

## **From the Chair.**

It gives me great pleasure to see the benefits that Westerham U3A brings to members and our success is due to the wholehearted support from you all. Last autumn we could never have foreseen how much things would change. We started the year with speakers in Westerham Hall, ranging from a gallop through the history of Carriage Driving, going round the world in a double decker bus and examining conspiracy theories; open meetings are popular and there was also the opportunity to chat over a cup of tea and cake. After lockdown we quickly transferred our meetings to Zoom to learn about English cathedrals and social distancing 17C style, these have been well attended, though sadly we have to bring our own tea and cake. Zoom has now become part of everyday vocabulary for many.

We had one visit to Hatfield by coach and there have been many group outings, for example to London or to the theatre. Christmas lunch was enjoyed by many of you with entertainment from our very own Ukulele band.

The committee has worked hard to keep as much running as possible, and 20 Keeping in touch weekly newsletters were sent out with ideas for entertainment and members' suggestions too, these were much appreciated.

Thank you to the two members who volunteered to be the speaker secretary and outings organiser, hopefully the latter will be able to resume in the not too distant future. Westerham U3A will only thrive with members' contributions. How could you help?

My thanks also go to the fully committed and hardworking committee, the groups who have organised teas at open meetings in the hall and group contacts who make the running of groups possible, and last but not least, to all members.

Thank you.

*Tina Rhoda*

## **Membership**

At 31 March 2020 we had 335 members. During the year 44 new members joined, 9 resigned and 3 of our members passed away. It has been very encouraging that, since the year end, 94% of members have renewed their membership despite the lockdown. We continue to use the Beacon management information system, with several Group Contacts now using it to manage their Interest Groups. The Third Age Trust has embarked upon a revamp of the system, referred to as Beacon 2 and this is expected to be implemented in 2021. Having now served for 3 years as Membership Secretary, it was Tony Pearson's intention to resign at the 2020 AGM. However, given the impact of the lockdown on our U3A and the introduction of Beacon 2, he feels that this would not be a good time to handover to someone else and so is willing to continue for one further year, if re-elected. This will allow time for another member to join the Committee and shadow him during the next few months. Please step forward!

## **Interest Groups**

During the year a number of Groups have closed due to lack of support or changed circumstances and it is thus sad to announce that the Allotment Groups which was one of our original groups from WU3A start-up has had to close. Nevertheless, Taster sessions have been run throughout the year which has led to a number of new Groups being formed and thus the number of Groups has continued to increase.

The Ukulele Beginners Group has grown from strength to strength and members have achieved a standard to join the Strummers who continued to give concerts to non U3A event around the district, thus the Beginners Group has served its purpose and has been closed.

An Ancestry Group and Play Reading Group were launched at the beginning of the year. A Flower Arranging Group managed to get its inaugural meeting in before lockdown. Two new groups, Asian Food Appreciation Group and a Criminology Group have been started during lockdown. With the pandemic it has not been possible for groups to meet face-to-face. To maintain contact and keep events running where possible, the members of the Westerham U3A groups have made great strides setting up at least 20 different virtual group meetings using Skype or Zoom. Whilst language studies and Play Reading can be managed through virtual sessions, Yoga and even Wine Tasting have continued.

Whilst great efforts have been made to maintain our activities during these difficult times, there is continuing demand for volunteers to act as Group Contacts not only for setting up new groups but also maintaining existing groups where the GCs have maintained the Groups since the Westerham U3A formed 6 years ago.

## **Publicity report**

### Communications with members take several forms:

An e-newsletter is sent to members towards the end of each month. This provides information about coffee mornings and Open Meetings, as well as any other events such as study days, theatre trips etc. It is also a vehicle for sharing members' news and advertising new interest groups or links with other U3As.

Emails are sent via Beacon for any special events or points of interest.

*The Westerley* is a paper based news sheet produced to consist mainly of reports on the activities of the interest groups. One was released in December 2019 and it is hoped to increase the publication of these, aiming for three a year.

Notice boards at the Open Meetings are updated regularly by the Groups Secretary to show contact details for interest groups and ideas for new groups.

Events are mentioned by the Chair or Vice-chair at Open Meetings.

Interest Group Contacts keep their own members up to date with relevant information.

Meetings with refreshments are held for Group Contacts to get together, to share ideas and to gauge response from members.

The committee meets once a month and communicates regularly and frequently with each other via email.

*Note: Those members without email, receive items 1 and 2 above via post.*

### Publicity for both members and non-members currently takes three forms:

Facebook is a relatively new venture and currently shows information about coffee mornings and Open Meetings. The hope for this platform is to attract new members in the future.

TN16 and CR6 magazines carry similar information for us when room permits, as does the website 'Visit Westerham'.

Flyers and posters are placed in prominent locations around the area.