

A handwritten signature in blue ink, followed by the date '8/1/24' written in the same ink.

**Minutes of the AGM
held on 9th January 2023 at 2.00pm
at the Charis Centre**

1. Welcome by Carmen Konopka, Chair

2. Members in attendance

140 members signed the attendance register at the Charis Centre.

3. Approval of Minutes of the last AGM on March 7th 2022

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 that almost exactly a year ago we had to cancel our monthly meeting and AGM on January 10th. What a long way we've come since then...

We had to move our last AGM to March because Covid cases were on the rise at the beginning of 2022 and we felt it was too risky. But since that time we have gone back to normal meetings and group activities in person. Lockdown and restrictions seem a long time ago!

A major change for us at the beginning of this year was that we moved our monthly meetings to the Charis Centre. We held our first meeting here in February – which was our first in-person meeting for three months.

It's the third meeting place in the history of Thorley U3A because we started at the Rugby Club then moved to the Barnabas Centre. We did a lot of research before coming here, and conducted a poll in which 63% were in favour of the move. It was also fascinating to discover that more than 60% of our members live outside the Thorley postcode area!

We have saved a lot of money by moving to the Charis Centre, which has not only meant that we could hold our subs at £15 for the year, but also gave us a £1,000 surplus, so we were able to give all the groups who meet in rented halls a contribution of £75. Twelve groups benefited and it gave them a financial boost at a time when many were struggling to get going again.

Another good bit of financial news was that we received a £500 donation from Riviera Travel because two members booked their holiday through their Affinity Partnership scheme. (If you're

thinking of booking a holiday with this company, please ask me how you can get Riviera to pay 10% of your payment to our U3A or another charity.)

Thanks to some excellent research and booking choices by our Speaker Co-ordinator Sue Warren, we have had some amazing Speakers this year:

January	- Zoom – Alsace Wine and Regions - Carmen Konopka
February	Mark Lewis: ‘Tying the Knot – History of English Marriage’.
March	Gary Matthews ‘A History of Easton Lodge’
April	Neil Hanson ‘Ghost Writing’
May	Chris Truran ‘Every Contact Leaves a Trace’
June	Helen Field ‘The Secrets of a Mystery Shopper’
July	Graham Craker ‘Medical Detection and Assistance Dogs’
August	Andrew Baker ‘Who is the Greatest of our Post-War Leaders?’
September	David Allen ‘The Making of the Film The Sound of Music’
October	Geoff Bowden: ‘Reviewing his Situation – Lionel Bart’
November	Andrew Baker ‘The Second Elizabethan Age’

Incidentally, we are very lucky to have such a wonderful group of Meeters & Greeters at our meetings. They are easy to spot because they all got new sashes and lanyards this year. A huge thank you to them all.

Our Groups have been very active. Thank you to all of the Group Leaders – you are the lifeblood of our organisation and we couldn’t manage without you. A few of the notable group events this year:

- Calligraphy restarted under Ceri Why
- New Craft group under Anne Willett
- History group started again after gap of two years – Sue Cranston at the helm
- Supper Club new leaders after Judi Burdett stepped down - Anne Perrin & Jean Mittins

And there have been lots of Outings and Holidays:

- A big thank you to Sylvia Poole, who has organised so many excursions, including theatre trips to the Drifters Girl and My Fair Lady, a visit to Christmas in Dixieland on the Tereza Joanne boat and a coach tour of the London Lights with a fish and chip supper.
- Meanwhile Pam Archer ran an enormously popular trip to the Thursford Christmas Show.
- Mike McGregor invited us to join in with a trip to Brighton that he set up with Bishop’s Stortford U3A.
- Maggie Bennett amazingly organised not one but two holidays for us this year. In July there was a holiday to Devon, staying at a hotel in Torquay. Then in September she ran a holiday based in Newcastle, with visits to places like Beamish, Bambrugh Castle, Holy Island and Durham.

All of these were open to all our members, but in addition many of the groups ran outing for their members.

- Jim Hook ran all sorts of activities for the Cultures & Customs Group, including a visit to a Bengali restaurant and an outing to Cambridge to see the new Eco Mosque and Fitzwilliam Museum, ending at Tea Orchard at Grantchester for cream tea.

- All of the three Garden Groups were very adventurous. Between them they went to the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Leonardslee Lakes at Horsham, Impington Mill near Cambridge, the Old Rectory near Newmarket, Chippenham Park Gardens near Newmarket, Fanhams Hall in Ware, Benington Lordship near Stevenage, Alswick Hall in Buntingford, Furzleys Gardens at Danbury... and several more! A big thank you to the Garden Group Leaders, Barbara Jacobs, Beryl Davis, Val Fenwick and Linda Maxwell.
- The Walkers, a group led by Richard Masters, must have walked every footpath within a 30-mile radius during their weekly walks. And they also went to London for a tour of Legal London.
- Meanwhile the U3A Singers managed to hold their first concert for two years in October, as well as holding a Come and Sing Day open to all, singing at a care home and also in Jackson Square just before Christmas.

In May we held our first New Members Coffee Morning for two years... there will be another one at the end of March, and people who have joined in the last year will get individual invitations.

In October we had another fantastic Quiz Night – with a fish and chip supper – under the direction of our Quiz Master Dave Willett, with help from Anne Willett who organised all the bookings and Ken and Frances Blethyn.

And in December we had a superb Christmas Lunch for more than 100 members at the Great Hadham Golf & Country Club. Thank you to John Bailey for managing all the bookings, to Ken Blethyn for sorting out all the place cards and Anne Willett for running the raffle.

And I couldn't finish without mentioning that the Newsletter started up again, this time under the editorship of Ian Hudson who is producing a very readable and informative round-up of our activities every two months.

Throughout the year I have been supported by an excellent team of committee members and couldn't have managed without them:

Sue Warren, vice chair and speaker co-ordinator
 Ken Blethyn, treasurer
 John Bailey, assistant treasurer
 Duncan Palmer, business secretary
 Roger Doughty, membership secretary
 Diana Austin, groups co-ordinator
 Ian Hudson, newsletter editor
 Tom McNeeney, equality, diversity and inclusion officer

There are also many others who help us to manage our U3A, including Richard Masters and his Tech Team, David Aitken our Webmaster, Kathryn Aitken and Sue Russell and their helpers who provide refreshments at our meetings, Terry Rhoda who co-ordinates the trips diary, and Nick Ambrose who provides internet support.

Finally, in this Chair's Report – which is beginning to sound a bit like a speech at the Oscars! – I want to say thank you to all of you members. Our U3A is not an organisation that simply provides services to members. We ourselves are the ones who organise activities and events. Without so many of our 530 members being enthusiastic and involved, we simply couldn't exist. So thank you all for everything you all do... and please keep doing it throughout 2023.

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

Two Committee Members retired: Duncan Palmer, Business Secretary, and Ian Hudson, Newsletter Editor.

Both were thanked for their work and were given cards and wine as a token of appreciation.

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

- David Willett, Communications Officer
- Anne Willett, Events Organiser
- Pam Archer, Business Secretary

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date of Next AGM

8th January 2024.