

## **Chairman's Report for the Chorleywood U3A AGM – 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

I hereby present the annual report for the year 2020/2021.

A year ago I wrote: “We don't know if the experience we have been through these last few months will be in that awful phrase ‘the new normal’ or if in a year's time we will be able to look back on this as a blip.” Encouragingly we have seen signs in recent months of some of our activities undertaken in a way recognisable from a pre-pandemic period, and although many uncertainties remain as we move into winter, I am heartened by the optimism shown by our group leaders and members.

Our main aim for now is to give groups the opportunity to maintain their presence and progress in whatever form each group considers best. Consequently we have continued with the two Chorleywood U3A Zoom accounts for use by members and groups.

Our financial position remains strong – see separate report from Chris Higbee who I thank for her continuing efforts as Treasurer. With the help of reclaimed Gift Aid we were again able to offer members a discounted subscription on renewal. I am again pleased to see that so many of you took advantage of this offer (see below).

One disappointment is that the continuing restrictions meant we had to abandon plans to hold a (delayed) 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary party as a 10+1 celebration. However should circumstances permit we are developing ideas for new events in 2022.

Looking back on the previous year, which was the first full year of varying government/national restrictions, including lockdowns, we maintained a reasonable programme of membership events, both physical and electronic for over 400 members and had a Zoom session to welcome some of the new members who had joined during that time. 91% of our existing members have renewed their subscriptions. We are also pleased to welcome 18 new members and 2 returning members to join us taking our current membership to 427 and hope that all members will participate in as many activities as possible and enjoy the u3a experience.

I thank Dee Watson for continuing to manage our membership in such an efficient manner.

### **Groups**

Most of our groups have continued to meet throughout the pandemic, initially via Zoom, WhatsApp and email, and now increasingly face to face, thanks to the enthusiasm of our group leaders.

Our practical groups were most anxious to get going again and now include:

All Walking Groups (except Amblers for which we need a new organiser/leader), Line Dancing, Singing for Fun, Patchwork and Quilting, Ukuleles, Table Tennis, Uninhibited Stitch, Local History, Tai Chi, Shakespeare on Screen, Family History, Treasure Seekers and other Art Appreciation groups, Garden Buddies, London Walks, Wine Appreciation and Psychology. Other groups prefer to continue to meet at home and use Zoom for the time being.

I am grateful to Richard Dwyer for stepping in to take on the Strollers group from Dee Watson who ran this so successfully for 10 years. A new Practical Photography group begins this November, while Folk Music Appreciation and Verse and Worse, plus a short Family History for Beginners course, plan to begin in the new year.

We have lost Cook Talk, Enjoying Classical Music, Italian, Memories and Recollections and Pilates this year but thank those group leaders for their work in making these groups a pleasure over several years.

An online Carol Concert was held last December involving input from several of the groups and was enjoyed by many. An online Coffee Morning to celebrate national u3a Day was held in June to promote our groups to potential new members.

Our Groups Co-ordinators, Tricia King and Jill Menghetti, have met with group leaders throughout the year via Zoom and email, made careful risk assessments and encouraged our groups to complete safety checks and maintain social distancing whether meeting outdoors, in homes or in halls. These regulations remain in place at present.

### **Events**

We were pleased to resume our educational trip programme in August with a trip to Kew Gardens. We had 22 members join us for the visit where we were able to explore the gardens, glasshouses and exhibitions over several hours. Our next trip to Winchester Cathedral (with guided tour) and Christmas Fair in December has been very strongly supported and we have fully booked the coach with a reserve list starting to be generated. We look forward to a very enjoyable trip. Dave Carter, and now Sue Brocklehurst, have responsibility for arranging our educational visits. Although the programme this year has been necessarily limited, they have put in much effort researching potential destinations that we hope will bear fruit in 2022.

### **Main meetings**

We continued our programme of monthly meetings using the Zoom platform with many interesting speakers arranged by Gillian Pugh and Andrew York. Attendances were comparable to our previous face-to-face meetings. We were also able to hold successfully our 2020 AGM in this way. In September – after the end of the accounting year – we were able to meet back in the Memorial Hall with our speaker present. This was held as a hybrid event with members not able to attend in person logging in to Zoom to hear the speaker. For the moment we will continue with hybrids while we monitor attendance – live and virtual.

### **In Memoriam**

Maureen Burr, Reg Collison, Gilda Conrich, Brian Donnelly, Vivien Dwyer, Doris Francis, Geoff Jones, Margery Lee, Martin McDowell, John Pearson, Colin Simmonds. Our condolences are sent to their families and to close friends who knew them.

### **Local and national links**

The Herts Network has continued to meet but only on line. Meetings with smaller groups of local U3As have however recommenced. The TAT National Conference this year was again cancelled with the AGM online.

### **The Committee**

Gillian Pugh has been a member of the Committee for 9 years, and for the last three has served as my vice-chairman. During this time her support and advice have been invaluable. She has decided not to stand for re-election for a further term. The Committee and I thank her on your behalf for the work she has put in.

Doug King will also be standing down at the AGM, due to the time required for his commitments elsewhere. Although Doug has been on the Committee for just one year he has made a real contribution in that time, and we thank him. Early in the year Dave Rapp resigned.

We are therefore looking for members to step up and join us as Committee members (including the post of vice-chairman).

Georgie Barton, Sue Brocklehurst, Colin Brown, Dave Carter, Chris Higbee, Gillian Hill, Tricia King, Jill Menghetti, and Dee Watson have all provided good advice and support to me throughout the year, and I particularly want to thank our Secretary, Katina Smith, who shoulders so much of the admin which keeps our u3a running smoothly.

My three year term as Chairman also finishes this year. With your approval I will stand for re-election for a further period.

### **2022**

As last year I am confident that our u3a with all your help and contributions will continue to thrive. Beyond that I will not forecast.