

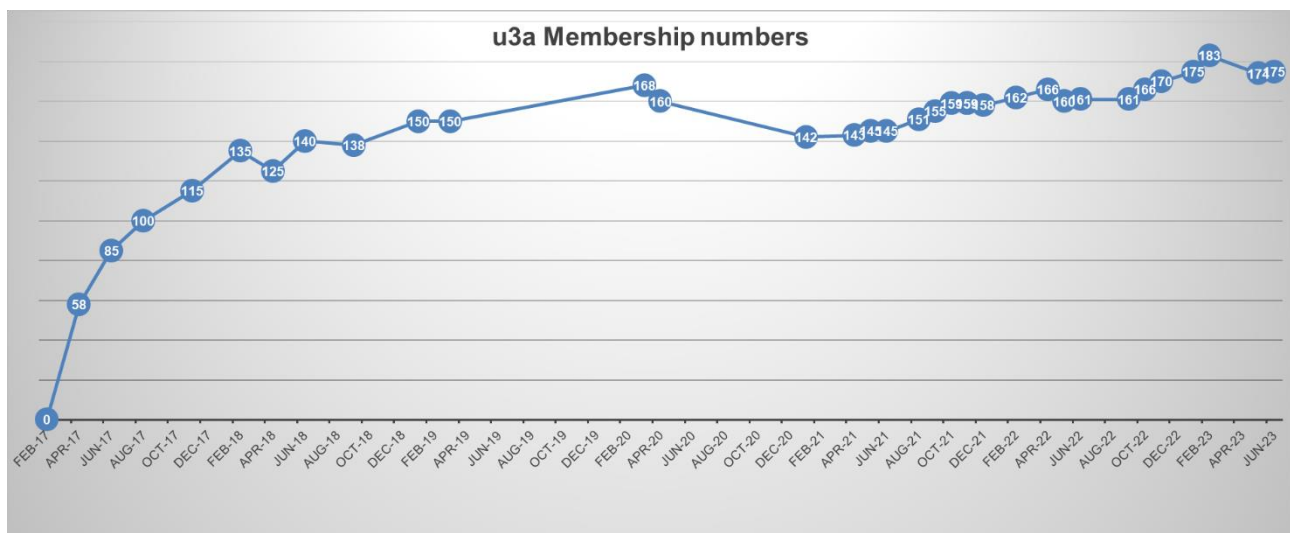
Pontesbury & Rea Valley District u3a AGM – 19 July 2023 Chair's Report 2022-2023

It doesn't seem a year since I wrote the last chair's report for the AGM and although the year seems to have flown by, our u3a group has managed to fit an awful lot into it in terms of events and activities for our members.

Of course last year's AGM was a very sad meeting as we were mourning the death of the founding chair Peter Traves. As a committee we have continued to miss his wisdom and wit and I know that the interest groups to which he belonged feel very much the same.

In September 2022, in line with many u3a groups across the country, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the UK u3a. We had an Open Event to showcase our u3a and had stands and displays from virtually all of our interest groups. The event was extremely well attended and was a really vibrant affair. It generated a lot of interest and our membership increased significantly.

This time last year we had 150 members and, as I write, we have 175. A few members did not renew their membership in the spring which is to be expected but we welcome new members every month these days and this enables our u3a to grow and thrive as new members bring new ideas.



Several new interest groups have been set up and several more are in the pipeline. Our group co-ordinators continue to work hard for their group members and in March we organised an event for them where they were able to work together to share good practice. A new co-ordinators' handbook was introduced at this meeting based on advice from the central u3a organisation. As part of this, updated health and safety/risk assessments were introduced.

Our Open meetings have been increasingly well attended and we have welcomed a range of speakers over the months. We learned about Curlews and Agnes Hunt, we've seen Shropshire from the skies and we have had Christmas and Coronation parties. It has been a real pleasure to have these meetings face to face rather than via Zoom and we have plenty of good ideas lined up for the next 12 months. We are keen to hear from members who might have a story to tell about their life, work or family and who would be willing to share it at one of our open meetings.

Our committee welcomed Steve Anderson as membership secretary last year and also Joan Lee as our new treasurer following John Rice's resignation in March this year.

Although our local u3a group has run smoothly over the year, the same cannot really be said for the central u3a committee and employees. Several of the resolutions they put forward for the main AGM last year were voted against following quite a concerted effort from many local u3a, ourselves included. These were related to membership fees and would have led to quite an increase if the resolutions had passed.

The SiteBuilder site had serious problems, there were issues with the delivery of the magazines and communication with office staff was very difficult at times. I think that perhaps a combination of new central committee members/employees and post-covid issues/challenges caused the problems and most seem now to have been resolved. There seems to be a strong desire to consult with u3a members and local groups so hopefully things are on an upward trajectory. However, there is the potential of increased costs to our u3a relating to the new u3a website and an IT membership system.

We took the decision to reduce the number of magazines we order following the issues that we had with delivery. Each group co-ordinator will receive a copy to be passed around their group and there will be copies available to read at the library. This has meant that we can keep our membership fees at £15.00 for the year – the same fee that was charged when our u3a started in 2017.

Our finances have been checked and the report is included as part of the documentation for the AGM. We have a healthy balance sheet but an awareness that many of our costs have and will be increasing over the next year.

To close the report I must thank the committee members and group co-ordinators who have contributed so much on behalf of our u3a over the past year. We cannot run without them. But of course, the most important people in our u3a are you, our members, and I thank you for your continued support. I hope that you have enjoyed and been inspired by whatever u3a activities or events in which you have participated.

Janet Walsh
Chair 22/23