

AGM May 25th

Annual Report of Kings Hill and District U3A

Introduction: I know that you are all looking forward to listening to me read out the Annual Report. I made a rash promise to someone that the AGM would be interesting, relaxed and short!! How can I live up to that?

Just over a year ago I made the condition that I would only agree to be chair of our U3A if I continued to enjoy the whole experience. I also expressed the condition that I would not enter into any argument or dispute situations. WELL.....you may wish to know whether my conditions have been met.

What makes me want to remain as Chairman:

1. The positive attitude of all our members to follow the principles and vision of the U3A movement and to put into action the motto "Learn, Live and Laugh". This is fulfilled by our 353 members plus any today; 52+ Special Interest Groups; numerous visits to theatres, concerts, towns and villages, gardens, famous houses; visits abroad; London Walks, luncheon club, Christmas Lunch, regular monthly meetings with usually over 100 attendees and interesting speakers on a wide variety of subjects.
2. The willingness of our members, convenors and committee to be open minded and creative about developing what is already a very successful U3A. In addition, you are all open to suggestions about helping out in various areas, taking your part in the planning and preparation in the SIGs and taking on organisational tasks in our U3A and in other local networks. (Kent and SE network with Summer School) I must stress the appreciation of us all to the group convenors who act as facilitators and diary prompts and the committee acknowledge that with an annual lunch and coffee mornings to meet together.
3. The enjoyment, friendship, fun, caring, support, understanding of peoples' different points of view and the reliability shown by members when they take on a task, need to be recognised, praised and publicised. All of these characteristics make up a very lively and successful U3A of which I am very proud to comment upon especially when meeting up with other area U3A members, and family and friends who often have no idea of what U3A stands for.
4. Recently I attended a course on communications and that prompted me to list our range of methods to keep us all informed.
Monthly Newsletter, Web Site, Face Book, regular emails to members, the Beacon system, Handbook, Monthly meetings and the annual sign up meeting in October.

So what do you think? it looks like I am here for another year!!! If you agree.

There are some specific people and events you would expect to be highlighted although they are all included if not by name, in the list above and forgive me if there are any omissions.

We said final “goodbyes” to Ron Hall, Geoff Pay and Doug Francis this year. They had all given so much to our U3A in their lives and we remember them with thanks and gratitude.

Committee members, Pat Bell and Barbara White who stand down this year, we say “thank you “for your service. They will still be influential and I am sure we will hear from them!!

Julian Smith, our newsletter editor, works miracles with photos of various quality and reports which vary in size and understanding. His contribution to reporting and advertising our activities is recognised as “outstanding”. He now has an apprentice.

Mark Richards continues to contribute to the reason for our successes and why I enjoy my role. He is a wonderful support and we should all recognise his selfless involvement.

As part of our corporate characteristic, a new SIG “Here to Help” has been set up with Sally Anne Clark as convenor. This is a fairly unique project designed to be of support for all our members who at any time may have the need to chat over a personal issue or problem. Sally Anne is very experienced and totally confidential. Thank you to her.

I had a dream after last year’s National Conference that music would become more prominent in our activities. Many of you have made this come true. The Singing group increasing monthly, now two guitar groups, ukulele group expanding, becoming known and performing in the community and the Big Band group gradually increasing in numbers. A keyboard player has recently been persuaded to join by Peter but a portable keyboard required.

I also set myself a challenge to visit all SIGs whilst being Chairman. Well 17 so far including groups I attend regularly.

Every month and at our AGM we all appreciate our refreshments, a big thank you to the Hospitality team led by Barbara White.

Another crucial role is covered by our Welcome Team. Elaine Scutt, Ann Pay and Kay Richards all provide that point of contact to all members but especially to new and visiting members.

During this year we have begun to share some of our events and groups with members from other U3As. We have welcomed members from Malling and Maidstone to our trip to The Netherlands and received wonderful reviews from them about the friendship and comradeship shown by our members. Mark has also met with local U3A organisers with a view to opening our events on a reciprocal arrangement. In fact this has already begun.

I can’t finish without mentioning more about our recent Visit to The Netherlands. Thanks to June Rose and Alan Pamplin for helping to put together a very interesting itinerary which gave us all an excellent experience of life, history and culture of Holland. In addition to the planned visits, our wonderful coach driver took us to a Belgian chocolate shop and factory and June found that the weekend we were away was promoting Windmills so we invaded Utrecht windmill where we were greeted with open arms. Kerkenhauf tulip gardens, Amsterdam Museums, canal tour and red light district, the town of Oudewater with its Witches Weighhouse and a modern castle built by a Rothschild completed the trip. Utrecht itself provided another canal

experience and attractive restaurants. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and maybe there will be interest in future adventures.

I should be standing on my head presenting this report. Our U3A is not dependant on a hierarchical system of organisation. We are all in it together, demonstrating our willingness to contribute, share, and volunteer, without waiting for the leader to plead for action. Long may you continue to demonstrate these characteristics and to pass them on to all our new members.

I look forward to another vibrant and developing year.