

CHESTER U3A CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, NOVEMBER 2002

This report covers a period of 13 months as a result of changing the date of our AGM to November. This later date is of considerable assistance to our Membership Secretary now that our numbers have grown to approximately 470.

During 2002 two of the three founding fathers of the U3A in the United Kingdom have very sadly died.

Peter Laslett and Michael Young – Lord Young of Dartington who were both born in 1915. They were not only instrumental in setting up the U3A but also in the founding of the Open University, they will be sadly missed.

It is always very sad to lose our own members particularly when death is the cause. I am afraid I do not always get to know of these sad events but I would like to mention the death of Joyce Catherall who was one of the very early members of Chester U3A.

Although our membership numbers have grown substantially the numbers attending the monthly meeting have in fact declined from peaks of about 170 to levels about 140. The committee therefore decided to remove the limit on the membership because if the experience of larger U3A's than ours is anything to go by there is not a pro rata increase attendance at the monthly meeting with an increased membership.

Because of the ongoing problems with the blackout at Upton and the limited parking available the committee decided to look for another suitable venue for our monthly meeting. We have been very fortunate to find that St Columba's Parish Centre was now available for hire on a regular basis. We do hope that you find this hall is a satisfactory place to hold our meetings in the future.

Cecil Wright has done a wonderful job in finding alternative speakers at short notice who did not require the blackout, I am sure you will all join me in thanking him for the way he has been able to make our meetings such a success sometimes under difficult circumstances. Cecil amazes me with his ability to find us such interesting speakers and this year is no exception. Topics have ranged from Aviation in the North West, Recycling in Chester, Frank Bonsor talking about Humour and not forgetting our own Golden Jubilee presentation "Members Remember the 50's"

We are also indebted to our wonderful volunteers who each month set out the chairs and equipment, welcome new members and visitors, make and serve coffee, help with parking and contribute in many other ways to making the Monthly Meeting such an enjoyable event. Thank you all for your time and effort it is much appreciated by everyone in Chester U3A.

We must never forget that the U3A was set up to further the education of middle aged and older people who are not in full time employment through the format of self help Study Groups. We have now established over 40 Study Groups in Chester some of the more recent additions to the list include Collecting, Play Reading, and very recently Strolling.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every group co-ordinator for all the time they devote and organisation skills they employ to ensure that their groups give the members the knowledge and entertainment which is such an essential element of belonging to our excellent organisation.

The other very important part of our activities are the wonderful range of Social Events with visits to the theatre, ballet, opera, museums and many other interesting trips.

We must not forget either the Sunday at Seven when we meet in a wide selection of locations for a very pleasant social meal.

I would like to say a big thank you to Mary Vives, Barbara Wright, Beryl Parkinson, Bertie Brown and Gwen Facer for doing such a wonderful job. I know that you look forward with tremendous interest to these events and appreciate the amount of time and effort that is necessary to make our Social Calendar so successful.

Chester U3A have taken over the administration of the Merseyside and West Cheshire Region from May 2002 to May 2003. The Region consists of 16 U3A's from Formby on Merseyside to Northwich in Cheshire. We have agreed hold the regional meetings in Chester during our term of office in the hope that more representatives from south of the Mersey will be encouraged to attend. Crewe and Nantwich U3A however have recently informed us that they are leaving our Region and setting up another Region in their area.

A Regional Lunch social event was held on September 25th at the Rotate Restaurant in Ellesmere Port in order that members from the local U3A's have the opportunity of meeting in an informal atmosphere.

On April 23rd 2003 we are planning a Regional Conference to be held at Christleton School Chester details of which will be announced in due course. This should be a very interesting day with the opportunity to meet members of other local U3A's. Once you have had the opportunity to study the programme we hope as many of you as possible are able to attend.

The Third Age Trust have proposed a model constitution and recommend that a local constitution based on this model is adopted by all U3A's in England and Wales. The Committee will be considering this in the next 12 months with a view to bringing to the AGM in 2003 for approval, a suggested revised constitution for Chester U3A.

Before closing my annual report I must express thanks on behalf of all the members to so many people, in addition to those already mentioned, who contribute so much to the smooth running of Chester U3A. John Turley for his work as our Treasurer and for the time spent

producing the excellent News-Sheet. We must also thank all the members of our committee each of who contributes their particular skills to the smooth running of our U3A. Our secretaries Julienne and Francis without their hard work and very welcome guidance my job would have been impossible. Dorothy Clift and her son Stephen for handling and delivering the post coming through our box number. Brenda Walker for taking over as our excellent and efficient membership secretary, Harold Wilson and Sylvia for printing the newsletter and taking it to the bookshop and Eric Hutchinson for acting as Accounts Examiner.

Before closing I would like to say a very big thank you for everything to Francis Holland, Mary Vives and Bertie Brown who are leaving the Committee, I shall miss you.

Finally 2003 is an exiting year for our U3A because I am reliably informed that we celebrate our 10th birthday on the 7th September, if you have any ideas how we should mark this event do please let me know.