

## **Chairman's Report for the Chorleywood u3a AGM – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022**

I hereby present the annual report for the year 2021/2022.

The past year has been essentially one that has seen us return almost to pre-pandemic normality. As such it could (unlike national politics) be almost described as routine, but in a wholly good way. I am of course referring to the management and administration of the u3a, and not at all to its activities and groups which have continued to provide enjoyment and stimulation to us all.

For the year 2021/22 we were again able to discount the annual subscription. This resulted in a deficit for the year, but one easily covered by our reserves, and our financial position remains strong. With activity returning near to normal we have reverted to a full subscription for 2022/23, albeit with no increase for inflation. For full details of our finances please see the separate report from our Treasurer – Chris Higbee.

During the latter part of 2021 and the first half of 2022 we welcomed 21 new people who along with existing members were all invited at the end of August to continue their membership for the coming year. Each year, our membership changes, sometimes more or sometimes less, reflecting whether people have moved away or have other personal interests or constraints on their time. In a year that was still slightly uncertain but where we were confident of providing almost all the benefits in some form, I am delighted to report that 85% wished to continue to be part of Chorleywood u3a and I am further pleased to advise that 4 former members have returned to us after a short break and have recently been joined by 15 new members taking our current membership to 398. However, there's always room for more!

### **Groups**

Following months of Zoom meetings during the Covid epidemic it is good to be able to report that the majority of our 40-plus groups are now running face to face though some are still meeting by Zoom or as hybrid groups. We are tremendously grateful for all the enthusiasm and hard work our group leaders put into running their groups.

We say a special thank you to those who have decided to step down, some after more than 10 years: Angela Lepper (Architecture), Joan Smith (Caradene art appreciation), Kate Brightwell and Peter Brocklehurst (Investors Forum), Helen Angel (Literature), Joy Clews (Social Psychology) and Clare and Steve Vincent (Rummikub). The groups continue to thrive with members taking over their roles, respectively: Alan Barton, Juliet Hale, Tony Leather, Rosie Warburg, Ursula Fahey and Margaret Cassidy. Debbie Edwards has taken on London Walks 2 from David Griggs.

Sadly over the past 12 months we have lost Singing for Fun, Digital Photography and Bridge at Sycamore House, led respectively by Georgie Barton, Richard Gill and David Hiddleston, and Shirley Sallis. Sincere thanks to them for their work in making these groups a pleasure over several years.

We are pleased that over the past year we have been able to add Folk Music Appreciation and Verse and Worse to our u3a. We hope to start Cribbage, Walking Netball and Racketball.

As groups co-ordinators, Jill Menghetti and Tricia King have held termly meetings/forums to help group leaders become aware of changes and developments on a variety of topics, most recently the use of our excellent new website (see below).

Having met on Zoom, these are now in person again, followed by an enjoyable buffet lunch.

### **Website**

This year we launched a brand new website for Chorleywood u3a on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022, coinciding with the start of the new membership year. This replaces the old website that had served us well but clearly showed its age. The new website, at <https://cw-u3a.org.uk>, presents a much improved public view of our u3a which hopefully will help to attract new members. It is built using WordPress which is a modern and flexible platform for websites and is also one that the Third Age Trust are planning to adopt. For members the new website provides a rich source of information including easy to navigate pages for all groups, event listings, a gallery, a full calendar of all activities and a members area which includes PDF versions of newsletters and other useful documents. Building the new website was a team effort, led by Mike Stansfield, involving the committee, a dedicated sub-committee and of course involvement of all the group leaders. We have been careful to keep the setup and running costs very low, including by sharing the website resources of Chorleywood Residents' Association. Our thanks go to everyone involved in this endeavour.

### **Events**

2022 started slowly as we waited for the impact of the winter Covid outbreak to diminish before offering trips to our members. However overall we ran three successful educational visits in 21/22 to Winchester, Cambridge, and Salisbury (guided tours around Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals being especially appreciated) as well as more recently to Hampton Court. Following on from the very successful visit to Winchester Christmas Fair in December last year we will visit the Christmas Fair in Oxford this year on December 7th. Attendance on the trips has been variable as members took the opportunity to catch up on holidays and with families after the previous two years but we hope to get back to larger numbers of those joining us in 2023.

We also had a theatre coach trip in May to a new production of the award-winning musical "Jersey Boys" at the newly refurbished Trafalgar Theatre, which was well liked.

Recently we successfully held an event at the Memorial Hall to celebrate the u3a movement's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the UK. Most of our groups displayed their work and enjoyed talking to visitors both members and from the public (some of whom are now members).

### **Main meetings**

We continued our programme of monthly meetings with many interesting speakers arranged by Andrew York, with assistance from Doug King and Gillian Pugh. In the interests of inclusivity we have continued to make these available also via Zoom for members unable to attend in person. Attendances were disappointing earlier in 2022, but I am pleased that they have increased latterly, though on average still a little below pre-pandemic levels.

A revised version of the online Christmas Carol Concert, where items were devised by some of our interests groups, was enjoyed by many of the membership last December.

### **In Memoriam**

Jackie Hale, Anthony McMurtrie, Jim Milledge, Anne Reiner, Natalie Ross, Julie Shepherd. Our condolences are sent to their families and to close friends who knew them. They will be missed.

### **Local and national links**

The Herts Network has closed as no volunteers could be found for its committee. We are members of the East of England Region which remains active and with whom we are in discussion about the benefits of some form of county activity.

Relatively informal meetings with smaller groups of local U3As have continued. The TAT National Conference this year was again cancelled though the AGM was held as a hybrid in person and online meeting.

### **The Committee**

At the AGM this year five of the current Committee will be standing down. Sue Brocklehurst has been a member for a relatively short spell, but made a valuable contribution in this time helping to organise educational visits. Colin Brown (Webmaster), Chris Higbee (Treasurer), Katina Smith (Secretary) and Dee Watson (Membership Secretary) have all given many years service to our u3a and on behalf of the Committee and the Membership I want to express our thanks and admiration to them.

My thanks also to other members of the Committee – Georgie Barton, Dave Carter, Gillian Hill, Tricia King, Jill Menghetti and Mike Stansfield – for the support you have given me this year.

Dave Carter will take over from Dee as Membership Secretary, and Mike Stansfield from Colin as Webmaster. I am also delighted to say that Mike Field will be standing for election to re-join the Committee with a view to becoming our new Treasurer.

At the time of writing therefore the posts of Secretary and Vice-chairman (not filled last year) will remain vacant after the AGM which is not satisfactory. We are therefore looking for members to step up and join us as Committee members (including for these two roles).

### **2023**

In general I am confident that our u3a will continue to thrive. However it is also my duty to say that this can only happen if members come forward to make a contribution to running it by joining the Committee. What happened this year to the Herts Network should be seen as an alarm.