

## AGM – Chairperson's Report – 2022-23

A warm welcome to the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Retford U3A. Sometimes there is so much happening that it becomes quite impossible to tell all. It's a bit like that for us in Retford U3A this year. Anyway, here comes my feeble attempt to do just that at the end of what has been a remarkable comeback year for our U3A after Covid. Membership up past 500, and, seemingly, a new interest group launching almost every month.

Most visibly, our General Meetings have more than doubled in attendance numbers since our relaunch of face-to-face meetings at the Well. The walking groups, gardening and military history have all seen significant growth in numbers attending and in trips out. At every General Meeting, they and other groups have manned tables to deal with growing member interest. Roy Evans and the Military History group have continued to build on their successful series of Zoom meetings. While Zoom was forced on them by Covid, they have continued to run Zoom sessions that are now attended by U3As from all over the UK alongside restarted normal meetings. Thanks to military history, Retford U3A has fully paid-up members from Michigan and Illinois.

The past year also saw the launch of our Big Nights Out in October of last year. What started as a one-off to get members socialising again after Covid is now a regular quarterly event, which is always fully booked as soon as it is advertised.

This is my last Chairman's report, so forgive me if I let myself bask in the glow of how much has been achieved in the past year. It is our hard-working Committee (of which I have merely been the figurehead) and Interest Group leaders who have done all the work, but sometimes life is like that. The Chairman reaps the praise, even though everyone else did all the work. As your chairman in 2022-23, I have genuinely enjoyed the plaudits that so rightly should be going to others. It is now time for me to step to one side and let the more deserving be acknowledged.

The Management Committee has been wonderful to serve on. Let me draw your attention to our Treasurer, Pat Everitt, and Membership Secretary, Sue Paul, who have been the most responsible for the current excellent health of our membership rolls and finances. All of us owe them a huge debt of gratitude for their work over the past year (and years!). Sue is now retiring from the Committee, but, thankfully, will continue to run our Retford U3A Big Nights Out.

Our Interest Groups have positively thrived under the guidance of our joint Interest Group Coordinators, Caroline Marsh and Carol Knowles, with six new groups launched with their support. Meanwhile, Pippa Ramsay took on the Speaker-finder role and booked us a fascinating card of General Meeting speakers for this past year and most of the next. Members may not realise it, but the cost of booking speakers more than doubled after Covid, but with Pippa's guidance our programme's quality has been maintained while our expenditure has decreased! Finally, with reference to the Committee, where would we be without the quiet efficiency and effectiveness of Secretary Pam Mann? Some of the most important work goes unseen. Most of that unseen Committee work gets done by Pam!

There are others who also keep our ship afloat. Chrissie Cooke has been an unfailingly productive editor of our monthly Not So Idle Times. It is an excellent paper that draws envious attention of other Nottinghamshire U3As. Meanwhile, Andrew Young stepped in and accomplished the redesign and launch of our website at the end of last year. With unfailing patience and courtesy, he has turned the website into an informative and useful tool for all of us, training Interest Group leaders

and trustees alike in how to upload information and communicate better with members. As always, Roger Stenson has kept us supplied with diaries and lanyards.

And now it is my time to step down as chairman. I won't go far, because membership willing, I hope to stay on as vice-chairman. Whatever happens, I want to thank all of you for letting me prance about on stage at these meetings. You have been very patient.