

SLU3A Chairman's Report for AGM 2020

Although it began with a turbulent 2019 AGM and ended with the unprecedented restrictions associated with Covid-19, I feel I can accurately report that the past year has been an overall success. Our membership peaked at an all-time record of 1502 before the virus hit. A suggestion that a new U3A in Kirkby Lonsdale would help relieve the pressure on South Lakes is now with the North West Region of the Third Age Trust. However, the necessary Kirkby resident who is prepared to organize a 'start-up' meeting has not yet come forward.

Ed established a new special interest group "Contemporary History and Politics" which was filled before its first meeting. Cycling and Tuesday Walkers created 'sub groups' to cater for growing demand, Jan led an externally-prepared course "Learning to be Retired" and Hilary and Donald organized some very popular and valuable first aid training. All that is in addition to the many established regular activities. Indeed, when I produced a comprehensive list of SLU3A events I found that there were several occasions when as many as ten separate activities took place on the same day (which actually made it impractical to provide the requested calendar in printed form). Nevertheless, demand still exceeds supply and proposals for new groups continue to be very welcome.

Once again, our Open Morning in October was very busy and many new members were recruited. Val (aided by Brian) did most of the hard work involved in organizing this. Unfortunately the unavailability of the Town Hall and the uncertainty of the virus situation will prevent a repeat of this event in the same format this year.

Mark continued Sheila's tradition of finding interesting and entertaining speakers for our monthly meetings. It is rather difficult to account for the somewhat variable attendance at these. The subject matter, the speaker's reputation and the weather all have an effect, but clearly some members simply like meeting up with friends and enjoying the refreshments provided by Fiona and her 'team'.

The Committee has frequently repeated the mantra that "you can't please everybody". The Coffee Morning organized by Val for our group coordinators and other (known) volunteers proved to be a classic illustration of this. Some want presentations and speeches. Others prefer informality and a chance to gossip. Perhaps we should serve marmite sandwiches next time! Hopefully the sincere "thank you for your contribution to U3A" message was not lost.

Communication with members who have an e-mail address registered with SLU3A has been improved by Paul's magnificent efforts with the new electronic newsletter. Peter's website has become a really useful central source of U3A information particularly during the crisis. Hilary and Susan's indefatigable work to get group membership lists entered

into the Beacon database has made contacting most members much more straightforward.

However, by far the most niggling issue that the Committee faced this year was that of communication with those members who do not wish to get involved with the technology needed to access e-mail and websites. Many group coordinators have helped by continuing to keep in (virtual!) touch with such members in their groups. Sadly, SLU3A has neither the volunteers nor the budget needed to set up a paper-based solution. Recently, great progress has been made by Anne, Audrey, Hilary and Hester who used the opportunity presented by lockdown to mount a magnificent campaign to phone all the members registered as 'non-electronic'. Very few of those contacted reported that they felt that they were being excluded and almost half of them were willing to register their previously undisclosed e-contact. Now we have only 87 members who do not have a registered e-mail address.

Possibly the most frequently used word in my U3A communications has been "thanks" This is because the organization functions on a mutual, voluntary aid basis. Many members perform invaluable service without recognition. The names mentioned in this report are simply representative of many others. For a full list of acknowledgements please see (GDPR permitting!) the list of all members in Colin's Beacon database.

Cath Sharpe, Ian Fishwick and I have now completed our allotted spans on the Committee and we are very pleased to welcome new co-opted members Kate Kohn, Ian Powell and David Little who will act as our respective replacements until such time as we are able to hold an AGM. I am truly grateful to EVERY committee member, old and new, for their support and I wish the new committee all the best in dealing with the significant challenges presented by the uncertain future.

Bob Wells 16/5/2020

Additional report from the Acting Chairman

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Bob Wells, Cath Sharpe and Ian Fishwick for the work that they have done on the Committee which has helped to make South Lakes U3A such a success over the last few years. In total they have ten years committee service between them. On behalf of all of the members thank you all very much, we have also sent each of them a small token of our appreciation.

David Little Acting Chairman 28 July 2020