

Trustees' Report for 2019/20

The Organisation

Thornbury u3a (Tu3a) is a registered charity (number 1080095) constituted in 1999. Its purpose is the advancement of education and in particular the education of older people and those retired from full-time work, by means including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development in Thornbury and its surrounding locality.

Thornbury u3a is operated as a collection of interest groups (people drawn from a common membership to follow a particular interest). The interest groups are the primary means of satisfying the object of the organisation. The groups have a large degree of operational independence, with the central committee (the Charity Trustees) providing:

- Recruitment and administration of the overall membership
- Setting-up and support to the interest groups
- An internal communications hub
- Running events with a cross-group interest
- Governance of the organisation

Achievements 2019/2020

Open Meetings

Two Open Meetings took place in 2019/20 as follows:

- Helen Roberts arranged a talk on Newark Park in November 2019
- Phillip Unwin arranged a talk on SS Great Britain in February 2020.

The Committee wish to thank these members for arranging these talks which were well attended. Unfortunately, all other Talks and Visits had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus.

Recruitment and administration of the overall membership

At Membership renewal time in Jan 2021, the numbers recorded show a drop to 1479 but this does not include over 200 members who have not renewed their membership to date. This decrease from the 1854 members we had last year is almost certainly due to the Covid-19 restrictions that curtailed all activities from March 2020 onward. We were unable to hold any "New Members" meetings at which we normally recruit several new comers and advertising has also been severely restricted.

Support to the interest Groups

There are currently 85 interest groups within our organisation. Approximately 20 of these are still functioning in the light of the restrictions, either by using virtual meeting platforms such as Zoom or by creating small groups for such activities as Cycling and Walking. To enable these virtual meetings to take place without time restriction, the Committee have purchased two "professional" Zoom licences. In addition, one member of Tu3a has run two successful training sessions for anyone interested in running Zoom meetings. The situation regarding each Group will be closely monitored and the Committee will support all Groups wanting to restart once the restrictions are lifted.

In February 2020 we held a meeting for the Group Leaders to discuss the issues raised in the 2018/19 financial accounts, the use of Beacon as our main Membership management system and the way in which we communicate to all members – the use of Newsletters, emails and the Website. This was the first time the Leaders had been brought together in this way and it turned out to be a very successful meeting. It is planned to hold other meetings (beside the Leaders Lunches) in the future since the success of our organisation rests on the Group Leaders shoulders.

Changes to the Constitution

It had become apparent that, following the Charity Commission's recently introduced financial reporting requirements, there would no longer be sufficient time between the end of the Financial Year (30th Sept) and the AGM to get all the Groups Financial inputs collated and approved by the Financial Examiner. This delay would have been in breach of the existing Constitution that stated approval of accounts needed to take place within six weeks of the end of the Financial year. The Committee organised an Extraordinary General Meeting, that was held "virtually" in early July 2020 to modify the Constitution to allow the AGM to be moved from November into the New Year. The electronic vote was held and the proposal passed; over 630 members voted, the vast majority in favour of the changes.

The 2018 / 19 financial accounts revealed the overall turnover of Tu3a was significantly above that of the central Committee expenditure, so the Committee ran a Group Leader Conference in February 2020. This briefed them on the financial issues raised in the recent accounts, the increasing need to use IT, emphasising the need to use the Tu3a website, and also the Beacon management system. The Group Leaders' handbook has been updated and now includes sections on several aspects of running a Group. It is published on the website under the Group Leaders own webpage. This website and Beacon now include details of all central and group activities and contact details. Equipment is owned by the u3a for use by the groups and for committee-organised events. The Committee supports "Start up" grants for anyone wanting to start up a new Group and, for existing Groups, has financed the replacement of the older equipment. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions on activities there has been very few equipment upgrades this year.

Trustees

Norman Taylor (Chairman), Frank Tustin (Vice Chair), Ian Macdonald (Secretary), Steve Hughes (Treasurer), Jackie Gitsham (Membership Secretary), Barbara Jones (Beacon Administration), Mike Farquhar (Equipment), Don Grundell (Webmaster), Louise Ingsley (Group Co-ordinator), Sue James, Anne Reed. Overall, the Trustees believe Thornbury u3a continues to be a successful and thriving organisation with strong finances and a friendly, helpful and supportive atmosphere.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees Norman Taylor, Chairman, Thornbury u3a 28th December 2020