

Chairman's Annual Report 2019 / 20

This report covers the period between the AGMs in April 2019 and 2020.

At the 2019 AGM held in the Corn Exchange on 11th April, Simon Coe stood down after 5 years, leaving with our thanks for all that he had done for U3A on the Committee. Roger Wilkins was welcomed to the post of Secretary. Apart from this appointment, the Committee remains the same. All details are in our Newsletter.

During the year there were 11 General Meetings, 10 in the Corn Exchange, and with a General Election in December, we moved to the United Church for our last meeting of the year. We were very grateful to the management at the United Church for facilitating our relocation and we remain grateful to Liz and Phil at the Town Hall for all their help during the year. In April we went on an exciting tour of the Universe with Astronomical Society Fellow, Valerie Calderbank. In May we learned about Renewable Energy Sources from our Science Group Leader, Ron Colyer. Yellow Hat Tribe Gallery owner, Irene Tyack came to talk to us about how her early years in Wales helped to develop her love of art. July saw the welcome return of Peter Sharpe who spoke about Breaking Trench Warfare Stalemate in 1918 and in September, by popular demand, we welcomed back Dr David Jones, who had us on the edge of our seats with his talk about the Most Dangerous Animals, with a special emphasis on his favourites – snakes. In October, Paul Colley treated the meeting to a talk about the Secret Life of Bats, illustrated with his amazing award-winning photographs, which brought applause and appreciation from the members. In November we learned about the Wonders of Westonbirt from volunteer and speaker, Pauline Thomas and to end the year, Oxford Natural History Museum lecturer, Sally-Anne Spence came along to enlighten us on oft-misunderstood invertebrates, particularly dung beetles. In the New Year, we were captivated by Al Sylvester's description of his walk from Land's End to John O' Groats in memory of a friend. His Walk To Freedom documented the 881 gruelling miles which he completed unassisted. In February, volunteer at Worcester cathedral, Howard Robinson brought his presentation about King John's mother, the amazing Eleanor of Aquitaine. In March we are looking forward to Dr Lynda Ware talking about Evidence Based Medicine and in April we look forward to welcoming Bernard Purrier talking about Whales and Dolphins.

We have had some memorable afternoons with our speakers this year and are eagerly awaiting the programme planned for the rest of 2020. Shela and Danielle work hard to book such a wide variety of speakers and to report for the Newsletter and local publications. I am grateful to them both.

On Tuesday 4th June we hosted a Coffee Morning to thank Group Leaders for all their hard work in organising and running the interest groups, which now number 42. It was also an opportunity to welcome the new U3A members who had joined during the year. Attendance

was good and those who attended were able to meet, share hospitality and enjoy a very pleasant get together.

On August 8th, thanks to Steve and Jenny Braithwaite's continuing generosity, we held our Summer Lunch, which was attended by more than 120 members – up on last year. A big 'Thank You' to everyone who came the evening before for the set up though thanks to high winds, had to return the next morning to get the job done. If that wasn't enough, they stayed behind to tidy up after the lunch as well. We are always in the lap of the gods as to what the weather will do, but this year was a treat - the skies were clear, and the sun shone. It was a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon with fabulous food, well-chosen wine and very congenial company. Music was provided by the Ukulele Group and the Recorder Consort and I believe everyone had a great time.

On October 1st our Annual Open Day was held in the Corn Exchange. The event was well-publicised and attracted a good number of visitors. Existing members were able to peruse the tables and find out about groups that they might be interested in joining and lots of people were on hand to welcome visitors hoping to join. On the day, 11 new members were signed up bringing the membership to over 500. We are hoping to maintain a similar number once everyone has decided if U3A is for them and we look forward to welcoming all members to activity groups, general meetings and special events throughout the year.

On January 9th we banished the winter blues with our January Japes lunch in the Corn Exchange, where 97 of us gathered to enjoy a delicious lunch followed by the fascinating travel talk from Al Sylvester. We are indebted to Paul, Sietske and the staff from Sadler's for all their hard work to produce a delicious lunch, look after us with such care and do the washing up!

My personal thanks go to the Committee whose support is invaluable. Everyone has their own part to play but will also step up to the mark when it is needed. I must thank the Newsletter Editor, who continues to produce an informative and interesting publication. He is always on the lookout for photographs for the front cover of the Newsletter, so if you can help please feel free to send them to him. Finally, I would like to thank all those who have helped with refreshments each month, all those who worked so hard to make the Summer Lunch and January Japes the successes that they were and to everyone who plays a part in making our U3A the enjoyable, worthwhile and valuable organisation that it is.

Last year I was reflecting on my first year as your Chairman but now, I am getting ready for my third and last year. It means that at the AGM 2021, we need to have found my replacement also a new Newsletter Editor...we come as a package! That is not to say our replacements need to be the same. If you would like to become the next Chairman and would like to find out what it entails, please get in touch and I will be happy to talk it through with you as will Geoff for any would-be Newsletter Editors.

With very best wishes.

Margaret Brown