

25th Anniversary Talk. (Peter - black; Delia - blue)

If you had asked me 25 years ago what I would be saying on this anniversary celebration, I should have said: “Don’t be so silly – there is no chance that I will survive that long!”

It is, in fact, a tribute to medical advances and the NHS that we are both standing here.

However, there is something else that has helped our survival: it is the u3a. When we set out to create a u3a, we had little idea of what would be involved. Hesse u3a gave us friendly advice, but there was at that time not much support from the Third Age Trust. It was quite an adventure.

As we were newcomers to Swanland, the founding committee were almost the only people we knew in the village: Jim Willson, Malcolm Lawrenson, Linda and Geoffrey Collier. Carol Willson provided tea and set up the provision of tea at the Thursday lectures. At our first public meeting, Barbara Howard offered to wash up, so she was co-opted as secretary. We were launching into uncharted territory and it was exciting. Retirement was not going to be dull.

But that, really, is the point. By volunteering to do something, we made new friends, found new interests and kept our minds and bodies active. It was a busy time, but the rewards were tremendous: we found ourselves offering to give talks to interest groups and Thursday meetings on a variety of subjects, all needing careful research;

we explored the Wolds to find walks for the walking group; we read plays; delivering the early newsletters by hand almost led to a interest group on the positioning of letterboxes – and there was one house that we never found;

we painted pictures; we researched our family histories; we visited industrial sites; we got involved in creating a choir; we Scottish danced; we even lead a u3a trip to Germany, when Jennie Thomas was unable to go.

All these new interests, friendships and activities were the result of saying “Yes!” when asked to do something, rather than feeling afraid to have a go. Almost always when you volunteer, you gain more than you give.

We should like to thank all those who have come forward to run interest groups, prepare the tea and coffee, wrestle with projectors and microphones, put out chairs and serve on the committee. Above all we are grateful for those who volunteered to chair that committee.

There is someone who deserves our special gratitude. It was Jim Willson who really started us off on this road. Without Jim all this would not have happened.

Swanland u3a reaches its 25th anniversary at a very difficult time, thanks to the pandemic. If it is to survive, all its members need to be prepared to volunteer their active help to keep it going.

We both hope that someone else will be standing here in 25 years 'time celebrating the first fifty years of Swanland u3a.

