

UPTON & LYTCHETT u3a

ANNUAL REPORT AGM 2023-2024

Introduction

This is the second Annual Report that I have produced since becoming Chair in September 2022. It is intended to provide our membership with an overview of our achievements and challenges over the past twelve months. As well as containing our Annual Accounts, it includes an update from myself and other Committee members.

Part One - Chair's Report

It has been a year of considerable development with many advances made on a several fronts. At the start of the year we set ourselves a number of strategic aims, many of which I'm pleased to say we have achieved in full, others are ongoing with more work required to build on the progress made.

Our Strategic Aims

1. Improving our financial stability

As you will read in our Treasurer's report we have achieved this. We now have a bank balance which will enable us to forge ahead with a number of new initiatives and support for our groups. We also now have sufficient reserves to allow us to absorb any increases in venue fees that occur during the year.

2. Renewing and implementing a new fee structure

With initial help from one of our members, work on this has been ongoing throughout the year. I can't emphasize enough how much effort we have put into developing the new graduated fee structure that we are proposing at the AGM. This new structure, whilst less simplistic than our current flat fee system is, fairer and more equitable to **all** members. Calculating fees based on individual membership is complex so I have produced a separate document that explains the process in full. This paper was circulated to all members along with the AGM agenda prior to the meeting.

3. Gift Aid registration

Preliminary work on this started during the year but due to time pressures the bulk of the task is being held over for future attention.

4. Recruiting new members and developing our groups

I'm pleased to report that progress has been made on both topics. Our membership has increased slightly and so has the number of groups we offer. We are pleased to be able to continue to add new groups but can only do so if we have people to lead them. If this is something you might consider, please get in touch.

5. Broadening the range of events, talks and social activities on offer

We have moved forward on this but there's still a lot more we would like to do. Last September we introduced a coffee morning for new members which went well and which we intend to repeat this year, and at the end of August we will be running an Open Day. This day has two objectives; to provide information about our u3a to potential new members, and to enable existing members to renew their membership and pay their subscription fee. We hope lots of people come along and the day proves worthwhile.

Our annual programme of talks and social events was again well received. Many of you have told us how much you enjoy them and we know you would welcome more. We would like to offer more, but to do so we need more help. Organising and administering our talks involves a lot of negotiation and preparation; it takes up a lot of time. Attracting affordable speakers is not easy, many now charge a substantial fee as well as travel expenses. We endeavour to avoid this by trying to find local speakers, who as well as offering topics of local interest, waive their travel fees. We have advertised for help and for a volunteer to take on the role of Events Organiser. Hopefully, if someone comes forward, we will have the opportunity to develop future events.

6. Continuing to develop our website

Our IT Manager has worked tirelessly on this during the year. He has undertaken a major migration project to transfer all the information on our old website onto a new one provided by the Third Age Trust (TAT). The next task is to sort the material available and encourage members to use it as a key source of information.

7. Developing and expanding our Committee

This remains an ongoing challenge which we cannot achieve without your input. We are pleased to welcome a new Committee nominee who has come forward to take over the Membership Secretary's role, but we are still carrying several Committee vacancies. We are seeking people to assist with Publicity, Administration and also Events Organising. We cannot bring forward new groups, talks or events without more help from our members.

8. Implementing a new secure document storage system

This has been achieved and we now have a system that is accessible to our Committee members, is easy to use and, most importantly, is secure.

9. Purbeck u3a - Reciprocal Membership

This new initiative began last year with a collaborative agreement being signed by both u3a's. By enabling members to participate in activities across both organisations we can offer a larger variety of group activities and other learning and social opportunities.

Part Two - The Committee (Trustees) 2023-2024

The Committee for the past year:

- Honorary Chair - Dawn Bason
- Honorary Treasurer - Andy Jenkins
- Honorary Secretary - Sharon Morgan
- IT Manager + Vice Chair - Bob Newnham
- Groups Coordinator - Gwyneth Harrop
- New Enquiries Secretary - Sarah Wall
- Social Secretary - Sheila Twelvetrees

Co-opted members:

- Temporary Membership Secretary - Peter Tipping
- Health & Safety Coordinator - Sarah Fleming
- Newsletter Editor - Riette Hodson

As this year draws to a close, Peter Tipping retires from our committee. I would like to thank Peter for his contribution as Membership Secretary over the years and our very best wishes go with him for the future.

As we approach the AGM we have one new nominee as a full Committee Member. If elected, Jacquie Bolson will join us to take on a specific task.

Special thanks

My heartfelt thanks go to all our committee members who work so enthusiastically to enable our u3a to function. Without such a hard-working committee we would not continue to survive.

I would also like to thank all the members who support us during the year; those who provide food for our events, help with setting up and clearing away and those who provide prizes for our raffles. I also wish to pay a special thanks to our volunteer, who helped us with the spreadsheet work that informed our new fee structure.

Part Three - Committee Members' Reports

Group News - Gwyneth Harrop

Setting up and supporting our many groups is both rewarding and challenging. There's always something going on, new developments to deal with and issues to resolve. The following is just a flavour of what I've done this year.

- Upton and Lytchett u3a had 35 groups in 2023/4 and others were accessed as a result of reciprocal membership with Purbeck U3a. Three Upton and Lytchett groups started during the year- Classic books, Photography and Play Reading.
- Two groups have closed this year - Dog Walking and Ancestry - as a result of falling enrolments and difficulties with Ancestry software at the library.
- A Pickleball Group is starting in September, after requests from members. Flower Arranging will also be advertised and a Dance class has been suggested and will be researched. We currently offer no Music groups, local members attend a Purbeck u3a Singing group. An aim is to plug this gap.
- The Sunday Lunch and Coffee and Cakes groups continue to be very successful in counteracting social isolation among some older people in the area.

Challenges include:

- Finding new groups leaders, though when two leaders recently resigned (Bridge and Enjoying Poetry), other group members offered to take on the roles.
- Finding suitable and reasonably priced venues, particularly in Upton. Rising venue costs could jeopardise some groups.
- Although there has been a small increase in the numbers of men joining the u3a, recruiting more men continues as a priority.
- More ideas are needed for attracting younger members.
- Striking the right balance between having a happy and relaxed culture in the u3a whilst ensuring sufficient record keeping etc to comply with official requirements.

Work of the New Enquiries Secretary - Sarah Wall

As well as continuing in my main role of advising and supporting people who contact me about joining our u3a, I have been responsible for contacting and inviting three of our speakers who gave talks during the year.

Prior to the advent of Sarah Fleming joining us, as Health & Safety Coordinator, I started to implement our Risk Assessment system. I went to various Leaders' homes to explain the process and help them fill in the form however finding mutually agreeable dates to meet proved quite time-consuming in the end.

IT Developments - Bob Newnham

Upton and Lytchett u3a now has a new website, with a new website address:

<https://upton-lytchett.u3asite.uk/>

This is thanks to the Third Age Trust's ongoing programme of migrating all u3a websites to its new server. You might not notice too much change to the content, but the layout is clearer and simpler.

If you're a geek, you'll be pleased to know that it's a WordPress site, in common with millions of others. If you are a normal human being, the thing to remember is that the new site is very much better at handling and displaying images than the old one, so there is scope for any group to provide lots of photos of their activities. Of course, some groups will have more photo-opportunities than others, but we'd like you to send photos for inclusion in the website - certainly there is no excuse for the Photography group not to do so! Send your photographs to me – IT Manager uplytu3a@gmail.com.

The Secretary's Year - Sharon Morgan

A satisfying year – in which now, on reflection, many objectives have come to fruition. As secretary, my role encompasses a wide range of duties together with numerous side issues that also take my attention. Early on, a happy meeting with Purbeck u3a evolved into our new Reciprocal Arrangement. This offered the opportunity for us to discover how another u3a is operated and, although a member myself, I have yet to join in their meetings because my time has been occupied enjoying the groups that I partake in. Every few weeks our committee meetings take place, so agenda and minutes are prepared and issued, with documents later filed in our super new management system. I arranged two of our very enjoyable talks; Birds of Poole Harbour and Steve Etches Fossil Museum and help with the membership process, banking and local liaison, including the recording of attendance lists for our gatherings. New for this year, I sent out our bi-monthly u3a Newsletters and occasional mailshots. Something I personally enjoy, for meetings, is to decorate the tables with flowers from my garden, to greet our members and make our events feel rather special, including making the name tags, so that we can all greet each other by name and engender the friendly u3a community that we have.

I look forward to an intriguing and enjoyable year ahead. **Join us!**

Part Four - Our aims for the coming year

In addition to the day-to-day work of running our u3a, next year we will focus our efforts on the following strategic aims:

- Recruiting new Committee members
- Continuity planning
- Introducing a programme of Study Days
- Website improvements