

BEESTON U3A CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2018

Good morning everyone. I am delighted to welcome you to our 7th AGM

I would like to begin by introducing our committee.

Beeston U3A continues to thrive and membership is now more than 800. Our numbers are rising each month and we are delighted that our popularity continues to grow as we cater for people in the locality with a wide range of needs and interests. We average between 12 and 20 new members at each monthly meeting and we are now considerably larger than other local U3As. Members sometimes ask us if we are getting too big but we are lucky that currently we can accommodate everyone who wants to come to the open meetings and as long as we continue to extend our range/number of interest groups we can continue to expand. Our increasing membership creates a lot of work for Margot Gale, our very efficient membership secretary, particularly at renewal time. We have adopted the U3A electronic Beacon System which allows us to record members details and extract useful information and we look forward to providing the opportunity for paying the annual subscription on line for those who wish to do it this way. We are delighted that many group leaders are also finding it a very useful tool. There is a possibility that a Wollaton U3A will be established in the next year or so and if this happens we look forward to working with them. Our rise in membership and careful management by Malcolm Brookbanks and Jo Muxlow our treasurers has led to surplus funds and this has meant that we have been able to reduce our subscription for 2018/9 to £12.

As a committee we have continued to work from our development plan A major area, as last year, has been to continue to make our U3A vibrant and appealing to all members.

Included in this area has been the constant need for more interest groups. Chris Chater, our group co-ordinator, has continued to work hard establishing new groups. We now have over 70 interest groups with additional ones in the pipeline. Very popular ones are expanding to third and fourth groups which hopefully will avoid the frustration new members feel when they join and are told that groups they would like to try are full. In the last few months a few of our long-standing group leaders have decided to stand down and we would like to thank them most sincerely for all their hard work and enthusiasm. I would like to particularly mention Jane Smith, Graham and Sue Lodge and Helen Stewart

and Elizabeth Le Marchant Brock who have run their groups right from the beginning of Beeston U3A. We are grateful to members who have taken over the organisation so that these groups have continued. Again, we have moved to teams leading groups rather than all the responsibility resting on one or two people

Anne Pinnock, who will join the committee as a co-opted member after this meeting, will work alongside Chris Chater for the coming year.

New groups established this year include

- Recorders
- 2nd Medium walks
- 3rd Wine Tasting
- 4th Table Tennis
- Astronomy
- Whist
- Jazz Appreciation
- Practical Art
- Understanding the landscape
- Architecture
- Learning to program
- Strollers

In the recent questionnaire members have given us some good ideas for possible new groups. These include

Ecology/biodiversity

Walking football or netball

Learning to sew

History of Aviation

Music and movement.

Snooker

Our excellent group leaders have ensured that their groups have continued to be lively and interesting. These folk, as I've said many times, are the backbone of Beeston U3A and the committee can't thank them enough. Art Gallery Visit members have had many visits, organised by Barbara Johnson and Nadya

Lancaster, which include the Djanogly Gallery, Newark Town Hall, New Walk Gallery Leicester, Nottingham Contemporary, Collection Gallery Lincoln and the Harley Gallery.

Some members of the Wine Appreciation Groups joined members of the Nottingham Wine Group again and visited Verona and Venice last June and a similar visit is taking place for the third time this year. The theatre group continues to be extremely popular and Eve Gurd works very hard organising tickets for productions in local theatres.

The Garden visit group led by Sandy Banks have enjoyed many days out and these have included visits to the RHS Chatsworth show, Nottingham Park Garden Trail, Cossall open gardens, they have also visited Cambridge Botanical Gardens, Bridgend, the Hidden gardens of Easton Lodge, Beth Chatto Garden, Lode Mill, Marks Hall, Anglesey Abbey, Sandringham show and Little Morton Hall/Biddulph Grange.

Several groups have made requests for financial support to buy equipment/subscriptions etc. We welcome these requests and the committee is keen to support them whenever possible. Examples over the past year of requests that have been granted, include a new laptop, a CD player, speakers, wine glasses, card tables and yoga blocks.

In March, we planned to hold our annual Group Fair when we would have the opportunity to showcase our U3A and give groups the opportunity to recruit new members. After comments made by group leaders last year we had arranged to hold the event in a new venue i.e. the Pearson Centre. This would have given us much more space and allowed all groups to have tables in the same room. There was also a stage for performances and then it all went wrong when heavy snow fell, and we had to cancel! The event will now take place at the Pearson Centre in October and we'll have a break next year.

During the year, we have also held a range of evening social events and these have included another Fine Wine Tasting led by Piers Krause, a Murder Mystery evening, a Ceilidh, and a Quiz. Many thanks to Janis Patterson for her hard work. We celebrated Christmas with seasonal refreshments and entertainment by the Ukulele, Singing for fun, Let's right Shakespeare and the Play reading groups. We were also entertained by a Barbershop quartet called Central Locking. The winner of the short story competition was also announced. Congratulations went to all the folk who had entered and the winner Sue Daly a

cluster member from Long Eaton was presented with a £25 book token. The competition is taking place again this year.

We are always keen to hear the views of members and we have recently sent out a questionnaire seeking members views. As a committee we are extremely grateful to the members who took the time and trouble to fill it in and return it. Your comments will inform our updated development plan and a summary of the responses will be sent out to you all when they have finished trickling in. We always try to listen to members suggestions/concerns and act upon them when we can. An example of this is our move away from plastic cups. We now ask members to bring their own. The annual group leaders meeting was another opportunity for members to make suggestions for improvements. We have also moved the refreshments to other rooms to try to make it a little calmer.

Lucy Beardsley continues to organise an excellent range of speakers and she and Breda Cooper have also arranged some outstanding visits over the past year. These have included two visits to the Charles Hanson Auction House to see the filming of Bargain Hunt, a trip to Lichfield and overnight visits to the Thursford Spectacular and Blenheim Palace.

Another area for development areas has been to forge links with local colleges/universities. Despite starting very well and being very successful our links with Central College have ceased. This is disappointing, but the college didn't seem to have the necessary resources to continue. However, during the year we have developed our working relationship with Nottingham Trent University and have been engaged with a retail research group in their Business School about grocery shopping and older consumers. In May and June, we circulated an anonymous online questionnaire to members and there were over 170 respondents who provided invaluable research data about their grocery shopping habits. Steve Austin then participated in their Academic Conference in July where he presented the results of the survey. A group of 18 members then volunteered to take part in more detailed focus groups held at the University in November. This provided the NTU research team with over three hours of transcripts which they are currently analysing with the objective of publishing an academic journal article later this year, and so hopefully increase major retailers' awareness of the needs of the older shopper.

We also strive to keep up to date with local and national U3A initiatives and then, where appropriate, feed back to you the members. Margot Gale, our Vice Chair and Membership Secretary and I attend the Nottinghamshire Network

meetings and disseminate any relevant information and several committee members have been to local workshops. I have recently trained to be a volunteer to help with setting up new U3As locally. We were well represented at the National Conference at Nottingham University and I summarised the main findings in the newsletter. Any member can apply to the committee for sponsorship to attend the conference which includes the AGM. As well as excellent speakers, there is the opportunity to attend workshops and exchange ideas with members of other U3As. It will be held at Nottingham again at the end of August. We also feel it's important to co-operate with the other U3As in our local cluster i.e. Long Eaton, Ilkeston, and Stapleford. I meet with the Chairs of these U3As every six months, so we can exchange ideas and learn from each other.

Only this week Malcolm, Margot, and I attended a national U3A workshop in Birmingham where the topics discussed were Data Protection, Equality, Safe Guarding and Insurance. As I'm sure you are aware new data protection regulations known as GDSR come into force at the end of this month. We have set up a subcommittee to tackle any changes that we need to make and we will ensure that we keep you informed and we'll shortly be holding a group leaders meeting to ensure they are fully conversant with the implications and what they need to do. We will be formulating policies for Data Protection and Privacy so that you know how any information we have about members is protected.

I am aware that I say frequently that U3A is for the members by the members and one of our aims is to involve more people in the numerous tasks necessary in running a successful U3A. Whenever possible members are expected to give as well as take. We are not here to provide a service but to help each other and be prepared to play our part! It can be very frustrating and a bit soul destroying when help is needed in a group and no-one is prepared to give it. Last year we appealed for some help for Janis who organises the social events but not a single person came forward and offered their services which was disappointing. However, we do have non-committee members who help enormously. We couldn't manage without our meeters and greeters, the refreshment team and those who sign members in, but more are always needed. Other helpful people are Mike Allery who does numerous IT tasks with such willingness, Mike Johnson who takes our photographs and Eve Gurd who helps to set up the room for open meetings and looks after the signs we have on the tables. If you feel you could give a little help in any way, please please let us know.

There will be some committee changes next year so we hope some members will consider playing their part in that way. My heart was gladdened a few months ago when Kathy Shipway said 'I am very happy to join the committee. I feel I take a lot from U3A, but I don't give a lot back, so I will do my bit on the committee'

We like to make all our volunteers feel valued and to let them know that we don't take them for granted. To show our appreciation we held our annual thank you Christmas coffee morning at the White Lion and a thank you lunch and meeting for our group leaders.

Communication is an area that many members have praised in the questionnaire. Celia Billau our communications officer works tirelessly to send out information to you. Please can you ensure that you tell us when your details change. Celia has now taken over the newsletter from Marie Potts and the excellent quality has been maintained. She also produces a very useful interim bulletin and manages our Facebook page.

I would like to take the opportunity at this point to thank Marie for everything she has done for Beeston U3A over the last seven years. She really has been instrumental in our success and we are really going to miss her input at committee meetings. We wish her well and are really pleased that we will still see her around as she will continue to be a member. I've already got her lined up to be a regular meeter and greeter.

The coming year will hopefully see us continue to build on our success.

Developments, some of which are similar to last year, are

1. To further develop the use of the Beacon system particularly looking at the opportunity for members to pay on line. We have already established a subcommittee to look at this.
2. To continue to extend the range of interest groups and to revamp the pack for new group leaders.
3. To hold a study day for members ..subject to be decided
4. To ensure we implement the necessary data protection changes including formulating a data protection policy and a privacy policy.
5. To hold a meeting for group leaders so that they understand the data protection issues.
6. To devise a policy for safe guarding and equality.
7. To feedback to members on the results of the questionnaire and implement any changes arising from comments/suggestions made.

8. To prepare for succession planning in readiness for any committee changes in a year's time.
9. To look for ways to encourage more members to take an active role within our U3A.
10. To continue to plan for the challenges brought by the ever-increasing membership.

I'd like to finish by thanking you all most sincerely for continuing to be part of Beeston U3A and hopefully we look forward to another successful and exciting year together.