

ANNUAL REPORT - CHESTER U3A. OCTOBER 1994

Chester U3A, like most organizations, especially in their early years, has experienced problems. The most pressing and persistent has been the lack of a suitable permanent venue in which to hold our monthly meetings.

As the year progressed, membership grew to 258 and the committee were constantly aware that, although all members do not attend each monthly meeting, nevertheless we must attempt to cater for the 150-200 people who may wish to come.

Our first venue, the Quaker Meeting House, had much to recommend it, not least its reasonable cost. However it has two drawbacks; most importantly Fire Regulations limit capacity to 100 people; also it cannot be blacked out to show slides satisfactorily. Each of the other venues we explored presented their own difficulties - high cost, refreshment problems, poor acoustics and, as here, at the Grosvenor Museum, the inability to move about freely and meet one another. The committee approached Chester City Council and Cheshire County Council for help and met their Continuing Education Officer, Alistair Tranter. As a result of this meeting he is pressing our case with the College Adult Education Programme, the Workers Education Association and others. Possible sources of assistance could be in the fields of accommodation, advertising, information and professional support. In addition, we are applying for a one-off financial grant, which, if forthcoming, will be used to purchase microphone and slide facilities. We will, of course, keep you informed of progress on these initiatives.

To underline the point that assistance may be a two-way process the committee was separately approached by the County Council Adult Education Department to help with an outreach programme in outlying towns and villages in our part of Cheshire.

Now to turn to the years activities - we have enjoyed a number of talks on a variety of subjects ranging from the reminiscences of the Duke of Westminster's ex-gamekeeper, Roman Chester, advances in heart surgery, poetry readings, the planned Arts Centre Chester 2000, Japanese culture and society and the history of Hoole, to the September visit of the Lord Mayor. Our Christmas party was a great success, thanks largely to the generosity of members and we plan a repeat in December. Our Group Leaders' meetings have proved interesting and fruitful in firing enthusiasms for new pursuits and encouraging us to widen our horizons. In our first year 25 groups were formed and most continue to flourish. Beginners have become improvers and, this year, an additional 6 groups are available with a further 4 awaiting leaders and hosts.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to extend heartfelt thanks to Group Leaders and Hosts for the wonderful work they do throughout the year. They are the backbone and mainstay of our organization. Without them we are nothing.

Many thanks, too, to all who have provided us with refreshments, always a welcome start to our meetings.

Also we are indebted to Eric Hutchinson who has audited our accounts and, thereby, saved us a considerable professional fee.

Finally, I know you will wish me to place on record our appreciation of the work of the Committee, in particular Chris Clark and Roy Wilson. Chris has not only carried the onerous burden of treasurer, he has also masterminded our transfer to Charitable Status and negotiated on our behalf with the Cheshire County Council. He is standing down as Treasurer as he and his wife plan to spend part of the winter in the South of France. Nevertheless we are delighted he has agreed to stand for adoption as a committee member. Roy worked tirelessly to get us up and running in our first six months of life, and, since leaving the committee, has been much missed by us all. He has recently been appointed U3A's Development Co-ordinator, and, although he works from H.Q. he remains a member here in Chester. He attended the AGM at Lancaster last month and will update us on the outcome.

In summary I believe we have achieved much in our first year. We hope to build on this and look forward to the future with optimism.

Pat Pulford
Chairman

