

ATTACHMENT C

Malmesbury and District U3A AGM Chairman's Report

December 2021 – November 2022

My second year as your Chair has been less extraordinary and far more optimistic than the first. Although legal restrictions were lifted sometime before, many members remained very cautious in the winter and spring months and efforts at face-to-face meetings were not always successful. However, confidence has begun to return. Although some groups and events continue to rely on Zoom (it has a number of advantages – not least the geographical convenience), from this summer face-to-face meetings have mostly returned.

Despite everything that beset us a year ago I am pleased to record that our u3a showed real resilience and members were determined to keep in touch. Yes, we lost nearly 10% of our total membership in the course of the two years of pandemic, but this was about half the average percentage loss for u3as nationally. So well done everyone! We remained active and consequentially retained wide support.

And now the *very good news* is that there has been a resurgence in interest, first evidenced by our stall in the Town's "Petticoat Lane" – part of the Carnival - and which we consolidated at our particularly successful Open Morning in early October. Our total membership at the time of writing (1st November) has once again resumed its former 500+ mark.

Our monthly lecture-based programme of meetings - whether or not by Zoom - continue to prove a considerable success. Speaker after speaker have provided us with entertaining and informative lectures across many varied topics, such as creating a watercolour painting in less than an hour, to a detailed (and mostly local) history of King Charles II's lucky and ingenious escape from the Parliamentarians hunting him down after his losing the Battle of Worcester. Many thanks to our Speakers Secretary, Susan Hammond, for ferreting out such an array of excellent presenters. She is standing down from the Committee as she has served her three years and *we still looking for a replacement*. **Any takers?**

Of course, the lecture is not the only aim of the Monthly Meeting, for it brings people together and reinforces a sense of community. Many thanks to Margaret Gore for over-seeing the provision of refreshments at these meeting and, of course, for other social events such as those at Christmas and in July. Margaret has been in post for three years, too, and is standing down from the Committee. A loss! Her quiet but competent and utterly reliable support for all our social activities has been a major factor in this year's emergence from the covid doldrums.

Our regular Newsletter has also proven very popular. It has helped keep people in touch and has documented the much good work of an array of different groups and the efforts made by their respective Group Leaders. So, again well done everyone concerned! And a particular 'Thank You' to the two-person team who produce it. John Hammond, one of the Newsletter Team (the other being Janette Barstow) is also standing down after three years in this post and we thank him warmly for his efforts.

But then, as I have said before, this is what we are about. The very *raison d'être* of the u3a is to provide a social network for those free of parental and occupational pressures but possibly finding a challenge in settling into retirement or perhaps in relocation or in bereavement. Sharing interests and developing new ones with like-minded people in similar circumstances helps us all to stay occupied.... and sane!

Of course, our u3a is not alone. We are lucky in Malmesbury to enjoy a strong sense of Community, and there are many other outlets with which our local U3A members have engaged – for example the Athelstan Museum where our Local History Group is particularly active and which many members support as volunteers. Then there is Wessex Week, the Carnival and its myriad of events, the Community Radio (which always gives us a slot to promote the u3a)....

We have also continued to play a part in the wider Third Age Trust (TAT) – the umbrella organisation that oversees the 1000+ local U3As in the UK, including ours. Indeed, the Bath and Wiltshire U3A Network of 14 local groups has been active, this year chaired by Malmesbury. It has proven a useful forum for local Chairs to swap ideas and experiences. Listening to how others running parallel organisations facing the same problems as we have but addressing them in different ways is very powerful.

Finally, I must thank all the Committee members – such a very strong team, willing to share the organisational load - and the Group Leaders for all their support. Your efforts enable us all to continue to **Learn, Laugh and Live!**

John Fairhurst

2022 Chair