



Chairman's Annual Report 2023

It has been a good year for K2 overall and an interesting one in many ways.

Sadly our sister organization SU3A closed at the end of July, after 26 years, owing to an inability to recruit members to form a committee. This has resulted in a number of SU3A members joining K2 and our membership increased past the pre-pandemic peak to a level of 752. However, with the new membership year there have been a number of resignations, as usual, and our membership has thus dropped somewhat since then. As there are some members who have still not renewed we cannot say what our membership will finally be. We anticipate a few more SU3A members joining us over the next few months.

With the significant influx of new members this year we have had more new members coffee mornings than usual. New members are the life blood of the U3A - from where we traditionally obtain most of our new committee members.

Attendance at the monthly Citadel meetings has been very variable during the membership year, ranging from 135 to 229. We have had some excellent speakers this year owing to the efforts of Sanda Connolly our speaker secretary. There has been a wide range of subjects for us to enjoy.

With the closure of SU3A and the influx of their members to K2 we were becoming worried about exceeding the number that the Citadel can accommodate. Various proposals were considered and we decided to trial an Affiliated Membership Category which would permit people to join K2 and become involved in groups but not attend the Citadel. This membership category would have been offered at a reduced cost compared to standard membership. Over the following two months the Citadel numbers did not increase as much as we feared and so the new membership category was put on hold for the present. The situation will be monitored over the new membership year.

The number of interest groups is now 75. With subjects from Ambling to Write Your Life covering over 50 different topics.

Unfortunately some groups have been lost: Biography, Bridge (Chicago), Cinema Club, German Conversation, Handbell Music, one of the Nostalgic Games, Rock n' Roll, Yoga and Zoom. Some were joint groups with an SU3A leader and have closed with the closure of SU3A.

To compensate, a number of new groups have been started or restarted by enthusiastic leaders: American Square Dancing, Bus Pass Travel, a third Canasta, a second Family History, Italian for Absolute Beginners, Italian for Improvers Level 1, Laughter Club, Motorcycling, a second Needlecraft, Pickleball, Quizzing at Home, a second Rummikub, Stretch and Dance, The 1960s, and two Whist groups. Particular thanks are due to the leaders of these groups for taking the effort to start something new. However, all group leaders are doing a great job in running their groups and deserve praise.

Without the interest groups there would be no U3A and so we owe our group leaders a huge thank you for all the hard work they put in to their groups. A number of groups of course are run by small committees and our thanks extend to these and also to all those involved in making our groups such a success.

Do not be put off by thinking it is difficult to run a group. A lot of help in starting up is available from Helen Beecham and groups can be run by more than one person. So if you have an idea for a group then maybe others would also be interested in it and would join you.

I want to thank the Committee for their support during the year. They are a great bunch and in fact do most of the work that is required in running K2. I may be the face at the meetings but the real work is done by the others. Each and every one of them has worked to further the objectives of K2. It would be unfair to single any out here – they all deserve our thanks.

A number of the committee do not have designated titles, they do, however, work in many ways to keep K2 running smoothly.

Your committee are all volunteers who receive no remuneration for the effort they put in except the satisfaction in a job well done. They put a lot of effort into our U3A and are a pleasure to work with.

All the current committee are happy to continue in their roles and we have one new nominee in John Biggs. We still have no vice-chairman. This is an important role and it is worth me mentioning that although our constitution states chairman and vice-chairman, this is not gender specific. Four of our seven chairmen have been ladies, so please don't let the title put anyone off!

If anyone is interested in joining the Committee with the intention of possibly taking on any role or just seeing how the committee works, we would be very pleased to hear from you. No long term commitment is necessary.

Outside of the committee Pat Massey helps with the groups administration, and Jill Gane still does all the photocopying for K2 despite stepping down from the committee last year.

We have had some excellent general outings this year organized by Lesley O'Malley. The popularity of these is evident by how often they are oversubscribed.

There have also been two holidays organized by Trish Anderson, to Caernarfon, North Wales, in April, and Norton Grange, Isle of Wight in October.

During the pandemic our Kontakt2 newsletter became the shorter, more frequent Keeping in Touch. This membership year it has morphed into K2 News and has become an excellent voice for our members. Diana Adolphus worked hard to produce a new format for K2 News and continues working hard to produce the new editions four times a year. It does of course depend on you, our members, to provide articles and photographs for Diana to include.

I would also like to thank the tea ladies and gentlemen, who provide the refreshments at our monthly meetings. Thanks also to the door marshals who mark our attendance at the meetings, and all the ushers who help you find a seat, all these help to make our meetings go smoothly. While mentioning our meetings at the Citadel – I really must thank the Salvation Army for their hospitality and help while we occupy their comfortable premises. The SA team have always provided us with excellent support. We have been using the Citadel for our meetings since K2 was formed – over 20 years ago.

In 2022 we adopted the Third Age Trust's "Beacon" system to manage our membership records. This system has a few quirks in its operation, but overall has proven to be a great asset in assisting our administration. Beacon can also manage group activities and finance. We have begun to manage some of our groups on Beacon and will extend this in the future.

You'll be pleased to know that I have now covered everything that I intended to speak about. I would just like to finish by stating that I believe the future looks bright for K2, we are a thriving U3A and are evolving when required to adapt to the needs of our membership. We would still benefit from more members becoming involved in running groups and committee work. The U3A is, after all, a self-help organization!

Frank Leaver
October 2023