

Dear Member,

Last week, we held the 12th Annual General Meeting of Much Wenlock, Broseley & District u3a. Thank you to all who attended and here's a summary for those of you who were not able to. As Chair, I was very pleased to report that our u3a continues to be healthy; in terms of how many members we have, the growing attendance at our monthly meetings (<https://u3asites.org.uk/much-wenlock/events>), a wide variety of interest groups (<https://u3asites.org.uk/much-wenlock/groups>) and the number of Committee Members.

At this time of year we are still receiving membership renewals but we expect to exceed 250, with a fairly even split between those who join as individuals and those who join as couples. In line with national trends, we have about a third men and two-thirds women.

The u3a ethos is 'by the members, for the members' or to paraphrase one visionary leader, 'ask not what your u3a can do for you ... but what you can do for your u3a'.



So how could you help our u3a to thrive?

We now have 26 activity groups with two new groups in the last year - French Conversation and a second Creative Writing group plus a new German group in the offing. Many of the Group Leaders have been doing the job for over ten years and some are ready to hand on the baton ... they just need somebody willing and able to hand over to.

It's also worth noting that some of our Committee Members are doubling up by fulfilling both their committee roles and leading groups. For example, Michael Theobalds is busy as our Membership Secretary - keeping the records up to date on our Beacon database. He has led the Wine Tasting group, is leading the Crown Bowling group - including running a new league team **and** opens the hall up for monthly meetings **and** puts the chairs out!

So, whilst I would like to re-iterate our thanks to all of our Group Leaders and Committee Members for the continuing time and effort which they put in perhaps I can also plant a seed with those of you who might like to contribute more to your u3a ... could you become a Group Leader? Or perhaps step up to help out? For some groups, the tasks are shared amongst the members, as has recently happened in the Ukulele group (Uke3a). With more people involved, the demands on any one individual are less.

In the last year, Uke3a have performed quite a few gigs including sets at the Christmas Fayre, both of our local care homes and a fund-raiser in Ditton Priors.

Other groups have been out and about in the community too. Three of the first Creative Writing group have been involved in 'Meet the Author' events at local libraries, promoting their novels.

The first 'Out with Friends' group has continued to hold monthly coffee mornings. They find this is a relaxed and informal way to meet up and decide on their visits, taking it in turn to host. In January this year they reached their 9th Anniversary and celebrated this at The Gaskell Arms in Much Wenlock. Their monthly outings have continued, even in inclement weather. They have enjoyed walks, visits to beautiful gardens, Garden Centres and arboretums, plus a games and quiz afternoon and many more special occasions where they can be together.

Members of the Art group are exhibiting their paintings at the Guildhall in Much Wenlock during June (usual Guildhall opening times 11am-4pm on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday). Why not pop along and see what they've been creating. Greeting cards as well as paintings are on sale and some examples are included in this letter.



In IT news, Glynn and returning Committee Member, Neil Lloyd have started work on migrating our website. As you might remember, all the u3a websites using the SiteBuilder platform crashed last year when the hosting company did the same. This meant that we lost all the attachments and pictures. Now, along with many other u3a branches, Much Wenlock, Broseley and District are moving to a new Wordpress-based SiteWorks website. This should mean that we can make more of our website and update it more easily. Another opportunity to contribute!

At a regional level, the Shropshire Network continues to be active. Christina Gore and I represented ours last September at their event in Shrewsbury, which was designed to share best practice and new ideas.

Nationally, there are now over 1000 u3as with around 400,000 members. The headline news at the Third Age Trust is all about their new structure. This consists of a smaller Board, focused on governance and finance, and a new "u3a Council" where elected representatives highlight and resolve issues that u3as want to be addressed. For the past few months, they've run a Pilot Council to try out how this may work in practice. If you're interested, more details are available here:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/?view=article&id=1438&catid=131>.

At last year's Third Age Trust AGM, a motion was passed to target 500,000 members by the end of 2028 with national promotion to achieve this. Locally, we are trying to do our bit too. On Saturday, 1st June - our u3a guitar group played in Broseley, outside 'Mikey's Cafe'. We were delighted to be featured in the locally-produced 'What's What' magazine last August, alongside Bridgnorth u3a and we're continuing to advertise our monthly meetings in the 'Wenlock Herald' and 'Village Life'.

At these meetings, thanks to Jean Buswell our Speakers' Secretary, we have enjoyed a fantastic programme of talks. For me, the highlights included:

- The story of William Reddaway's 2,600 mile ride around England on, and with, his horse Strider
 - 'The Dudleys' and their potholing adventures, including that incredible rescue in Wales
 - Everything you didn't know you didn't know about the Shipping Forecast
 - more recently, Wolverhampton's Pop Art collection and the history of British Light music
- Jean also organised the trip to Kilworth House Theatre for members to see the show, 'Hairspray'. Still to come this calendar year, we can look forward to the return of speakers who we have enjoyed before, including magician Jack Dent, costumed historian Max Keen and musician Roger Brown presenting on Scott Joplin.



We advised the AGM that the Financial Statement for 2023 and the budget for 2024 have been posted on our website. With respect to the Appointment of Examiner of Accounts, Jo Cohen was appointed at last year's AGM but due to concerns regarding the impartiality of a member of the committee acting as Examiner, we are pleased to confirm that Heather Sower has examined the accounts instead. She is a member of our u3a but doesn't serve on the committee. Heather has a Diploma in Financial Studies, a Masters in Business Administration and is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers.

There were no Proposed Changes to the Constitution and the following Officers were elected:

Chair: Alison Richards
Vice-Chairs: David Foster & Linda Wallace
Secretary: Jane Hague
Treasurer: Glynn Emery

as well as the following Executive Committee Members: Jean Buswell, Ian Cohen, Jo Cohen, Linda Davies, Christina Gore, Bill Hague, Neil Lloyd, Michael Theobalds.

The final item on the agenda was the Membership Fee for 2024/25. Our fees have remained unchanged for 11 years. We have sufficient reserves and there will be no increase in fees for 2024/25. They will continue to be £15 single and £28 joint. However, it is likely that we will seek to increase fees at next year's AGM, not least because half goes straight to the Third Age Trust for their subscription fee and for the u3a Matters magazine distribution. Consequently, we will schedule the AGM in 2025 so that the decision can be taken prior to the beginning of the membership year.



u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Thank you all for being part of Much Wenlock, Broseley and District u3a and on behalf of your committee, we look forward to another active and stimulating year.

Best regards,
Alison Richards
Chair