

Chairman's Report Tenterden u3a May 2023

I am delighted to see so many of you here today. We have not only survived another year, but are flourishing and meeting in person, which is the ethos of u3a. It is fantastic to have got back to some degree of normality.

The success of Tenterden u3a is due to you, the members, enthusiastic Group Leaders and a hard-working, supportive committee.

It has been heart-warming to see so many new groups evolve this year: newcomers being Cryptic Crosswords, Spanish Conversation, Research Group, Causerie Française, Creative Writing, Writing Your Life Story, Spin the Yarn, Jazz, Yoga. This means we have over 40 groups, with 3 pottery sessions! A heart-felt thank you goes out to all Group Leaders for their amazing efforts in providing such a variety of interesting groups to join.

We have started having outings again, but due to the uncertainty of train strikes, have not ventured into theatre trips to London. We had a very successful visit to Finchcocks in Tunbridge Wells where Katrina, Richard's widow, is keeping his name alive. The range of interesting instruments was incredible and Jean brought them alive when she played several of them. It was a memorable outing. Another successful outing was to Stevenson's Rocking Horse Showroom and Godinton House. There was an interesting talk about how rocking horses are made and an informative tour of this special house. Thank you very much to Richard Parsons and Debbie Jones for organising such diverse outings. We look forward to many more this year.

We have had many fascinating and entertaining speakers this year. Two entertained us with theatrical anecdotes: Pat Bryer gave a wonderful rendition of Joyce Grenfell and brought back many happy memories; while Tim Baker had us in fits of laughter, recalling acting incidents and encouraged audience participation. We had an inciteful look behind the scenes of the life of someone selling antiques by Janie Ramsey; again, with help from members of the audience. While Michael Smith brought Ernest Shackleton to life with a fascinating look at the life of this intrepid explorer. Many thanks to Pam Wait, who has been helping to select speakers for several years and is stepping down at the end of 2023. Pam is unable to be here today, but we shall give her a small gift to show our appreciation.

We have had two new members coffee mornings in Lindy's house where the committee have met several new members. Thank you to John Badcock and Annie Williams for stepping in at the last minute to organise these and to Lindy and Alan for hosting these mornings.

Many thanks are due to Neil for so calmly and jovially sorting out the sound for Monthly Meetings; no mean feat. I shall miss his dry comments when he wires me up!

We were delighted that the Street Names book was finalised and proves to give an interesting history into the origin of many of the street names in Tenterden. It can be purchased at Tenterden Museum and is an excellent read. Tenterden u3a Covid Journal was also completed. What a feat this was! It is a wonderful historic document of life in Covid in Tenterden; detailing political, personal and u3a actions in 2020-2021.

Thanks are due to all the contributors, but in particular to Roger Martin, Richard Wheeler, Lindy and Anna who worked tirelessly to get it finalised. It is on Tenterden u3a website and is well worth a read.

Of course, as always, my biggest 'thank you' goes to the committee. It has been another interesting year and has kept us all busy. The number of meetings, emails, phone calls that take place behind the scenes are amazing! But that is what is needed to keep everything running smoothly.

Liz Hammond joined us last year and is responsible for providing refreshments for everyone as well as ensuring that we have the necessary access arrangements in place. She also diligently keeps in touch with all our members who are not online. Sally White has been working with Lindy over the last year and is now going to take over as Groups Organiser, which includes collating the Monthly Programme. This is considerable, as the number of groups continues to grow. It is in no small way due to Lindy's and Sally's support, enthusiasm and encouragement that we have so many successful groups. Debbie Jones has taken over as Outings Organiser, and as you have heard, has been busy starting these up again. I know she has many more ideas up her sleeve – so watch this space!

Rosalind has continued to be a conscientious treasurer and has needed so much patience when dealing with NatWest and all its issues. They certainly don't make life easy! Anna has continued to be there as a wonderfully supportive secretary. Anna, you have kept me focused and ensured that we cover everything we needed to.

Tom has continued to be a wonderful support, resource and most efficient 'post boy'. He deals with so many IT issues, it would make you all gasp! But everything is done efficiently and effectively, including putting all documents into our 'house style'. He has been a wonderful support to both Rosalind and Ian and Barbara when there have been various issues.

An outstanding, supportive and diligent committee!

Now we come to 'goodbyes' and even more 'thank yous'.

Barbara has been Membership Secretary for 3 years and has been kept extremely busy with so many new members joining. There were many issues that had to be resolved after we 'gave' everyone a free year during covid. However, she, with the help of Ian, worked through it and have diligently welcomed new members and have dealt with the difficulties of renewals.

Sadly, Barbara is unable to be here today. We are sorry to lose her from the committee, but realise that time needs to be spent with Ian and her family. I know the committee would like to thank her so much for her support and conscientiousness over the last few years. We have a gift to give her to show our appreciation.

Now, how on earth do I sum up, not only my, but everyone's thanks to Lindy? Lindy has been on the committee for about 20 years! She has been chair twice; vice chair, probably at least twice and has held so many other posts: organising speakers, being Group's Organiser; has maintained links with both National and Kent Network. On the Kent u3a Network she served on the committee, organised Development Days, and took on the task of producing and maintaining the Speakers List which has been so

valuable, especially to new Speakers Secretaries, over the last 10+ years. She and Alan have hosted numerous u3a events in both their house and garden – new members coffee mornings, thank you parties for Group Leaders, etc. the list goes on.....

Lindy is now stepping down from the committee and is looking forward to a well-deserved 'rest'.

She will be sorely missed for so many reasons. She is a font of knowledge, is patient and supportive when dealing with 'issues', is always happy to open her house to any u3a event.

Of course, Alan is a wonderful support to her and he deserves many thanks in his own right. He has sorted the laptop, projector – speaker needs for several years and during our time of hybrid this was extremely stressful. The three of us, with some help at times, have arrived early, opened up, put out chairs and have ensured everything is in place for when we lock up. What a team they make! Alan, please accept this as a token of our appreciation. Enjoy!

I know fully well that I could not have done my job as Chair without Lindy's support, advice, encouragement, providing a shoulder to cry on, and to laugh at many issues. This was especially true during lockdown when everything was a challenge and we were constantly communicating to ensure we were doing all we could to keep Tenterden u3a vibrant and moving forwards. Lindy has been behind many projects: has organised many Study Days/Mornings; was involved with the photography groups's exhibition last year; worked with the National project on shops; as noted above, was very instrumental in the Covid Journal. I'm sure there is so much more.

Lindy, you are a very good friend and u3a colleague. THANK YOU.

And now, it is time for me to stand down. The four years have gone very quickly and have kept me busy in so many ways. It certainly hasn't been without its challenges, and Covid Lockdown was certainly 'interesting', but the committee worked tirelessly to keep everything running smoothly. However, it has been an honour and a privilege to help ensure that Tenterden u3a is such a thriving organisation. My wonderful committee have been there every step of the way and I shall miss my involvement with them. However, it is time for fresh ideas, new ventures and I'm delighted that I shall leave you in their capable hands. Donald, for one, will be delighted that I'm less busy.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and welcome. I can't imagine a better organisation to be involved in than Tenterden u3a.

Jenny Stevens, 18 May 2023