



Thorley

Registered Charity No 1182852

## **Minutes of the AGM held on 7th March 2022 at 2.00pm at the Charis Centre and via Zoom**

### **1. Welcome by Carmen Konopka, Chair**

### **2. Members in attendance**

105 members signed the attendance register at the Charis Centre. In addition, 27 participants were logged by Zoom. In many cases there were two people sharing a screen, giving an estimated total attendance of more than 150.

### **3. Approval of Minutes of the last AGM on January 4th 2021**

Minutes had previously been emailed to members and made available on our website, as well as being posted to members without email. A printed copy was also available at the meeting. As no members had raised issues with them, the minutes were deemed to be approved and Carmen Konopka (Chair) signed them off.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. The Chair's Report**

Carmen started by saying it had been a stop-start year!

The beginning of the year was Very Virtual, but with the Summer we managed to get lots of things going again... only to have to pause again before Christmas. Thankfully most of our activities are pretty much back to normal again.

She was hugely impressed by the way so many groups kept going online and in other ways during last year's lockdowns. For example:

- Photography with competitions and online chats.
- Linda Baker and Maureen Coe retired from running Art Group, but Rita Foster and Pauline Bullions picked up the baton and continued with art challenges and themed painting.
- Bridge players met on an online bridge platform to play the game, and used WhatsApp to chats.
- French classes continued every week on Zoom.
- Choir did practice sessions with YouTube.
- Self-guided Walks for lockdown and beyond - about 40 were planned and tested by Richard Masters and his walking group. All on our website.

Carmen said there were more examples and apologised if every group's lockdown activities were not mentioned.

A list of local tradespeople was set up to celebrate first ever National U3A Day on June 2nd - thank you to Assistant Treasurer John Bailey for organising.

Zoom was the order of the day for our monthly meetings for most of the year. In total, eight of our meetings in 2021 were on Zoom. Sitting in the comfort of our own homes we enjoyed some excellent talks, among them:

- January - Lucy Lewis on Lighting the Fuse
- February - Andy Thomas on Crop Circles
- March - Steve Short on David Nixon
- April - Jo Larner on Handwriting Analysis for Fun
- May - Sarah Slater on Sex, Secrets, Scandal and Salacious Gossip of the Royal Court  
• 1660-1830
- June - Ian Keable on History of Cartoons
- July - Chris O' Grady on My Walking Pilgrimage from Pershore to Rome
- August - Jeff Evans on The Questionable History of the TV Quiz Show

We also continued the Wednesday Workshops that started in 2020. A big thank you to our Vice Chair and Speaker Co-ordinator Sue Warren for taking these on in addition to the monthly meetings. Thanks too to Barbara Jacobs from Garden Group 1, who also engaged a couple of speakers. Wednesday Workshops included:

- February - Rachael Williamson from CAB on Scams & Carmen Konopka on Champagne
- February - Andrew Sankey on History of the Cottage Garden
- March - Carmen Konopka on Powers of Attorney
- March - Hearing Ambassadors Gill and Andrew Campbell
- April - Ray Archer and Anne Mayes on Three Rivers and Five Countries by motorboat
- May - Robert Harvey on Exploring Britain's National Parks

Thursday Elevenses on Zoom –hosted by Vice Chair Jenni Kemp and Committee Member Diana Austin – was another initiative that kept people in touch with each other.

Herts Network and East of England Region also ran various Zooms

Carmen went on to say that on March 29th the rules were relaxed just a little. It meant we could have 6 people meeting outdoors and larger groups for formally organised outdoor sports, so Walkers and Strollers started again. And a new Shorter Strollers Group was launched in May by Linda Ketteridge, alongside the regular Strollers Group.

March also saw the national U3A and our insurers asking for Risk Assessments... which we all struggled with. None of us volunteered to do this sort of paperwork, but it was a necessary evil.

From May 17th the rules loosened up a little bit more... we were allowed up to 30 people meeting outdoors and up to 6 indoors.

By late May Pilates and the Spirals class (which became Flex and Tone in September) started indoors again with tutor Mandy Cousins. Also Yoga with Astelle Dennis, and Zumba with Adriana Potts.

As the Summer continued, most groups started up in person again, including the Choir in July. This was particularly tricky because there were special Covid rules about singing. Carmen said that, as one of the Singers, it felt joyful to sing together again – and she was sure everyone felt the same about their own activities getting going again.

As a U3A we were determined to get people back together again, so we organised these events in the summer:

- July 14th - Day out at Henry Moore Foundation at Perry Green - more than 30 members attended
- August 19th - Group Leaders Lunch - about 60 members attended

By September we were able to have our first in-person meeting at the Barnabas Centre – though the Church required us to restrict numbers to 150 and to run an on-line ticketing system.

We also had to keep all the doors and window open in the Barnabas Centre, which was fine in September, OK in October but jolly cold by November, when the thermometer registered less than 16C and we were all shivering despite wearing our coats!

Nonetheless, we enjoyed our speakers for those three months. They were:

- September - Helen Fry on Secret Service for Escape and Evasion in WWII
- October - Chris Truman on Dabs and DNA
- November - Alan Goldsmith on 50 Years of Rock n Roll

We also organised a couple of great events towards the end of the year:

- November 20th - Quiz Night - with 80 members attending. Thanks to Dave Willet (quiz master), Anne Willett and Ken Blethyn.
- December 6th - Christmas Lunch at Great Hadham Golf Club - with 86 members attending. Thanks to John Bailey and Ken Blethyn.

Unfortunately we had to cancel several planned events:

- July - New Members Coffee Morning cancelled.
- Couldn't celebrate our 10th birthday in October with tea party because of restrictions in Barnabas Centre.
- November - U3A Singers outdoor Christmas Singalong cancelled because of Storm Arwen.
- December Christmas Lights Walk in London.

Carmen add that in hindsight it was remarkable how many planned activities did manage to go ahead. Among the notable trips, outings and activities during the year were:

- Cultures & Customs - Tour of St Michael's Church on August 23rd and visit to Crossness former sewage pumping station on October 12th. Thanks to Jim Hook.
- September 13th - Pam Archer organised garden trip to Leeds Castle.
- September 14th Linda Ketteridge shared some places on trip on behalf of National Trust Herts & Essex Border Group to Holkam Hall in Norfolk.
- December 1st Some members joined BS trip to Carriages, a recreated pre-war rail station near Huntingdon.

And there were two holidays, both of which had been postponed from the previous year

- North Wales Trip organised by Maggie Bennett in July.
- September 20th-24th - Weymouth & Jurassic Coast jointly with Stansted U3A, organised by Nigel Johnson.

Currently our membership is 545 – Just before the pandemic in January 2020 we had 561. Most of our groups are continuing and several new ones have recently started too.

Carmen said she thinks we are in pretty good shape, and this is because our committee, group leaders and volunteers of all kinds – and, indeed, all our members – have been committed to keeping Thorley U3A going under quite difficult circumstances. Well done everyone!

## **6. Presentation of Accounts**

The accounts, prepared by Ken Blethyn, Treasurer, were made available to members by email, on the website and posted to those without email prior to the meeting. A printed copy was also available at the meeting. There were no queries about them so they were deemed to be approved.

## **7. Thanks to Retiring Committee Members and Election of New Committee Members**

Three Committee Members retired, having served for three years: Jenni Kemp, Vice-Chair, who also acted as Minutes Secretary for part of the time; Anne Willett, Membership Secretary; and Rosemary Hoskins, Groups Co-ordinator.

All were thanked for their work and were given cards and vouchers as a token of appreciation – Jenni and Anne were not present, so their gifts were delivered afterwards.

Three new Committee Members were proposed. They were unopposed and duly elected by a show of hands:

- Roger Doughty (Membership Secretary), proposed by Sandra Doughty, seconded by Pam Archer
- Tom McNeeney (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer), proposed by Hilary McNeeney, seconded by David Herbert
- Ian Hudson (Newsletter Editor). proposed by Carole Hudson, seconded by John Glazebrook

## **8. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **9. Date of Next AGM**

9th January 2023.