

This is my last annual report as chair and because of Covid-19 it won't be a standard report. I will therefore break it into two sections, the before and after lockdown months.

Until lockdown, our U3A had continued its healthy organic growth. Membership numbers and groups slowly increase every year and we continue to introduce new initiatives. We established an Events committee that both relieved the committee's workload and also enabled us to introduce more events, so we could reach a wider group of members. We've also introduced a series of meetings called 'Useful to Know', where we have been able to disseminate information to our members, which have been very popular. We completed the first cycle of our Bumblebee Conservation research group and had just started the 2020 cycle. We also joined forces with the Friends of the Tunbridge Museum Library and Art Gallery to raise funds for the conservation of a Georgian court dress. This is being achieved by refreshing and re-launching a set of 3 local walks booklets, which had originally been produced by the U3A 12 years ago. The short breaks that we offer have also been very popular. The seminar on Western Art that we organised with Paddock Wood U3A was also well received.

When I reflect on the 4 years of my chairmanship, I feel proud of the new initiatives we have introduced during that time; holidays and short breaks, a range of events in addition to our normal groups, our useful to know talks, implementing the new membership and mailing databases to reach members more efficiently, shared-learning and research projects, new subscription methods and reducing many of the more onerous committee tasks. When I meet representatives from other U3As I realise how proactive and forward-thinking we are. I'm also proud of the feedback that we get on our friendliness and approachability as a U3A.

None of this would be possible without the support of the committee and the many other members who volunteer to help. I would like to thank everyone who helps; on sub-committees such as the Outings and Events teams, Group Contacts, the 'Tea' and 'AV' Teams. I am extremely grateful for all their help, always offered in such a gracious way. Special thanks must go to our retiring committee members. Jan Sumner has cheerfully overseen a steady increase in groups in her role as Groups Co-ordinator and Eryll Fabian has received many plaudits in her role as Newsletter Editor. Wendy Maher has been an exemplary Secretary for 2 terms and was instrumental in implementing the challenging change to our constitution. I'm also very grateful for the members who have volunteered to replace them.

Everything changed in March as social distancing and then the lockdown was introduced. For an organisation that is based on members getting together in groups, this could have been a disaster, but we have all rallied round by supporting each other and disseminating useful information. Tips on local shopping, educational and cultural links and entertaining items are regularly updated to our website and Facebook group and repeated in our newsletter, including the printed copy. We're also paying for a Zoom video-conferencing licence that many of our groups are using to continue meeting virtually. Having contact with others and advice on how to manage have been invaluable during this unprecedented time and members have expressed their appreciation for our efforts to carry on and ensure they are included.

I have really enjoyed my time as Chair. It has given me an opportunity to meet so many of our members and we are a really vibrant and friendly group. Although inevitably there have been a few challenges I've been able to respond to them as they arose, with support from the rest of the committee. The U3A's ethos is about learning new things and being prepared to step outside our comfort zone and being chair exemplifies that ethos. I know that the innovations we've introduced will continue to be supported and going forward, TWU3A will build on its past successes.