

## **Chairmans Report for Romsey Archway u3a – AGM – April 8<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**Your Committee Officers** – Dave Green (vice Chair) , Sheila Prangle (Vice Chair), Sue Keith (Secretary), Peter Stuckey (Treasurer)

**Your Committee Members** – John Roe, Barbara Vincent, Shirley Tarran, Nigel Greasley, Lesley Athersuch, Sue Edwards, Judy Duncan

**Your President** – Simon Spurrier

Well ‘it’s been quite a year’ is an understatement. Our last group meeting at the Crosfield Hall was in March 2020 and we were preparing for the clubs 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM due to be held in April. Lockdown prevented group meetings and we had to postpone that AGM which was held virtually though zoom, in June. Thank you to Nigel who from a governance point of view saw us through the procedures and kept us compliant (very important when we are trustees of a charity!). We were quick off the blocks looking at this new virtual meeting phenomenon and only missed one meeting. It was a struggle to get speakers (nearly every speaker we had scheduled canceled on us) who knew about Zoom let alone used it but in comes David Boag the wildlife photographer who saved the day and we restarted speaker meetings in May. But we weren’t sure how to use it either and chaos prevailed until our friends the Croxalls, our IT wizards, came to the rescue. All was well, and since then we have become Zoom addicts. Committee meetings, speaker meetings, guitar clubs, photo groups, book clubs, needle craft, art group, computing and probably more have all been meeting on Zoom. We appreciate, not all members were able or willing to use Zoom and this was a worry. How did we keep in touch during a lockdown. We tried to set up a contact group, we tried to encourage members to use Facebook and many of you sent in photographs of life in lockdown which put a smile on some faces. The weather was good and members spent most of their time walking, baking or gardening.

Lockdown eased, some groups started to get back together but we had to make sure we were not putting members at risk. Risk Assessments had become an important issue and your committee needed to take this seriously. Thanks to Dave and Sheila, my vice chairmen, who drew up our templates that were used and will be a great foundation stone when the current lockdown ends.

We welcomed three new committee members this year, Lesley, Dave and Sue clearly thrown in at the deep end in such an extraordinary year. It’ll be great when we can properly get together again and meet the membership in real life!

Our speaker meetings which continued monthly included u3a member David Pantling who spoke about the history of Bournemouth as a seaside town with some excellent feedback. We must ask him back.

Judy was her usual busy self, identifying speakers and one of the benefits of Zoom was that they didn’t need to be local. We could access speakers from London and further afield. Annamarie Dall Anese, a London blue badge guide has now presented twice. Probably our most liked was Paul Stickler with his talk about the Kray Twins and Steve Roberts about the London Underground. Thank you to Peter and Richard Crowder for hosting a couple of these in my absence.

October saw Lesley Athersuch run our first walking treasure hunt. A very popular event, all risk assessed of course, and great to get back outside in the fresh air and chat with friends whilst looking for clues. Lesley has promised us another one this year too so that's something to look forward to.

Our fish and chip supper quiz didn't happen so we tried zooming. A virtual social quiz – using breakout rooms – another new discovery, 40 at the first quiz in the summer and then 60 at the Christmas quiz. These have proven very popular. Thanks to Shirley, Sue, Barbara, John and Simon for leading these. Given groups were not running in the same way we really tried hard to put on events that kept people in touch with one another. We tried to establish a coffee group, with no interest initially, but committee decided to keep trying and we now have a regular 15 – 20 people that pop in with their morning coffee for a catch up. We will keep this running until its no longer needed but who knows how it will develop after lockdown ends. Thank you to Peter, Shirley, Charles and Barbara and Ian Marriott for rotating hosts. Out of this general chat group ideas for other events emerge.

Group coordinators, Barbara and Sue E have been keeping in touch with group leaders and are always there to help anyone who has an idea for a new interest group. Once we can get back together we hope more members will come forward to suggest new ideas, as this is what keeps the club fresh and vibrant, helping us to find new members.

We were also early on the scene for Facebook, extending our coverage this year with now 108 members but would like to expand this and use it wisely to spread the u3a word, promote activities and show what fun you can have in your groups.

Membership has been constant this year with now 318 members, 290 of those have Romsey Archway as their principle club and a number of these are also members of Romsey and District with whom we maintain a very positive relationship.

You will have noticed that the Third Age Trust magazine has been re branded to appeal to a younger audience and attract newly retired people to the organization. The u3a is very conscious that existing membership is ageing and the pandemic is expected to have an effect on membership this year. We will hold a u3a day to promote the Romsey clubs. It is anticipated that a higher than usual number of people will have retired or semi retired this year and the u3a is a great organization to get involved with to keep active as people finish full time careers.

The club cannot run without an active committee and it has been a pleasure to work with the team we have. To think though, we have actually not seen each other as a group in person! In accordance with the constitution we will see four members step down this year. Judy and Nigel have been on the committee since inception, Judy will still be very close to us and has so many contacts here she will still be actively involved in sourcing speakers. Nigel has shared his

governance knowledge and has played a very important part in our development, introducing ad hoc meetings on local issues. We hope to continue this idea. Sheila has completed her 3 years having been our website and Beacon admin guru also serving as vice chair this year. Peter has also completed a three year term as Treasurer having carried out a complicated bank transfer and set up our accounting practices. I cannot thank them enough for their help and guidance over the last 3 years. All will remain active members of the club.

As a smaller club, we have always been keen to promote a collaborative approach with other u3a clubs and many of our members are also members of R&D. The idea of Network events has been developed this year and Archway are very supportive of this giving our members access to 'other events' in local clubs. We will see how this develops but we hope you do take part in cross club events and get the most out of your u3a membership.

We are looking forward to getting back together again in 2021. Zoom will still play a part and I think life will have changed there in that there can be real benefits from Zoom contact, quick easy and very efficient, but there really is nothing like getting together in person, so we hope many groups will now seek to explore how and when to restart their activities. We will think about how and when we can start Crosfield Hall meetings again.

**Steve George**  
**Chairman**  
**Romsey Archway u3a**

**March 14<sup>th</sup> 2021**