

Chairman's Report 2017/2018

It has been a busy year for our U3A; 70 new members joined us. We have had talks as diverse as the History of Art, Smallpox, The Tower of London, Time Travel and amongst others a memorable meeting featuring our local butcher and his sausage machine! We ran a Memory Course that was very successful and enjoyable. The Christmas meal and our home-grown entertainment was both excellent and fun.

Rosemary Westlake retired from running the French group for 20 years and Sandra Hoaksey took over. Another Yoga class was added to our list of groups which now number over 40. Both the Solos group and Industrial Heritage have travelled on many well organised trips. I have spoken at great length in the Newsletter (probably too long!) and my thanks go to **all** who have helped our growing U3A stay thriving and successful.

I must thank the Committee for all their hard work. Data Protection has given us much to think about and will affect the way we work in the future. There will also be other items concerning the financial running of our AGM which will affect some group leaders: please be patient as we carry out these changes. Garry Stephenson will update us later on Data Protection.

There has been much work on our new Beacon system which enabled us to move to a more efficient method of renewing our membership. Thank you for bearing with us and the inevitable teething troubles! In particular, I wish to thank the retiring members; Jackie Ephgrave for her meticulous work as Treasurer, Lilian Pooley in her role as Group Co-Ordinator and mentor – thank you Lililan – and Michael Yorke who is standing down as Secretary. Michael has also been a tremendous help to me. Doug Crowley has agreed to stay on as Webmaster for a little while as we find ourselves with an unexpected vacancy. Welcome to Jen Thoburn as Programme Secretary and Sue Martin as Trip Co-Ordinator.

There are so many people to thank; hopefully I will have covered this at length in the Newsletter. I do apologise if I have left someone out! You all help to run this organisation and are really appreciated; our grateful thanks.

This coming year, we have trips arranged for SS Great Britain and several more in the pipeline which have yet to be discussed. Please remember to make use of our suggestion box – we want to hear your ideas!

A lot has happened since the nomination papers were distributed. Our Committee has found itself short of a Secretary and more of that later. Carole McDerment has agreed to take on the role of Group Co-Ordinator and you will all be meeting her soon. This is of course, dependent on proposal and acceptance by you all and we will come to that in due course.

As I read the Newsletters from other U3As, I realise we all have the same problem. The challenge is to find others who are willing to serve on our Committee. Time and again I have seen the words ...'If we don't find another 'x' then we will have to close'. We are coming precariously close to this this year and I propose to set up a succession programme to identify anyone who feels that they could help in the future. If you think you may be able to help us, maybe not at the moment but at some future time, please come and see me

or any member of the Committee. Please remember the whole ethos of the U3A is about giving as well as taking. Enjoy the groups you attend, but please think about helping out our Committee! Skills which you bring from the experience of your past employment could be of great help to us; apart from which the sense of belonging to this thriving organisation with over 1000 U3As nationwide is very rewarding. Remember 'If it's not fun, it's not U3A'!

Marilyn Gibbon