

## **Exmouth & District u3a Trustees Report - 2022-2023**

This trustees' report gives us the opportunity to look back on the many activities and events that took place during our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year and the 40<sup>th</sup> year for the u3a nationally. Importantly it is an opportunity to look forward as well. As a registered charity we are required by the Charity Commission and our constitution to provide this report for our members.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year**

Our u3a is one of the largest in the South West with 1,000 plus members; an active vibrant u3a with much to offer and share as typified by the variety of ways in which we celebrated 10 years.

The year started and ended with 'trees'. An anonymous and most generous donation by one of our members means that we now have an Exmouth & District u3a 100-tree copse with our own plaque in the u3a's 'Woodland' situated on the England/Wales border in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The idea of the woodland was to mark the movement's 40th anniversary and members concerns about climate change and care for the environment. The original target of 5,000 trees was surpassed very quickly so the target was revised upwards to 10,000.

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and on what turned out to be the best weather of the week a small group of our u3a members gathered on the multi-user path at Lower Halsdon Farm in Exmouth to plant 10 heritage fruit trees to mark our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These included local varieties such as 'Exeter Cross' and 'Devon Star' and will be maintained by National Trust volunteers. Something for our u3a members, future u3a members and members of the public to enjoy across the seasons with an enormous benefit to nature as well.

Our very talented, creative and skilful Quilting Group designed and made a special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary quilt on the theme of 10. The Group have made many different quilts together, raising funds for charity. Raffle tickets have been sold across the year for this special quilt with funds to be ring-fenced for 'accessibility' to support and assist our members to participate in the great variety of activities we have on offer. So don't miss the draw in Exmouth Pavilion on the morning of Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at our regular monthly meeting.

Our hard-working Social Committee have made sure that members could come together, so important after Lockdowns and restrictions in previous years. So coffee mornings and special anniversary cruises were organised. Good fortune was with us for a cruise to Ladram Bay in September as the evening light was beautiful, showing off the coastal features and sea at their very best. The weather also kept fine for a Fireworks Cruise to Topsham.

At a special entertainment on the theme of Friendship in Exmouth Pavilion on 9<sup>th</sup> June we were delighted that many members from the first Steering Committee could attend and sit back and listen to popular music, singing, Latin line dancing, a friendship audio visual and a well-designed and 'fun' quiz involving the members present. Plus we were fortunate that the three former Chairs could join me to cut a beautifully decorated cake. Our Bake and Taste Group provided very tasty cakes and altogether there was a fabulous spread.

The entertainment was held on our usual monthly meeting day; the second Thursday in the month and over the last year we have live streamed these sessions via Zoom for our members at home, on occasion with more than 30 members present. The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration was no exception except to say that one of our members joined us from Florida where she was staying on holiday. Certainly the versatility of live streaming was evident on that occasion.

Whilst we were able to offer mostly 'in person' events for our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we also thought it appropriate to offer a celebration via Zoom and so it was that members gathered in front of their screens to watch highlights of our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in the autumn. Another wonderful occasion showcasing the many talents of our members.

None of the special events would have happened without the participation of our members, busy organising, helping out with ideas and practical support for which we are most grateful. We endeavour to thank members at the time but as a committee we would like to extend our special thanks, especially to all those of you who are generous with your time, sharing your expertise and skills willingly.

## **Committee**

An important year for our committee with a strong commitment to ensure that our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was marked and celebrated generating additional work which was taken on with a commitment to make sure everything worked well for the benefit of the membership.

At this AGM two of our committee are standing down as I am too and I would like to both thank and acknowledge their conscientious work for our u3a (please see below). To the remaining committee who are standing again at this AGM I would like to extend my grateful thanks for all the varied and essential work you have been involved in, some of which has been very time-consuming. So thank you to Lyn Holmes, Steve Rixon, Olwen Smith and Alice Robson.

Also our thanks go to non-committee members; Alison Jackson who has supported the committee so well with succession planning leading up to our AGM, and to Brenda Craig who has stood in recently as a most efficient Minutes Secretary for our committee meetings.

## **Ian McLauchlin**

Ian served as our Secretary from 2019 until October 2022. Most of you will have seen the tribute to Ian in our newsletter at the time which is repeated here, especially for our members who have joined since then. *"I know that our members have appreciated his numerous communications keeping you all so well informed. Since 2019 Ian has worked tirelessly, over and above what would be expected, his time generously given. All that Ian has done has been for the benefit of our members, much of it unseen but essential in making a positive difference for Exmouth and District u3a."*

Ian continues to administer our regular Thursday Zoom sessions which includes live streaming from the monthly meetings in the Pavilion and editing recordings which he makes available on our YouTube site. In addition he continues to act as the administrator for our own popular Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/exmouthU3A>.

## **Marion Ricketts**

Marion was one of our founding members on the Steering committee and then the committee until 2018; an active member committed to the future of our u3a. She has been an excellent Web manager for our Exmouth and District u3a, completing a total of 11 years, which is certainly an achievement. Marion has always been prompt in uploading documents and images and keeping abreast of changes. Her expertise in this respect came to the fore when our website along with hundreds of other u3a websites went down in the autumn. She has supported Group Organisers to update pages and she is very keen to see our website develop with increased participation,

## **John Hunt**

John joined our committee early in 2020 as our Newsletter Editor. Produced 11 times a year John has welcomed contributions from our members and has produced an attractive, colourful, informative and most interesting newsletter. This has occupied a great deal of his time, all generously given for the benefit of our 1,000 plus members.

John has contributed in many ways as a conscientious committee member and in particular with his technological skills. These skills have been applied in numerous ways in the Connect and Learn site he set up - <https://sites.google.com/view/connectandlearn> - and also our YouTube which he set up early in 2021 - <https://www.youtube.com/@exmouthu3a>. Not all u3as have such great facilities as these.

John has been a cheerful host for our regular Thursday morning Zoom sessions, often introducing topics for discussion. Set up just after the first Lockdown in March 2020 these sessions offered our members the opportunity to stay in touch and still do, often with much laughter and great interest. All possible because John dedicated considerable time to working in a small 'Tech' team. He personally helped over 100 members, supporting them with 'Tech' advice all remotely and to their great benefit to stay connected with their u3a friends. John always arrives early for our monthly meetings to ensure that everything is set up for live streaming, again ensuring our members can remain in contact.

## **Ann Newby**

Ann joined our committee as Speakers' Coordinator in May 2022. Reporting to our committee Ann has made sure to contact speakers for our monthly meetings in good time, checking arrangements via our standard 'booking form' as well as by email. Along with other committee members she always arrives early at our monthly meetings to ensure that the speaker is greeted and their needs are met.

Ann filled the gaps in our 2023 programme and has booked speakers through to June 2024. She writes comprehensive reviews and ensures that a future programme is available in our newsletter.

## **Group Organisers**

We were delighted to provide our Group Organisers with a 'thank you' tea in 2022, all well-deserved for the commitment and work involved in running a Group/s. Such a variety of groups in our u3a with arts and crafts, exercise and sport, music, languages, science and technology and much more. Too many to mention here but that is part of our success as with Lyn Holmes as Groups Coordinator you have ensured that our membership have around one hundred Interest Groups to choose from. It is so good to know that new Interest Groups have been set up as well including a very popular 'Pickleball'. So thank you to Lyn Holmes, our Groups Coordinator, who has also taken on the role of Vice Chair. Thanks too to Nigel Day for preparing Groups lists; they are most useful.

## **Hubs**

Suggested by Ella Young, one of our members, this excellent idea has taken off and flourished. The idea being that members could meet locally, share in different activities and form friendships. As a very large u3a with a commitment to serve members across Exmouth & District this is most important especially in some parts with an infrequent public transport system. Now we have hubs in different parts of Exmouth and hubs which cover much of our 'District' which includes Aylesbeare, Budleigh Salterton, East Budleigh, Ebford, Exton, Lypstone, Topsham, Woodbury, Woodbury Salterton and Yettington.

## **Meeters and Greeters**

We returned to the Pavilion in September 2021 and since then a group of cheerful volunteers have greeted and assisted visitors and members at our monthly meetings. Thank you to Olwen Smith for liaising with and ensuring that the Meeters and Greeters are all actively involved, making a positive difference with a warm welcome and helping to answer members' questions.

## **New Members**

Many thanks to Sheila Clarkson who has ensured that our new members have been able to attend new member sessions and are kept well informed about all that our u3a has to offer. Plus the addition of a 'Link up table' in the Pavilion café at our monthly meetings for new and recent members is working very well indeed. Thank you too to Committee members who have attended 'New members' sessions.

## **Membership**

Busy throughout the year but especially at renewal time Olwen Smith as Membership Co-ordinator makes sure that she undertakes this role in an organised, timely and efficient manner. She is there at our monthly meetings at the back of the hall dealing with enquiries, welcoming new members and ensuring that renewal goes ahead.

All of this is quite different to smaller u3as with around 40 members. Olwen works hard to ensure that the membership information of our 1,000 plus members is kept up to date in a systematic manner, working too with other volunteers, supporting and advising, all most important work for our u3a.

Thanks also go to Camilla Benyon who ensures that our members without e-mail receive printed materials so that they are kept informed of all that is going on. Another most important task.

Special thanks to Melanie Parker who is stepping down as Database Manager. A role that is mostly unseen but most important and a role that Melanie has undertaken efficiently and conscientiously. Melanie has kindly offered to support a new Database Manager.

## **Accounts**

Steve Rixon, Treasurer, as one of the Officers on the committee fulfils a vital role for our committee with responsibility to report to our committee and to you. Steve is definitely committed to ensuring that we take our responsibility for our income and expenditure seriously, endeavouring as always to do all that we can to ensure that our members derive as much benefit as they can from our annual £12 membership fee - a fee we are recommending remains the same for 2024 to 2025.

Thanks too to Mark Hazell for agreeing to audit our accounts for the year ending March 2023.

## **Looking Forward and Reflecting on Time Past**

As I step down as Chair at this AGM I would like to wish our new committee and our members all the very best for the future. I joined our u3a at a fully packed Elizabeth Hall in 2012 and was delighted that an u3a was being set up as I was aware of how much an u3a could offer to those of us at a different stage of our lives; our 'Third Age'. Still in part-time employment it helped me make that transition from full-time to part-time work before finally retiring from the education world in 2016. I was definitely most grateful to that first Steering Committee with their enlightened approach, vision and commitment.

As some of you have done in 2023 I responded to a plea from Jan Harper Shea as a previous Chair from the Pavilion stage and joined the committee in May 2018 taking on the role of Speakers' Coordinator which I held until May 2022. I absolutely loved the role, always on the lookout for entertaining and interesting speakers offering something a little different. I booked speakers through to 2022 and most of 2023 determined to provide a smooth transition for a new Speakers' Coordinator.

March 2020 saw a turning point for us all as I thanked an entertaining and humorous speaker not knowing that we wouldn't return to the Pavilion until September 2021. The intervening time saw me take on the role of Chair in that momentous year whilst still acting as Speakers' Coordinator.

We responded to the Pandemic by keeping going with our committee meetings via Zoom and by offering our members weekly Zoom sessions with our members as presenters and what talent we discovered! It was wonderful to book external speakers as well from across the UK and abroad and we were entertained and informed and often amazed by some incredible presentations. We would never have afforded the travel expenses!

To conclude it has been a privilege to be your Chair especially in this anniversary year and I would like to thank you all for your friendship, support and understanding and especially to Maurice my husband who like me is committed to our u3a. Offering us all the chance to:

“Learn, laugh and get the most out of life; meet up with friends and make new ones; be part of a strong supportive community; share ideas, knowledge, experience and enthusiasms in a friendly atmosphere; develop the fun and passion we have for whatever interests us; find the inspiration for new ideas, hobbies and experiences and participate in a variety of social activities.”

**Christine Chittock, Chair**  
**11<sup>th</sup> April 2023**