

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

This report covers the period between the April AGMs in 2016 and 2017. At the AGM on 14th April 2016 AGM, three new Committee members were elected, maintaining the number on the Committee at twelve, each of whom was allocated an area of responsibility. In addition, Alison Thomson was elected as Vice-Chairman, replacing Simon Coe who continued as Secretary.

During the course of the year, 11 General Meetings were held in the Corn Exchange on the second (or, as in October, the third) Thursday of each month with speakers on a wide range of topics. We learnt about the settlement of Carterton, writing and directing for the BBC, the paintings of William Daniell, developments in satellite technology, living and working in Turkey in the 1960s, the life of aviator Percy Pilcher and the French way of celebrating Christmas and the New Year through food. We were mystified by the Mile High Magician, were introduced to newly-discovered paintings by Lord Berners and learnt about Brunel's SS Great Britain. Most of these meetings made use of the Corn Exchange's projection facilities and amplification system which was enhanced in November by the addition of two extra loudspeakers and a hearing loop.

On 19th May a 'Drinks and Nibbles' party was held in the Barber Rooms at All Saints Church to which all group leaders – to thank them for their hard work - and members who had joined since the October 2015 were invited. Approximately 50 came to this enjoyable and useful gathering which provided an opportunity for low-key networking. On 4th August, thanks to the continuing generosity of Steve and Jenny Braithwaite, we held our Summer Lunch. The weather was fine and well over 100 members came and enjoyed excellent (locally-sourced) food, good wine, congenial company and music provided by both the Recorder Consort and the Ukulele Group. On 18th October our annual Open Day was held in the Corn Exchange. The event was well-publicised both before and on the day when the newly-acquired portable microphone and amplifier system was deployed in Market Square. There was a good atmosphere in the hall for what was a well-attended event. New members were enrolled, bringing the total membership (in November) to a record high 490. On 12th January we had our gloom-dispelling 'January Japes' event in the Corn Exchange. Almost 90 members enjoyed a two course lunch with wine and coffee.

A new feature was added to our website this year: a Home Page table showing recent amendments and additions to the website and the date they were made. Electronic communication is important to us (e.g. for membership renewal) and the use of both mass and selective e-mailing of members has continued. For example, an electronic questionnaire (complementing a hard-copy version in the Spring 2017 Newsletter) was recently sent to members with e-mail asking their views about possible new groups; returns received so far have been analysed. The Committee is grateful to our IT Coordinator for his work in this area.

The lifeblood of our U3A is its interest groups and the vigour of the organisation lies in encouraging its members to be active. Although a few groups have stopped or are seeking new leaders, two new groups – Italian and Striders – started this year. The questionnaire mentioned above has, to date, resulted in the possibility of two or three new groups being launched in the coming months. It is also pleasing to note that the series of well-attended 'Workshops' has continued during the year with sessions on Cryptic Crosswords, Climate Change, Ukuleles, Making Christmas Music and Lord Berners.

What is reported here was only possible because of hard work by many people. My thanks go to the Committee for getting lots of things done with their usual unflinching good humour, to all the many

group leaders who continue to be the core of our U3A, to our Newsletter Editor, to those who help with our refreshments at monthly meetings and to all those who helped in many ways to make our Summer Lunch such a success.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON 'NEW GROUPS'

Our U3A has almost 500 members and well over 40 Special Interest Groups. It occurred to me that there could be members who would be interested by subjects not on our list. I've done a very unscientific survey of interest groups offered by other U3As up and down the country. Many have groups similar to ours, but I have come across a number of areas that we don't cater for and have compiled a list. I'd like to canvass your opinion about possible new groups (either on my list or not) and whether you might be interested in starting up a new group, by asking you to complete a simple questionnaire [which was sent to members with e-mail a week or so ago].

1. Which of the following would be of interest to you if there was a group operating in this area (tick all that apply)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Antiques and collectables | <input type="radio"/> Flower arranging |
| <input type="radio"/> Archaeology | <input type="radio"/> Geology |
| <input type="radio"/> Architecture | <input type="radio"/> Hand-bell ringing |
| <input type="radio"/> Art - Drawing/sketching | <input type="radio"/> Local history |
| <input type="radio"/> Art - Painting | <input type="radio"/> Maths for pleasure |
| <input type="radio"/> Badminton | <input type="radio"/> Metal detecting |
| <input type="radio"/> Biography | <input type="radio"/> Money & Investment/Personal Finance |
| <input type="radio"/> Bird-watching | <input type="radio"/> Natural History |
| <input type="radio"/> Calligraphy | <input type="radio"/> Philosophy |
| <input type="radio"/> Chess | <input type="radio"/> Play Reading |
| <input type="radio"/> Classical studies | <input type="radio"/> Rummikub |
| <input type="radio"/> Crafts | <input type="radio"/> Singing |
| <input type="radio"/> Creative writing | <input type="radio"/> Travel study |
| <input type="radio"/> Debating | <input type="radio"/> Yoga |
| <input type="radio"/> 'Desert Island Discs' | |
| <input type="radio"/> Exploring world faiths | |

2. Would you be interested in starting a group in any of the areas you've ticked?

3. Are there other group topics that would interest you that are not on the list?

4. If so, would you be interested in starting a group in this area?

5. Finally, please provide your name

You can return this questionnaire at the April AGM/General Meeting or post it to:
Chairman Faringdon and District U3A, 10 Leamington Drive, Faringdon SN7 7JZ to arrive before the end of April.