in ensuring its continuing growth and development.

Thank you also to members, including Charles Hallifax, Sanchia Elsdon and Fran Cooper who help regularly at our monthly meetings, others who help serve the refreshments, put out the chairs and act as welcomers to new members and visitors. Also thank you to those members who help deliver What's On? and other publications, including the yearly Programme of Activities, which helps to lower the cost of postage.

Thank you to David Earley for once again examining the accounts.

Thank you too, to all our Group Leaders, who work so hard leading and organising our forty plus groups. Midhurst U3A is run by the members for the members. Its success depends on the active participation of its members. New groups are started and sometimes it is possible to revive old groups in a new way. Inevitably some groups become no longer viable, especially when the leader retires or moves away, but if new leaders can be found, then Odette and the rest of the Committee are always happy to offer their help and support. Some groups become so popular that there is a waiting list. If possible, a second group is started, but of course that depends on whether someone is willing to lead the group. If there is an interest group you feel is missing, then please volunteer to lead it. Thank you too, to the hosts and hostesses, who open their homes to groups. 50p is a very small price to pay for a cup of coffee and a biscuit and a comfortable chair. Without their generosity, groups would struggle to afford the cost of meeting regularly in halls and small meeting rooms and the costs ensued would be so much higher.

Thanks to Denise Barre, Christine Musgrove and Maggie Rhodes, who continue to organise such interesting and varied outings both near and far and to Bernard Allan for organising last year's holiday to Northumbria, as well a visit to the opera at Brighton. We are looking for other members to join the Outings Sub-Committee, so if you are interested, please have a word with Denise Barre.

Some of the highlights of 2022 – 2023 have been the Summer Lunch at Cowdray Golf Club, a Thank you Tea for Group Leaders at the home of two of our members, the U3A Day held in the Council Offices in Knockhundred Row, led by Philip Watts and Jeannine Murphy, a Bus Safari to Guildford, an outing to Osterley House and Strawberry Hill, the Quiz night, a trip to the Winchester Christmas Market, Christmas Lunch at The Unicorn, a theatre trip to Titchfield Barn to see The Three Musketeers and a talk by the police about how to prevent yourself from being scammed. There has been a variety of speakers at our monthly meetings, including 'The escape of Charles II through Sussex in 1651' by Helen Poole, 'Look into my eyes' by Alan Jones, 'The Shetland Bus' by Gillian Halcrow, 'Christmas – a Celebratory History' by Andy Thomas and 'Artistic Highlights of the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum' by James Taylor. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control, two monthly meetings had to be cancelled, one due to the exceptionally high temperatures in July and of course, the devastating fire at The Angel in March meant that access to the Methodist Hall was uncertain, the only way to get from the south of Midhurst to the north being by using the muddy path beside the river Rother, until the pedestrian barrier had been built.

Before the pandemic there were over 420 members. Numbers, of course, dropped for several years, but we ended on 31st March this year with 383 members. An excellent achievement.

Next year we celebrate our thirtieth anniversary, and the Committee will begin planning for this at our Away Day in July. If you have any ideas, please speak to a member of the Committee.

After the closure of my school in the summer of 2008, I was wondering what to do with my sudden enforced spare time. Looking through the Cocking Church and Village magazine I saw an advertisement for a talk at the Midhurst U3A monthly meeting. I went along rather tentatively and enjoyed the talk. I was then invited to a new members' coffee morning where John Broad badgered me to become actively involved with Midhurst U3A and in August 2009 I attended my first Committee Meeting with Bernard Allan in the chair. I have held various positions over the years, and I was the first Groups Co-ordinator. During his time as Chairman, Ian Buckingham persuaded me I had enough limited IT skills to take over from him as the writer of the Mailchimp e-newsletters and the Pearl & Dean Powerpoint presentations before our monthly meetings. Against my better judgement I become Chairman in 2015 and was expecting to stand down in 2020 as the constitution states that the Chairman can only hold that position for five years. However, the Third Age Trust allowed me to continue in that role for another year, during the height of the pandemic. I took up the reins again in August 2022 after Geoff Wadge had to resign as Chairman due to ill health and I have decided that 2023 – 2024 will be my last year as a member of Midhurst U3A's Committee. It has been an interesting fourteen years, with many highs and a few lows and I think new blood is now needed to take Midhurst U3A forward into its thirtieth year and beyond. So please think seriously about volunteering to become a member of the Committee – you will be well supported by the other members and made very welcome.

Let's look forward to another year with every member playing their part to make Midhurst U3A the thriving and successful organisation it can continue to be.