

## Annual General Meeting 17 September 2020

### Chairman's Report 2019-2020

Well I think it is fair to say that a lot has happened since our AGM last June, very much a year of two halves. The first half was full of initiatives, success and activity. The second half has been very different, but also with initiatives, success and activity – more of that in a moment.

Our highlights between June 2019 and March this year includes lots of 'firsts':

Our new first time committee member Dave Lesley joined us as Treasurer and got stuck in very quickly in spite of being Treasurer for three other organisations. When he kindly offered to take over the role on Derek Murphy's departure, he said he didn't like committee meetings but he has attended all of ours, dare I say he enjoyed them!

In August we had our second Summer Lunch at Saxon Hall and a great success again. It was a first with the creators of the Strictly Come Dancing dresses. Carole the manager gave us a talk and members had the chance to try on the clothes and feel the fabrics. Beautiful weather and a lovely day for us all.

Also in August the U3A held their National Conference. Previously since being Chairman none of us on the committee had wanted to attend. As this was going to be my last year, I thought I should go for the first time. To my surprise I really enjoyed it, the workshops were good and meeting members from other U3A's was very interesting. Whilst there I was persuaded to be a Subject adviser, which I am really enjoying. You get to talk to like minded members from all over the country. If you are interested in a subject why not consider becoming a Subject adviser? You don't need to be an expert just give help to other U3As wanting to set up a group or answer any questions they may have. National Office will be delighted to hear from you.

At the AGM National Office advised that for the first time they wanted to have a National U3A day on 3 June, where all U3A's celebrated, promoted and publicised the U3A in their own way. In October we joined with 6 other U3A's in the area to have our regular quarterly meetings. It was raised that we should do something 'of the moment' and as we were beside the seaside we should hold a

‘beach clean’ together. Three other U3As wanted to join us and a plan of action was put forward. Two planning meetings were held, but as we know due to the pandemic and lockdown it never took place. National Office will no doubt rearrange when the timing is appropriate.

In September David White, Group Coordinator ran a very successful Group Leaders meeting with plenty of Group leaders participation, which was good. It was held for the first time in our Lady of Lourdes church hall, kindly arranged for us by Dave Lesley.

For our Christmas meeting we had a 60’s Music Quiz run by Steve Scrutton former Radio Essex DJ. Volunteers who offered to join the quiz teams for the first time were all men! Two teams, four on each team the ‘Strolling Bones’ versus the ‘Mods and Rockers’ The Maths for fun group kept a live score on screen with the ‘Mods and Rockers’ just winning. Our feet were tapping and we hummed away- a good start for the Christmas season.

**And so we began 2020. The main meeting in January was fine and in February there was talk of a virus in China but the meeting progressed as usual, however in March it was lockdown and all activity came to a halt.**

We had our first committee meeting on Zoom to come up with ideas to help our members. David White set up a helpline for anyone that needed shopping or any other requirement and we had a list of volunteers willing to help. What wonderful U3A spirit.

We had 6 volunteers to join the Committee another first!

Lorna Reeve suggested a newsletter that would make members smile and the first much celebrated Smile News was born. Members rallied around to send amusing items to Lorna and she created the Smile news every week. This has been so well received well done Lorna!

Things were looking good.

You can’t keep a good U3A member down and it was wonderful to see how group leaders really worked hard to be there for their groups. These are all firsts:

Local History 2 sent out a weekly news letter with interesting stories that members had contributed, all put together with his own fascinating history of the area by Jim Sanctuary. I met the daughter of a member who said how much she had enjoyed reading it and it gave all members a reason to look back and share stories.

Family history and Quiz group quickly met successfully on zoom. Garden group leader Sue Sullivan sent out pictures of members gardens, daily, what a great up lift to receive in your inbox. We've managed to continue as a community despite being unable to meet up physically.

After the more relaxed guidelines, Sketching started meeting in the Library gardens. Fashion Groups met in two groups of six in Chalkwell Park and Woodlands Park. Country walks and Local walks ventured out and Photography organised outside photo shoots -all social distanced of course. It was so good to see one another again.

I'm sure many groups will have stories to tell of how they kept in touch, please do let the committee know.

Whilst we continue to live in difficult times we are all here for each other. Let's face it U3A members have something in common so let's continue to talk to one another support one another and stay in touch.

It time to say thank you to the lovely committee I have had the pleasure to work with this year. Esther Gilbey and Linda Butler left the committee in June both having done marvellous jobs. Any new member will know what care and attention you were given by Esther. Her initiative of holding a monthly drop in session at Truleigh Scrumptious for members and potential new members was a great success, she was always present and gave members all the time they needed. The dedication she gave to the role- for so long- is to be applauded, thank you Esther. Linda was the person who organised front of house at our meetings which ran so smoothly. She ensured that up to date notices were always displayed at Leigh Community Centre, and sent cards to those who were sick or who had lost a member of their family. Our thanks to them both were sent in flowers in June.

Lorna Reeve and I will be leaving the committee today. 3years ago Lorna was the person who used the right words to persuade me to be Chairman. I said I would do it if she became vice chairman and after much thought we decided to go for it!

Lorna has been my right hand woman and I have had 4 right hand men! Lorna has stood in for me if I was unable to attend meetings and we worked well together on managing events. We spent hours preparing, had many laughs and enjoyed doing it, although we were exhausted afterwards. Thank you Lorna for your great contribution to the committee, I will miss our get togethers!

My first right hand man is Dave Rixon, every chairman needs a good reliable secretary and Dave is the one who sends out everything to you and manages the Leigh Estuary mail box plus much more....marvellous, thank you Dave !

My second right hand man has been David White. Any of you who know David knows he can do anything....make cakes, do the photographs, organise the technology, run the website, terrific, thank you David you are a great asset to our U3A.

My third right hand man is Ian Flack who will always tell you I twisted his arm to come on the committee and I'm so glad I did! He has been such a help in his knowledge of writing a constitution and the technicalities of Gift Aid and even took over the role of writing the Minutes when our minute secretary retired as well as being Speaker secretary. Thank you Ian and thank you for your humour always uplifting in meetings.

Last and not least our Treasurer Dave Lesley, quietly competent and has been reliably doing the accounts in spite of ill health. We really appreciate your hard work Dave thank you. **I will miss meeting up with you all at our meetings.**

I will end by saying I believe we will come out of this peculiar time in the worlds history with some new skills, new perspectives and a whole range of emotions but we are members of Leigh Estuary U3A and the past few months have shown we are pretty resilient which gives me hope and I trust that it is the same for you.

Good Luck and all good wishes to our new committee.

*Ruth Lancashire 17 September 2020*