

## Chester U3A Annual Report – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 - Jenny Carley

Chester U3A is a successful and vibrant U3A thanks to you, the members. It has been a privilege to be Chair over the past two years. Thank you all for your support, I couldn't have done it without you, all of you - the members, the committee, co-ordinators, meeting organisers, news sheet editors, social committee, welcoming committee, help desk team and webmaster; volunteers who put out chairs, collect keys, open up the hall, provide the visual aids, maintain the notice boards, trade lists, equipment lists, book swap, resource listings and then there are special events like Popular Science and Group Fair, Co-ordinators lunch, new members lunch and Christmas lunches, and those who count us in and all the volunteers that I have not mentioned and especially the coffee and tea makers. I thought it was an army who marched on their stomach now I know it's the groups and the committees.

At the start of the year a new caretaker of St Columba's Hall was appointed bringing a change to the opening up procedure of the hall. The computer and science support offered by Bishop's Bluecoat School came into doubt when they lost their science status; I hope that our letter contributed to their successful application for academic status.

Following a series of advice notes issued by The Third Age Trust, members of the committee attended the NW Regional conferences in Manchester and in Chester; this has resulted in several amendments to our procedures. Disabled access to the hall was addressed and the welcome committee are now alerted to assist any disabled persons.

At the conference Terry Hardie, TAT treasurer gave advice on the financial procedures that should be adopted so as not to jeopardise our Charitable Status. This has an effect on our Third Party Insurance. We are currently in the process of reviewing and amending our financial procedures so that we work within the constraints of our Charitable Status and because we, as a committee and as such are Trustees are ultimately responsible for all monies involved in study groups and social events. Unless we make these changes we would be in breach of our third party liability insurance cover, so necessary in today's world. The next chairman will have the task of ensuring that all the groups take on board the new procedures. I'm sure he will have your support.

Some of my entries though heavily edited have been published in U3A News, one about a Leucistic Redshank, one about the Art and Photographic exhibition at Ness gardens and then to my surprise I was featured at a 'Science School' in Durham. The last 'story' about the three ambulances and a helicopter is about to be published.

This year Brian Holyoak will be relinquishing his position on the committee as Speaker secretary, we thank Brian for his dedication to detail and for giving us such a varied array of speakers over the past six years. Brian joined the committee in 2004 and became Speakers Secretary in 2005. Two co-opted members joined the committee this year Mavis Evans, Kay Lunt. Thank you for joining us. Kay replaced Barbara Wright on the committee

We have purchased several computer hardware items this year, so that our equipment is continually updated and is fit for purpose. More memory has been added to one of the computers

in order to upgrade the system and we also purchased an additional dongle, to access the internet. These items will be used for your benefit at the Help Desk and in the groups. The failure of a speaker's PowerPoint presentation at a Tuesday meeting led to the purchase of a new, more powerful computer together with a wireless controller/pointer.

What can I say about the Tuesday and Thursday meetings? – Well done to all those involved. That the meetings continue to be so well supported are a tribute to the organizers, Brian and Myra. At the Tuesday meetings the speakers have been very varied, from 'Humour in Court' to 'How the Universe Began' and at the Thursday meetings from 'Flamenco dancing' to a talk on 'Dementia'.

Our groups have also entertained us. The Story Telling group enthralled us and Val Quince, a member of the 'Friday Writers', read her prize winning entry, 'Sandalium Infantis', which was awarded the Roy Wilson Prize at the last AGM. The craft group continue to display their cards at many meetings throughout the year for which we are all grateful. A talk on Heraldry at a Tuesday meeting resulted in a short course, educating us about an ancient, but still extant art. This year I started the Rolling Notices before the meetings as I was aware that you the members were not informed on wider activities of the U3A. They will continue so keep watching.

An important part of U3A activities are the study/interest groups, which provide the opportunity to spend time with others pursuing an already existing interest or exploring something new. Sheila took on the role of Group Liaison Officer last January and has done a remarkable job. It has been a particular busy time this year, there have been 13 new co-ordinators, many for the first time. The two history groups were combined after Neil and Constance were no longer able to run these groups. Unfortunately Canasta, a shared group with Cestrian, closed. The Gardening group, though slow starting, is now well established. A new walking group - Wednesday Walking - was set up to bridge the ability gap between the long established moderate walking groups and the tougher 'Friday Walking'.

A computer survey, carried out by Andrew, showed that there was an extremely wide requirement for computer training amongst the members. After much deliberation it was decided that, given the expertise available, we could concentrate on two aspects. Existing users who wished to improve their skills and learn more about computers and their application and the beginners who were still wearing L-Plates. Andrew Cross, as well as taking on Shadow vice chair and acting as IT member on the committee started the Computer Users Group CUG, and yet continued to be part of the Help Desk. Not to be outdone John Quinn and I started the beginner's computer group. Both now operate from Burley Hall.

Venues are always a problem because of cost, location, and availability of parking space. Boughton Hall approached us to offer such facilities. I subsequently presented a talk to the residents about the U3A after which they offered the use their premises free of charge to our groups. There are currently two groups meeting there, Collectors and Needlecraft 1, but their future is only secure as long as a member of the group resides at the Hall.

A special thank you to all the co-ordinators who do such a wonderful job. If it wasn't for you, groups wouldn't exist and groups are what the U3A is all about. Keep up the good work, share

your experiences and maybe when members see what a good time you are having they too will want to be co-ordinators. Remember you can never have too many groups.

At the co-ordinators lunch last month changes to the new financial procedures were presented together with information from The Third Age Trust. This information has been collated into a new 'Co-ordinators' booklet. The Group Fair was held in November last year after which many groups reported that their numbers had grown. We will be holding it again this month.

Groups also have their own holidays. Eleven members of Bird watching 1 went to Calaeverock, staying on the WWT reserve. The Strollers went to Cumbria and the Friday Walkers stayed in Yorkshire.

In February at the ever popular 'Popular Science' Godfrey Harrap talked about hair and Geoff Butt about the weather. In October it was Kate Howells turn on Oil spills and Don McIntyre on colour blindness. How's that for a mix!

The establishment of the nearby U3As at Ellesmere Port and West Cheshire Rural has probably contributed to the reduced growth in our membership. It now stands at 755 a 2.3% growth Thanks go to Patricia Gifford our membership Secretary and her helpers.

The brochures you receive at membership time are thanks to Sheila Young and Pam Spencer, who keep them updated throughout the year.

Communication is a difficult part of a large U3A, hence we rely mainly on the News Sheet and web site. This year the News Sheet has had a make-over. Tom and Barbara have worked hard to produce a cleaner crisper appearance, now always on a white background. Non U3A items are no longer printed so allowing more space for you.

The web site [www.chesterU3A.org.uk](http://www.chesterU3A.org.uk) continues to give us a massive resource of information for which we have to thank John Hammond. Its success has been mentioned at several meetings and conferences that I have attended. He has been webmaster now for five years and continues to be enthusiastic and helpful.

Research shows that, overall, people are healthier and experience greater feelings of well-being when they are more socially connected. Our social programme prepared by Mary and her team makes a great contribution to this. Unfortunately Barbara left the committee due to other commitments. She will be missed, In addition to Kay Lunt, June Irwin and Chris Parry joined the social team, and thanks to June the social calendar is now available on our website. In the past year there have been visits to Theatres to see both musicals and plays, to concerts at the Halle and Liverpool Philharmonic. There have been tours of Historic houses, Cathedrals and the towns of Cranford and Tissington, also the flower shows at Trentham and Harrogate. There was also a trip to the electric mountain to light up our members; lunches at the Bistro and the Adelphi, and that's only part of what they do!

Food always brings members together so a New members lunch' organised in January proved that it did. There was a noticeable increase in numbers at social events and group activities after the lunch.

The welcome committee, May and Ada, now have additional help, with nearly 800 members they need it! The addition of 'The two Marys', Mary Hasdhi and Mary King, enables the new members to be singled out for special treatment.

The annual lunch this year has been relocated from Rossett Hall to Cheshire View after complaints about the food at Rossett Hall. Thanks to Mary Prince for the organisation. On the subject of food Sunday at 7 continues to thrive thanks to Ann and Gwen

In spring there was a short holiday to Glasgow which prepared our members for perhaps the most ambitious social event of the year - the very successful holiday to Lake Como. Nothing but glowing reports; well done team. The work that goes into planning and arranging these events is very much appreciated.

Our commitment to the 'Deeside and Wirral Network' meant that I was heavily involved setting up the Art and Craft Exhibition at Ness Gardens last spring. As part of the sub-committee that organised the event I produced the brochures and flyers. Thank you to all who contributed to the exhibition and those that helped on the day. It was declared to be a success. My report for the U3A News did appear, although heavily edited. Photographs were taken by Geoff Newcombe, a member of our photography group.

In addition to Chairing Chester U3A I have been fairly active in the Network, I recently wrote their constitution. In September I was elected Chair; so that's what I will be doing next. No doubt you will be hearing from me in this role in the future as I change hats but my heart will still be here in Chester.

Last but not least I must thank Tim for being so patient and having to do all the jobs at home I haven't had time to do. He is now getting his wife back

Jenny Carley

To finish:

Thank you to you all - you the members

Those who help and those who watch

Those who cheer and those that grumble

Those that silently do their duty

You know who you are

So do I

Be assured your efforts are appreciated

By me and all

Thank You to you all