

CHESTER U3A CHAIRMAN'S AGM REPORT – NOVEMBER 2006

I feel that the past year has been a very busy and successful one. Whilst the decision was taken last year to restrict membership to 600, it took until March to reach that number. However, this year there has been an influx of new members, and we have already reached this total. This may be because of the cut backs in Government funding for adult education and I feel that the new Committee will have to look for ways that membership of U3A can be made more available to people here in Chester.

The number of Groups has grown to 59. However, for the first time since I have been on the Committee we have lost a group, as Jazz Appreciation has closed following the retirement of Jeff Jefferies. If we are to continue to flourish, members must come forward and replace Co-ordinators as they step down, and indeed to start new groups, as there is a great need for low level activities such as short walks for our less able members.

The problem of introducing next year's subscription rates before they were approved by members was resolved by making a slight alteration to our Constitution and holding a Special General Meeting in July.

I am delighted that the Committee unanimously agreed to appoint John and Ida Turley as our first Honorary Members, in recognition of John's service to the Committee as Treasurer and being the only member of Chester U3A to have served on the National Committee.

Our collaboration with Bishop's High School continues thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of Howard Sherman. Several 'Popular Science for Beginners' lectures have been held and the Ecology Day was a great success.

On the communication front, the News-Sheet now goes by email to over 220 members and we are grateful to John Hammond who has done a great job in creating a new Chester U3A website which is proving to be very popular.

We have taken a very active part at both National and Regional levels

Following the success of last years Summer School North, held here in Chester, the Third Age Trust decided to make it an annual event. Once again we provided many of the course tutors and together with Cestrians, welcomed delegates and manned the registration desks.

The U3A Conference and AGM were transferred to Chester at very short notice and we provided many of the stewards. One of the benefits of having it here was that the majority of the Committee and some of our members were able to attend.

We were represented at all the North West Regional Meetings and many of the Committee attended the hand-over of the Chairmanship from Northwich to Warrington at a lunch held at the Vicars Cross Golf Club. And at the North West Study Day held at Liverpool University, we provided tutors for some of the courses

I am extremely grateful for the support I have received from all members of the Committee. Everyone has had a job to do and I feel that we have worked very well together as a team.

Thanks to the efforts of our Vice Chairman Neil Fitton, we have purchased both main and back-up hearing loops for use by the groups.

Treasurer Gordon Bowyer, who is retiring this year, has done a great job in computerising our accounts and our thanks go to Eric Hutchinson for examining them.

Carol Ferris continues to handle the mail and the never ending, but useful correspondence that emanates from National Office while still taking time to organise the wonderful Christmas and New Year lunches at Rossett Hall that were attended by nearly 200 of our members.

In her first year on the Committee, Connie Charlesworth, our Committee Secretary has coped marvellously well in keeping me on the straight and narrow and producing coherent sets of minutes out of our discussions.

Thanks go to Hilary, our Membership Secretary, who is also retiring this year, for the enormous amount of work she and her daughter have put in completely re-writing the New Members Application form & Introduction Pack.

Our Speaker Secretary Brian Holyoak continues to provide us with excellent speakers at the Monthly Meetings and the problem with the loop system at St. Columba's church hall has been resolved. My thanks go to all the people who help make the meetings such a success. Ray Pulsford for his work with the sound system, our 'tea lady' Brenda Smith and the Groups that serve us with refreshments, all the volunteers, headed by Peter and Ada Sargent, who set out the chairs and put them away again afterwards and Margaret Reed who looks after the notice board.

Group Liaison Officer Joan Hall has produced our first Group Directory, and begun a programme of not only visiting all the groups, but seemingly joining most of them. I would like to thank the Co-ordinators, including those who have retired during the past year, for all the time and effort they put into running their groups.

The Social side of our U3A continues to flourish with Mary Vives, Barbara Wright, Beryl Parkinson and Norma Hardy providing us with a packed programme of events. While the 'Sunday at Seven' ladies, Gwen Facer and Bertie Brown, take us to a variety of restaurants, both here in Chester and the surrounding districts.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you, who have put up with me and given me your support during my time as Chairman of this wonderful organisation.

Thank You, Alex Davis – Chairman 2005/2006.