

Chairman's Report 2024 / 2025

Good afternoon. This is my first report as chairman of Midhurst u3a and I should like to thank the committee and members of the u3a for their support and guidance over the year.

Particularly for those of you who are new members I would like to introduce the 2024/25 committee to you. Sue Edwards is Vice-Chairman and also the Groups Coordinator. Jeannine Murphy is our Membership Secretary. Denise Barr is the Speaker's Secretary. Ian Woodhams organises our social events. John White is our Treasurer. Peter Moss took over from Penny Holland as Business Secretary and I would like to come back to this later in the meeting. Jenny Peters now runs our RUG group (Really Useful Group) and organises people to put out chairs, prepare refreshments, act as a welcome committee for new members and guests etc. Ruth Bonner is our Minutes Secretary and keeps the records straight.

All of these people do a sterling job, but we do need more members on the committee, to spread the load. There should be twelve members but as you can see we are only nine and this is something that we really need to address. I am talking here perhaps to the newer members of our branch as many of our established members have contributed in the past and we thank them for that, but the u3a is an organisation run by the members, for the members and so I urge every one of you to think how you could make a contribution. Come and join us, we will give you all the help and guidance you might need, and we are a friendly and fun bunch of people, despite appearances.

My thanks to all of the people that have helped run our events throughout the past year, to Fran Cooper for helping Jeannine on the front desk to register members and visitors and try to keep the queue as short as possible. Thanks to Bruce, Val and Pete for taking care of the AVA system at our monthly talks. Thanks to Ted and Peter for putting out the chairs and to all those who have made visitors and new members welcome or who have helped with organising refreshments.

Before the Pandemic our membership stood at 420 and then it fell dramatically but has steadily increased until we finished the year with 401 members. So far 304 have renewed their memberships or joined Midhurst u3a since April 1st. If we want to expand our numbers, we must look at the number and range of the groups we offer. Litter Picking, Beginner's Spanish, Mah Jong and Bridge are all fairly new groups but what else could we offer? How could you contribute? Perhaps start a group in collaboration with a friend, thus sharing the tasks between you. You do NOT have to be an expert to run a group, some of our groups like Local History are a gathering of like-minded people investigating a topic that interests them all. Yes, there is a 'leader' who coordinates dates and times and provides the tea and biscuits, but that person is a fellow traveller on the journey of discovery that they

have all embarked on. Groups do not have to be eternal – you would NOT be signing up as a group leader for years – a group might have a shelf life of six months or so, just while it explores a particular interest.

Whilst on the subject of groups, I would like to thank all of our Group Leaders who work hard organising their groups and also to all the members who open their homes as venues for these activities. Some groups meet in halls or small meeting rooms but this requires a commitment by the group members to pay for the costs of the venues and so we really appreciate it if we can meet in someone's home. One Group Leader I would like to mention in particular is Bernard Allen who has just recently stopped his Art Appreciation and Art History groups after very many years, but this has been far from Bernard's sole contribution – he has run both Opera and Art outings, organised Art Holidays and served for years on the committee in various roles including Chairman more than once. Thank you, Bernard for all you have done for u3a.

We organised a thank you tea in September for all of the Group leaders and other regular helpers who keep our organisation running smoothly, as I said earlier for the members, by the members, although they should ask somebody else to pick the date as I invariably choose the one wet day in the middle of a dry spell. Surely only the British sit having tea under a gazebo in the rain!

At the Committee's Annual Awayday we looked at all aspects of the way we do things and decided an extra person on 'reception' at the Tuesday meetings might shorten the queues. We also considered the state of our finances which led to a lot of discussion about both the annual fee and the monthly meeting fee. I set this out in a letter to you all earlier in the year and that is an item further down the agenda.

During the whole month of September, we were featured in the Midhurst Museum, celebrating our 30th anniversary, and many people came to find out what the u3a was all about and what its purpose is. Thanks to anyone who contributed to the displays and to Mr Peter and Mrs Gill Nightingale for hosting the exhibition

Thank you to the outings sub committee Christine Musgrove, Tricia Stephens and Judy Fowler who organised trips to Shoreham Airport and the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, an evening with Tim Rice, a theatre trip to see Filomena and an outing to Winchester Cathedral Christmas Market. We can still look forward to A Government inspector, Marie and Rosetta, Top Hat and a possible Christmas trip to Hever Castle (details to be announced). Could you organise one outing a year? If you could please don't hesitate to contact one of the sub-committee members – they would all be very willing to fill you in on the ins and outs.

Socially we enjoyed a well-attended Christmas Lunch in December and a Spring Lunch in April at The Unicorn, Heyshott. Ian also organised a Quiz with fish

and chip supper that was warmly received and will be repeated in September. It's always nice to meet different members at these events and get to know each other better.

Thank you once again to David Earley for examining the accounts.

We held our u3a Open day in September at the old Library and this year we will be here in the hall for that event. This day is a very good opportunity to show to the uninitiated what we are all about and we will be looking for groups to come along and encourage membership to prospective new members. We were also present at the Midhurst Rother College Community Day in May, and a council run initiative earlier in the year. These events help us boost our membership but don't forget you can all play a part in this too. Encourage friends and neighbours to come along to a Tuesday meeting and find out for themselves what we are all about. Together we can keep Midhurst u3a the thriving, friendly organisation it is. Thank You.

Odette Marshall

May 25