

### **Chair's Annual Report for Torridge U3A AGM August 2020**

Following our new last AGM in June 2019, we were looking forward to a year of growing member numbers, new groups being formed and a calendar of events, meetings, Coffee Mornings and monthly lunches. No one could have contemplated what changes the first few months of 2020 would bring and how that would impact on our day to day lives.

As we progressed through the second half of 2019, member numbers were indeed rising and many groups were full and had waiting lists. Attendances at our Coffee mornings were growing and we were seeing many new members attending. The numbers at our monthly Lunch at the Royal Hotel were growing and we enjoyed some excellent after lunch speakers, so many thanks to our Speaker Secretary, Alison Tamplin. All the members who attended our Christmas lunch also enjoyed the performance by the Appledore Women's Choir.

Much needed updating had been made to the Upper Room, with new flooring, heaters etc. being provided. We were also able to start making much more use of our Beacon Management Software to keep records up to date and to establish better communication between the Committee, Group leaders and our wider membership. A number of Beacon tutorials had been held to help Group leaders to use this new tool and more had been planned.

As we entered 2020, we had a full program of Speakers arranged for the monthly lunches, Coffee mornings planned and we were starting to look at the possibility of arranging day trips out to local places of interest!

Then, before 2020 seemed to have arrived we started to hear stories about a new virus appearing in China, which before we knew it became the Covid-19 pandemic that went on to change all our lives so dramatically. By the middle of March, we had to take steps to cancel all forth coming events and group meetings without any clear idea of when things could re-start. Even as I write this we still don't know when we will get back to the "old normal" although some restrictions are now starting to be eased.

Although it has not been business as normal since lockdown it has been encouraging to see what steps groups have taken to maintain contact in the period of isolation. We have groups keeping in contact by telephone, email, text and now even Zoom meetings being held on a regular basis. My thanks go out to all members and group leaders who have done all they can to make this happen over the last few months.

With very little group activity to report, our Newsletter editor, Graham Thompson, changed the emphasis of the Newsletter and for the last few months we have had an excellent selection of stories, poems, reminiscences, quiz's and crosswords to look forward to. Many thanks to Graham for all his hard work and to all those who have contributed.

Anne Budd, has recently stood down from the Committee to be replaced in the role of Membership Secretary by Julie Thompson. I would like to express my thanks to Anne for all her work helping us with the implementation of our Beacon System and I am pleased that she will still be working with the U3A in a Beacon support role.

I would also like to thank all the Committee members for their hard work and effort during these difficult times.

It has been very pleasing to see that we have now had over 300 members renew their membership for 2020/2021 and I am sure we all look forward to better times and more social interaction in the coming months.

Dennis Pavitt

Chair, Torridge U3A