

Chairmans annual report to Members of Romsey Archway U3A.

As we approach the end of the 2019/20 U3A year it is hard to believe that this is only the second full year for Archway U3A. The year has flown by for me and as I reflect on what we have achieved and what we could do better, two things that spring to mind are the superb support we have had from our committee and the extraordinary growth of the club (now 325 members) over the previous two years. Makes me think we are doing lots right but as always there are also things we'd like to do better.

Firstly, with 4 new committee members this year who have settled in extremely well, we get new ideas and keep in touch with the membership. I would like to publicly thank each and everyone of the team for their contributions and enthusiasm this year. It's not an onerous task when there is such great support but to keep things fresh we will actively seek more new faces on the team at this years AGM.

The club is focused on two areas, regular monthly speaker meetings and Interest groups.

Judy has done a fantastic job in selecting and booking speakers and we are already booking for 2022. This year we heard about Egypt, Sri Lanka, Abu Dhabi and Broadlands; looked into the eyes of a hypnotist, been amongst the penguins of Antarctica, and had a cruise down the Solent.

Nigel has introduced our special interest Ad Hoc meetings on data protection, Romsey's flood alleviation scheme, development ideas and nature reserve.

We get about 100 members to each event but that's only one third of the club. Can we be doing something different to attract more of you to these events?

Shirley has brought a new dimension to the group with her Facebook and publicity role. We have 75 members now viewing our Facebook pages and this gets exposure to various Romsey community groups too to increase awareness in what we do. The more IT savvy are even posting pictures on it.

John has made membership his own, has build up a great rapport with members and now runs a couple of groups too. We are now able to offer Third age magazine and a discounted membership to U3A members following changes to the membership applications this year.

Many members have joined solely to participate in particular interest groups, how can we get you to come along to monthly meetings or join more groups?

We beefed up the Group coordinator role this year as it's just so important. The core of the club is its Interest groups and we excelled this year increasing from 30 to 45 Interest groups.

Jane and Barbara have done a great job working with group leaders to help set up and grow their groups. Coming up with ideas and encouraging others is a key role. We are sad to see Jane moving on now but thank her for the two and a half years she has dedicated to this most important but rewarding role. We have tried to get a Travel group and a Questers group up and running but this has proved more challenging. Maybe our membership is too young and like more active interests, maybe we have chosen the wrong places to visit; answers on a postcard.

The real unsung heroes here though are our Group Leaders, whether you're the passionate specialist or the organizational leader, the club doesn't exist without you. Thanks for coming forward and making the club so attractive to our new and existing members.

We achieved our Charitable Status this year and many thanks to Peter who had the onerous task of setting up new bank accounts that better protect our members and meet our charitable obligations. We were able to collect gift aid, which helped us reduce the membership fee last year. Peter would love to hear from anyone with an interest in figures work to work with him this year.

Our Website gets over 3000 hits a month. Most members find out about us here, it is our 'shop window' for new joiners, for existing members to get our latest news updates and register for new groups. Keeping it interesting and up to date is vital and here Sheila plays a vital role. Work is to commence this year on a significant update to the site and linking it with the Beacon U3A admin system, which will give a more modern look and feel for the user and improve the connectivity of these tools. The Beacon system makes life easier for group leaders and helps us with finance and membership records.

We held our first 'social' event to try and bring people together, Secretary Sue ran a quiz that attracted over 90 members and left

people asking for another, a super night. We would like to run a couple of socials in the year and are looking for ideas for a fun evening which enables members to get to know each other better and create a better 'club' feel to our U3A.

Thank you to Bob and Simon for lending me their experience and keeping me on track in my first Chairman year. Both these gentlemen are fully immersed in groups and are passionately involved in making our U3A a continued success.

This next year I want to continue building bridges with our parent U3A Romsey and District, to combine forces where its sensible, to share resources and speakers, to hold joint meetings or even competitive events. The U3A as a national organization wants to increase its profile and become the premier point of contact for providing services to people in their 3rd age. I would ask you all to be ambassadors for the U3A movement, get involved, tell your friends. The U3A goals are to provide Learning, laughing and living for those that are no longer working full time. We are all volunteers; feel free to come forward with ideas for groups and events. The U3A is a great way to make friends, do something new or revisit some skills or interests of old. You'll be helping people remain active and having fun at the same time.

There is a National U3A day in June and Archway will be taking a stall at the Mayors charities picnic in July to showcase our activities. We will be looking for members to help for a couple of hours, showcasing your hobby, playing your music or just chatting to the public. Watch this space, more details to come.

So, increased awareness of what the U3A is all about, championing the cause, get to 100 users on Facebook, share resources and ideas with Romsey and District, see members enjoying the variety of speakers we have and ensure we are well succession planned on the committee.

Thank you for your membership, we look forward to you getting involved in 2020.

Steve George
Chairman
Romsey Archway U3A

