

Chair's Report - AGM 17/03/2022

A year ago, the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic prevented many groups from meeting and the gatherings that did happen, including u3a committee, some interest groups, the twice-monthly Thursday Lectures and other events had to be held on Zoom.

The 2021 AGM (on 18th March) was also on Zoom with an attendance of 98 people.

For many of us, meeting on Zoom required a new set of skills and we are very grateful to Keith Taylor and John Munson for a series of Zoom drop-in sessions and training for all members in March and April 2021 which helped us to get the most out of using Zoom. This, too, was fulfilling the u3a's educational role of members sharing knowledge with other members and has been useful in other contexts ever since.

Swanland u3a has held a special event every two years, open to other u3a branches. Our Zoomed 'Lockdown Escape' event was on 20th May 2021 and attracted members of u3a branches as far afield as North Yorkshire. The first part was an illustrated talk by Simon Seligman, a freelance cultural lecturer, entitled 'Chatsworth and the Devonshire Collection', looking mainly at the renaissance of the house since 1950. In the second part, a folk-singing duo, Fool's Gold' (Carol and Steve Robson) entertained us with a re-telling in word and song of the unsolved Flannan Island Mystery, when all three lighthouse keepers on this Outer Hebridean island disappeared without trace.

To celebrate the national u3a Day, we held another Zoom event on Wednesday 9th May, entitled 'Positive Aging' with input from East Riding Council Social Services, Ryedale u3a and Gwyn Woolley, who spoke about his experience as a volunteer in four different projects.

Apart from the usual break in August, we have continued our Thursday Lectures on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month right up to the present. However much the meetings on Zoom enabled us to keep in touch with each other and enjoy lectures together, the essential purpose of the u3a is both educational and social. There is nothing to compare with real face-to face contact and to this end, we held our first Hybrid meeting on Thursday 16th September with a speaker and an audience of 14 on Zoom and a live audience of 22 in the hall at St Barnabas. Although some interest groups have been holding live meetings since September, our first Thursday Lecture with our speaker, Graham Buckton, present in the room at St Barnabas was on 17th February 2022. That meeting also had some viewers on Zoom, but from 7th April 2022, Thursday Lectures will be completely live again.

Swanland Village Hall was the venue for the 2021 Convenors' Meeting, which provided an opportunity for Convenors to meet each other and the committee, share news and concerns and ask questions of the committee, as well as a thank-you from Swanland u3a for all the work that convenors do. The meeting ended with a buffet, organised by Barbara King and served by members of the Refreshments Team.

Several teams make a big difference to success of the Thursday Lectures. The Refreshments Team provides the tea and coffee which is a very important part of the social life of the u3a, when people from different groups have a chance to chat. Whether it is a live or hybrid meeting, the Sound Team, led by Andrew Campbell, and Projection expert (Malcolm Lawrenson) play an important part in the success of the lecture itself. The members of the Chair Rota ensure we have somewhere to sit. Many thanks to all of these teams.

We are very grateful to John Munson for all his hard work as Speaker Finder and Zoom Host, taking over programme development from Veronika Keczkcs and continuing her legacy of a varied and interesting lecture programme. He has also been actively involved with other committee

members in the formulation of Swanland u3a's Finance, Disability and Safeguarding Policies.

Thanks also to Keith Taylor for his technical support and advice. Keith is also to be congratulated for meticulous administration of the Website and also producing regular monthly reports to the committee about which interest groups were meeting, which groups were meeting by Zoom and which groups were in abeyance.

The Newsletter is another source of information about Interest groups and Convenor contact details, as well as articles about the u3a activities. After several years as Editor, June Clough handed over to her assistant, Rosi Rawson, in July 2021 and Rosi, our new Editor, was welcomed as a co-opted member of the committee on 29th July. However, she has decided not to stand for election as a full committee member, though continuing as Newsletter Editor.

Another key figure in communications is our Membership Secretary, Graham Whitaker, who, in addition to maintaining membership records, sends out all emails and letters to members and greets people as he records their attendance at each Thursday meeting.

During Covid restrictions, there was little opportunity to establish any new interest groups, but on 14th October, Richard Hoyes was co-opted onto the committee as our New Groups Secretary, a post vacant since the late John Barrett stepped down at the 2021 AGM. Richard is standing for election as a full committee member and we hope to see new interest groups to attract new members. Although Richard is unable to attend today, he was planning to invite members to think about new groups. He has drafted a questionnaire also to enquire about the needs of existing groups.

Four committee members are stepping down at this AGM: Paul Poulouse, after his two-year term as Chairman, served a further year as a committee member without portfolio and his experience has been very helpful. Hazel Ward steps down as Business Secretary. Her role has been mainly to keep Swanland u3a in touch with other u3as and with the National Office, previously known as Third Age Trust. This vacancy now needs to be filled. Our Treasurer, Jim Munday, is also standing down. We thank him for his expertise in keeping our financial affairs in order, as well as his efforts in the negotiations with banks who seem to be making life more difficult and expensive for societies. We welcome his proposed successor, Glenn Aitken, with whom Jim has kindly offered to work in a hand-over period. After a four-year stint on the committee, Patricia Simmons, our Minutes Secretary, is also stepping down as a committee member, but we are pleased that she will still be attending committee meetings as a guest while she hands over to her proposed successor, Brenda Wilson.

We welcome, Brenda, Glenn and our third new committee member, John Bailey and I would like to thank all current committee members for their hard work during the year.

On 16th December 2021 we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Swanland u3a. Our excellent u3a Choir gave us a Christmas Concert, conducted by Di Ford, and the refreshments included a special 25th Birthday Cake. It is no accident that Swanland u3a has lasted a quarter of a century; it is the result of 25 years' loyal support by yourselves as members, dedicated hard work by the Convenors of our many Interest Groups and the supporting work of members of the u3a committee. It would be impossible to name everyone who has contributed to the success of our u3a, but every member is an important ingredient in the mixture.

Thank you all!

John Scotney,
Chair,
Swanland u3a.