

CHESTER U3A CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, NOVEMBER 2003

This report covers the 12 month period from November 2002 which has again been a very successful one for Chester U3A. Our numbers have now increased to over 500 however with the now confirmed maximum numbers at St Columba's of 250 we have not yet found it necessary to put a limit on membership.

Although our membership numbers have grown from 470 last year to 506 this year the numbers attending the monthly meeting have stayed very constant at about 150. This is very much in line with other U3A's who have found that there is not a pro rata increase attendance at the monthly meeting with increased membership

Cecil Wright has again done a magnificent job in finding us some wonderful speakers this year. Topics have ranged from Barn Owls, The Anderton Lift, Williamson's Tunnels, The Story of Swing and A Dog Collar on the Docks to name but a few. Cecil you have done us proud and on behalf of all our members I would like to express our thanks and appreciation for all your time and hard work.

While I am on the subject of Monthly Meetings we must not forget Alison Wright and her happy band of helpers whom each month serve us with tea and biscuits. We are also indebted to the wonderful volunteers who set out the chairs and equipment, welcome new members and visitors and contribute in many other ways to make each meeting so enjoyable. Thank you all for your time and effort it is very much appreciated by everyone at Chester U3A

We have increased our Study Groups to a healthy 44 there are now two Walking Groups a Strolling Group and an Ambling Group giving the members a choice for this very popular pursuit. Another new group to start recently is a Discussion Group meeting once a month led by Julienne Collingridge.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every group co-ordinator for all the time and effort they devote and the organisation skills they employ to ensure that their groups give the members the knowledge and entertainment that we all enjoy so much.

The other very important part of our activities are the wonderful range of Social Events which give so much pleasure and enjoyment to many of our members with visits to the Theatre, Ballet, Opera, Museums and many other interesting locations.

The Sunday at Seven events, which have recently moved to Sunday at Six must not be forgotten. We meet in a wide selection of locations for a very pleasant social meal.

I would like to say a very big thank you to all those concerned in these events Mary Vives, Barbara Wright, Beryl Parkinson, Bertie Brown, and Gwen Facer, for doing such a wonderful job. I know that many of our members look forward with tremendous interest to hearing about forthcoming events on the social calendar.

I noted in my report last year that Chester U3A took over the administration of the Merseyside and West Cheshire Region from May 2002 to May 2003. The decision to hold these meetings in Chester proved successful with more of the 16 U3A's being represented. Chester have now handed over this function to Halewood U3A who are very keen to encourage even more representatives to attend the four meetings to be held in Halewood.

On April 23rd we held a very successful Regional Conference at Christleton School Chester which was attended by 200 delegates from 19 U3A's in the region and beyond.

The Conference was opened by the Lord Mayor Elect of Chester, Councillor Barry Cowper. Frank Bonser then entertained and amused us with his original views on Social Class. A format of informal workshops followed Frank Bonser in the morning and structured group sessions in the afternoon. Everything went very smoothly both the organisation of the event and the catering arrangements.

I have had numerous calls from around the Region saying how much they had enjoyed the day. I would like say a very big thank you to everyone involved in organising this event in particular Carol Ferris, John Turley and Frances Holland.

During my meetings with other U3A's in particular Warrington I learnt that they had obtained an "Awards for all Grant" and had purchased some Digital Projection Equipment which I believed would also be very useful for Chester U3A in particular many of the Study Groups.

The Committee decided we should apply for a grant and we were delighted to receive an award of £ 4,536 for the purchase of this equipment. We have now purchased a Digital Projector, Laptop Computer, Video/DVD Player and a Powered Speaker. This equipment is much appreciated by the Study Groups who have already used it for presentations. We envisage that many Study Groups will find that using the projector opens up new avenues for presenting study material to the members.

September 2nd was very eventful, firstly the revised constitution of Chester U3A was presented at an Extraordinary General Meeting to the members and was approved unanimously by everyone present. Secondly we celebrated the 10th Birthday of Chester U3A with a few words from four people very much involved in setting up a U3A in Chester. A beautifully decorated cake cut by Rosalie Hassall a founder member of our U3A was served with either wine or soft drink to everyone at the meeting. I believe that we all enjoyed this special event and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to making it so successful.

Before closing my final 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 our U3A. John Turley who until recently had the dual role of Treasurer and Editor of our excellent News-Sheet a very big thank you John. We now have new co-editors for our News-Sheet Alex Davis and Barbara Wright thank you both for taking this important task. We must thank all the members of the committee each of who contributes their particular skills in ensuring everything runs smoothly. Julienne and Carol, your hard work and guidance made my job considerably easier.

Dorothy Clift and her son Stephen for handling and delivering the post from our box office. Brenda Walker for being such a wonderful membership secretary, Harold Wilson and Sylvia for printing the News-sheet and delivering it to Booklands. Eric Hutchinson for acting as accounts examiner, Ray Pulsford for his time and skill in running our PA System

Lastly I want to thank June Hargreaves and Mike Hinchcliffe who are leaving the committee and everyone in Chester U3A who have made my two years as Chairman so very enjoyable.