

Chairman's Report for the year 2022- 2023

I was elected to the position of Chair by my fellow Executive Committee members following the AGM in July 2022. Of the previous committee only 2 had stood for re-election, of the remaining 6 members of the new committee, 3 were completely new to the Committee and 3 had served in previous years. This proved to be a good mix of continuity, experience and new ideas. Some committee members will be mentioned by name in relation to specific roles, but I thank every one of you for your hard work, commitment and support over the last year.

We were grateful to Trish Newell who remained as **Speaker Secretary** although she had stood down from the committee. The calibre of the speakers engaged by her has continued to be of a high standard but as with all things over the past twelve months their costs have increased significantly. This resulted in the decision taken to re-instate the fee for these meetings from April this year. On the odd occasion a speaker has cancelled, we have been lucky that our own members, David Soanes, Richard Rigby and Tim Young have been able to step in.

Our thanks go to all members of the **sub-committees**.

Publicity for producing various flyers, updating posters and giving support to Tim Young as editor not only of the bi-monthly newsletter but also of this year's splendid Yearbook. Thanks also go to the band of volunteers who agreed to deliver a copy of this to every member household. Huge thanks also to those few who continue to print and deliver the newsletters every two months for those not on email.

Attempts are being made to make the u3a known to a wider public. Posters are being displayed in public places not only in Newmarket but also the surrounding area. In Newmarket Library a month-long display advertising the u3a accompanied an exhibition of photographs from Camera group members.

David Soanes liaised with Newmarket Community Cinema who now show an advertisement for our u3a at their screenings in return for us making their programme available at meetings. He is also in contact with the Editor of the Newmarket Journal who is regularly made aware of our events and speaker meetings although publication is a bit hit and miss. We did however feature quite heavily in an article on U3As in the East Anglia area and a photograph taken at last year's summer lunch was published.

The **Activities** subcommittee once again displayed decorated trees along with publicity materials in St Mary's Church Ashley and St Andrew's in Isleham during their Christmas Festivals.

They arranged the visits to Holkham Hall last December and the trip to Thursford for November this year. The subcommittee also organised the very enjoyable summer Buffet lunch last September, which unfortunately fell the day following the death of Queen Elizabeth. Two other events however have not been so successful. The numbers attending the Annual lunch in January fell far short of that in previous years and the proposed summer outing to Gressenhall proposed for June had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. Whether this was due to the venue in both cases or other factors is not known. Your comments and suggestions are always appreciated

and I would like to remind you that any u3a member is welcome to join a subcommittee.

Website

In November 2022 our website was affected by a hosting problem and became unavailable until this was finally resolved at end of January 2023. The site was restored and is now working as before.

At the start of this year, all U3A Webmasters were informed that the platform was going to be replaced by a new, more up-to-date program which is currently being developed and will be rolled out to all U3As during the next year. Our web editor is keeping us updated as to progress.

Our thanks go to Chris Timmins for the excellent work she does in continuing to edit our website, especially contending with the problems encountered towards the end of 2022.

Membership increased to 208 in the last year and analysis showed that most members heard of the u3a by word of mouth. New and renewing members can now complete and submit an online application form and pay their subscription via bank transfer although paper applications and cheques are still accepted. Thanks to Margaret Jocelyn for her work as Membership Secretary and to Chris Timmins for setting up the online form as well as making sure the paper forms are up-to-date.

Interest groups settled into the familiar rhythm of monthly meetings although some did request a change of venue for comfort and convenience. As a result, all our meetings now take place at the Exning Road Club, Tesco Community Space, the Racing Centre and more recently Newmarket Day Centre.

Although you will be hearing more from group co-ordinators in their individual reports later there are a few things I feel worth mentioning.

Some groups are coming to an end, Local History/Village Life and the History of Science, all led by Alison Giles. Thanks go to her for her enthusiasm in leading these groups over the last couple of years both in person and via Zoom. The very popular Lunch group, led by Rosemary Foreman suffered because of its popularity. The numbers involved meant fewer local venues were able to cater for such a large group. This has been succeeded by a more informal Brunch meeting which is being held at the Newmarket Day Centre. Thanks go to Judy and Brenda for taking this under their wings. We have also seen the start of other new ventures, a tablet computer short course and a revival of the Bridge group, both of which you will hear more later.

Our thanks go to all our tireless group co-ordinators for their very hard work and to all those who support them by taking up the slack from time to time, assisting with talks and the organisation of meetings in the true spirit of the u3a.

Finally, thank you to two Executive Committee members stepping down today. Stephanie who has completed a three-year term and been our Groups Coordinator, and to Jane who has admirably held the position of Secretary for the past year, despite being very new to the u3a world. You will both be missed. To those who have agreed to be nominated to serve on the Executive Committee for the coming year, I'm sure you will all be working hard to ensure Newmarket u3a continues to go from strength to strength.

Kath Gifkins

Chair