

Chair's Report 2025

As your Chair I am delighted to be able to report on a really positive and productive year for our u3a. We have worked hard to try and make things better for all our members. For example: Christine Hooper has been responsible for commissioning First Aid training in case of need and we are hoping to run another training session next year. The fact that we can see and hear the presentations much more clearly each month is thanks to Philippe Bertrand and Terry Careford who have commissioned a new audio visual set up for the hall and sit there twiddling knobs each month. Thanks gentlemen. We now have a much more user-friendly and up to date website thanks to the really hard work of Carol Jenkins our Secretary. This is a great resource with everything folk need to know about our u3a in one place. We now have up to more than 500 people looking at it each month and up to 3,000 views. Carol is also responsible for a lively and engaging Monthly Update which I am sure you all read avidly.

Interest Groups

The success of our u3a rests largely on the Interest Groups that we offer and my sincere thanks go out to all of our Group Leaders who make it all possible - we really couldn't do it without you. Thanks also to Sara Piper and Philip Haughey for working on the Risk Assessments for all our activities that we have had to put in place. Sadly but understandable after a long time, a couple of groups have come to an end this year but we have also seen a number of new groups start-up such as another French group, our Pickleball and Singing groups, Nordic Walking, another yoga group and a film discussion group to name just a few. Also a knitting and crochet group, a wine tasting group and an art group are just getting underway. We are always looking for new ideas and for Group Leaders who will make things happen. Please don't be shy. A special mention for John Colman for another terrific year of Heritage Visits.

Monthly meetings

Christine Hooper has had a great year as our Speaker Secretary and arranged some fascinating speakers to talk to us. The Sound of Music talk was particularly well received so thank you Christine. Thanks also to our catering team for providing the refreshments each month (and washing up afterwards).

Membership

Membership of our u3 a now stands at more than 550, up more than 13% on last year. More members mean new ideas, energy and enthusiasm and more and different Interest Groups, so more activities for you all to enjoy. The rise in members was boosted by a really lively Open Day in September, organized very ably by our Interest Group Coordinators, Sue Barlow and Julie Frayne and supported by our Secretary Carol Jenkins. The Open Day also matched many existing members with

spaces in our groups so more of our existing members can now enjoy new activities. Most of our 60+ groups were represented on the day, ready to talk to prospective members, with several giving demonstrations to make it even more interesting still. The people who got up on stage to show their activities were very brave and deserve a special mention.

Sarah Richardson has had another great year as Our New Members Friend, welcoming people to her home, plying them with delicious cake and showing them how it all works. Thank you Sarah.

Finance

We have ended the year with a healthy bank balance and tidy accounts thanks to John Curwen our very able Treasurer. John will battle HMRC this coming year so that we can use Gift Aid to increase our income. Thanks to those of you who have already ticked the Gift Aid box on your membership forms and please consider it if you are a tax payer and haven't done it yet. This doesn't increase the costs for individual members and however much we can recoup from HMRC will be put to good use for the benefit of our u3a.

What do we want to do next year?

Apart from looking for ideas and enthusiasm for new groups, we would like to improve the website still further next year but sadly we can't do this within our present capacity and in fact Carol has done her time as Website Manager and now wants to hand it over to someone new. If we want the website to be improved or even to stay up to date and useful to you all we really need the expertise of any of our members who have those skills. So if that's you then please let us know. If you do, be assured we will train you on the website.

Summary

So in summary your Committee has worked hard this year to build on the good work of previous years and improve things still further. My thanks to them all for their hard work and all the things they do in the background to make our u3a work so well. Also thank you to them for their support for me as Chair. Our u3a is reliant on the hard work of a small number of people but our Constitution as a charity specifies that people can't continue indefinitely, so to ensure continuity and progress we always need more members to join the Committee or to take on other roles that enable our u3a to work as well as it does. If anyone else feels like volunteering to run a group, join the Committee etc. please don't wait to be asked. To paraphrase Lord Kitchener your u3a needs you! We'll give you support and training and many hands really do make light work. Even if you don't feel ready to stand for election at this AGM you can still find ways to help. Please talk to a Committee member.

Liz Rugg Chair, Preston Park u3a

4th December 2025