

Annual Report June 2019

Where do I begin my valedictory Annual Report? Do I ignore the first two years, do I just give a factual account of this year, do I mention everyone by name who has made these three years so much fun and enjoyment, do I make it long or short?

Let's start with 2019:

Here are some facts about the last year which give a flavour of the development which has occurred:

Membership up to 470

Special Interest Groups: 60+ as there are constant changes due to new groups starting. Remember "we never close" just start up a new group.

Monthly Meetings: highest attendance: 178.

Convenor's meeting: highest attendance 50.

Committee members: members of the committee have worked tirelessly throughout the year to plan and discuss all aspects of our U3A. There are volunteers for all new positions.

Newsletter: continues to be full of exciting news and photographs from various events and group activities.

New Members meetings: continue on a regular basis

Speakers for monthly meetings: a great variety of different subjects presented by a range of interesting speakers.

Musical Extravaganza: a new event when we showcased our Choir, Big Band, Ukeleles, Guitars and two groups from Paddock Wood U3A.

Another showcase Event: In September we are planning an Autumn Show which will provide an opportunity for garden, flower arranging, craft, photography, wine appreciation and art groups to showcase their activities.

Two visits abroad: German Christmas markets and to Tralee and Kerry in Ireland.

Events: so many different trips organised throughout the year too many to list.

Future Events: a new working group has been set up to plan events for the future, more of that later.

Links with other U3As: this has continued to be very valuable as members can experience how other U3As operate and learn from each other. I hope this will continue in the future to the benefit of all.

SE Network Summer School: several of our members have consistently supported this event and assisted the organiser.

MOTO: this group goes on developing and providing exciting activities for our members on their own.

Hospitality and Welcome Teams: many of our events and monthly meetings are supported by these groups of members. All are again volunteers but absolutely essential to our successful development.

All this list just demonstrates what a lively, creative and improving U3A we are. There never seems to be a shortage of members willing to step up and help with the continued development of our U3A.

Some Highlights of the last three years:

I have accessed the last three year's newsletters in order to pick out some memorable moments for me and maybe you.

2016

- **May**, a very important month for me!!
- **June**, my first convenors' meeting and the first time we alerted members to the fact that some members may have hearing difficulties. The newsletter was only 6 pages long.
- **July**, first European Holiday to France with some interesting visits and mishaps but we did see the Bastille Day fly past. Also first link with Paddock Wood U3A.
- **Dec**, support group set up to assist Helen Turner with SE Summer School. Also a FREE trip to Bruge Christmas market to compensate for the problems in July.

2017

- **Jan**, first mention of the development of musical activities, Big Band and More men in the singing group and acoustic guitars. Here To Help group was set up by Sally-Ann.
- **Feb**, up to 14 pages!! And improving with more photos and news items.
- **March**, we moved house.
- **April**, Ukeleles first gig at cricket club.
- **May**, yet more dreaming by me about the expansion of musical groups (singing, ukes, 2 guitar groups, opera and ballet appreciation and music memories. Netherlands Trip, planned and organised by our team and using Harry Shaw coaches for the first time.
- **June**, Brewery Visit!
- **July**, Digital Photography group excellent photographs.
- **August**, first Big Band meeting, with many u3as represented.
- **Sept**, First Bus Journey Challenge using bus pass.
- **Oct**, Petanque group became National Petanque Champions, and Bridge group invited to play with Paddock Wood. Julian Smith hands over the editorship to Don Bone. 15 pages!
- **Dec**, Magician at monthly meeting

2018

- **Jan**, first mention of combined choir with Paddock Wood, Wine Groups always reporting.
- **Feb**, introduction of Direct Debits for membership Payments. Maggie and I got married and a surprise party was organised at the Thai Orchid.
- **March**, first monthly meeting cancelled due to weather.
- **April**, choir first meeting.
- **May**, Classic Car group started.
- **Dec**, 400th member at Monthly Meeting (Anne Morgans.) First discussion about Seminar/Study days organised by Margaret Knock for First Aid, Words of Kent ,Gardening and a Cricket breakfast with Chris Tavare.
- **Nov**, publicity for Irish Trip
- **Dec**, first mention of planned Musical Extravaganza for March 19, first choir performance at Paddock Wood, Christmas Market trip including Meopham and Malling U3A members.

Summary

I took over this role from Karen Usher in May 2016. She and her team had set up our U3A, providing a strong foundation and inspiration for the future. I felt very honoured to be asked to take over from her but to start with I was rather overwhelmed. This soon disappeared and in the Annual Report in 2017, I listed why I wished to continue, citing the cooperation and enthusiasm of all our members to develop our U3A and to promote the “Learn, Live and Laugh” ethos of the U3A movement. In 2018s Annual Report, I listed all the composite parts of our U3A which together contributed to the continued development and improvement of our organisation without mentioning any particular names! At the time that seemed the correct thing to do as so much cooperation between members produced such great outcomes.

I have really enjoyed being part of the organisation and meeting so many new people, many of whom are now such good friends. I have valued the support of the officers and committee and all the convenors, but especially the total membership. You have all made it a very memorable experience and I am very pleased to have been in this position. I wish the new Chairman my very best wishes and support for the next three years and hope that she will enjoy it as much as I have.

However, the time has come to recognise individuals who are retiring from their roles. They have given so much to the planning and organisation and development of our U3A and on your behalf I wish to thank them for all their efforts.

Joyce Evans, our treasurer from the beginning. She has managed the increasing and changing systems and rules affecting the management of our accounts and assets with consistency and determination. This has been a difficult task but Joyce has achieved success in this role.

Christine Hutchins has been our secretary for three years. She has supported the committee and particularly myself through this time, and that was some challenge. In addition, she has managed the notice board at our monthly meetings. She is leaving the committee but as you know continuing to lead the new Events Team.

Margaret Knock has been our Speaker and Study Day organiser and has contributed to the success of our monthly meetings with a wide and exciting range of speakers. She has worked so hard on both these items but especially with the idea that I asked to put into action which was the study days. A bit more learning to go with the visits to breweries and vineyards. I hope this will continue.

Mark Richards, has contributed to so much to our U3A over the years and continues to do so by managing the website and the Beacon record system. He remains a co-opted member of the committee to manage these areas. He has been Membership Secretary and Events’ organiser and also a great help to me with communications over these three years.

