

Westerham u3a Trustees' Report for Year to 31 March 2025

Chair

Another successful year! Our membership reached 400, more Interest Groups were started, several Outings, our first Group Holiday and a stimulating programme at Open Meetings.

For several years we have had an excellent programme of speakers at our monthly Open Meetings and this continued in 2024/25. Thanks are due to Irene Hart, who arranged the programme and who has now decided to step down. We are delighted that Colin Hill has offered to return as Speaker Secretary. There has been an increase in attendance at our Open Meetings, we are now regularly getting 100 -120 members attending. Our Open Meetings wouldn't be the same if there were no tea and cakes, so many thanks to all those volunteers from the nominated Interest Groups who have fed and watered us so cheerfully.

Coffee Mornings, held on the first Wednesday of each month, have grown in popularity, providing newcomers with an opportunity to learn about u3a. Special meetings for recent members introduced them to the u3a movement and Westerham u3a's activities.

Our monthly Newsletter continues to be lively and informative, thanks to Jan Chart, please do provide her with news and events relating to our many Interest Groups. Our website (www.westerhamu3a.org) is managed by Nigel Meachem and now includes a Calendar of monthly activities. Do have a look, it has plenty of information about our events (past and future) and our Interest Groups. We have also become more active in promoting Westerham u3a to the local communities, thanks to Wynne Gifford, who, in her role of Publicity Officer, sends out articles to several of the local magazines. We also promote u3a on Facebook, just search on Facebook for Westerham u3a and please do follow us!

We had enjoyable and well supported outings to Brighton (organised by Penny Brook), Basildon Park in Berkshire (organised by Val Cahill) and Eagle Heights near Eynsford. We also had a 4 night holiday to South Wales organised by Gary Robinson with a busy schedule of guided visits to several local properties and museums. Thank you to all the organisers.

In September 2024 our application to the National Lottery Community Fund was successful and we were awarded £2,800. This is being used to support those of our activities that are struggling to be self supporting and to encourage more seniors in the local communities to maintain or improve their fitness. The Grant is for 2 years although we expect the funds will have been fully utilised by the end of 2025.

As a self-help organisation, nothing happens without members making it happen The Committee has worked hard on your behalf, with good humour and a sense of fun.

As you will note from Stuart's report on our Interest Groups, we have been busy in establishing new ones. Group Contacts have developed and encouraged the multitude of activities undertaken during the year. Thank you to all who contribute to the smooth running of our u3a.

After 7 years on the Committee including the past 3 years as Chair, I will be stepping down at the AGM. Colin Hill is also retiring as Secretary, thank you Colin for your diligence in fulfilling this role for several years and to all the other Committee members for their support and hard work.

If u3a is to continue to progress we need you, our members, to come forward and take on Committee roles and to provide your skills and experience so that Westerham u3a remains a vibrant, self-help organisation that embodies the u3a motto: Learn, Laugh, and Live. **Tony Pearson, Chair**

Membership

From 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, we welcomed many new members and at year end we had 417 in total. By its very nature, membership is in constant flux. Those who leave us and those who join us. I hope this coming year will see Westerham u3a continue to grow.

Throughout the past year, there have been several updates to our Beacon Database. I would therefore ask all of you to visit our website, click on, 'Join us', scroll down the page to find and read our current Data Protection Policy. Wishing you all a wonderful year ahead as I encourage you to embrace the u3a ethos of Learn, Laugh and Live.

Hilary Moore, Membership Secretary.

Interest Groups

The year has seen some great strides in activity, study and interest groups. With many groups having been operating for over 12 years, a need was seen for refreshment. We have been most fortunate to receive a lottery grant and this has allowed us to provide support to important groups that struggle to be self-sufficient financially.

Line Dancing which has provided great activity both socially and affording good exercise has struggled for membership and opportunities have been offered to both Edenbridge and Knole U3As with limited successful outcome, although there is still room for new members..

Modern technology has proved to be a challenge to many of our members and being able to cope in a high tech world is seen as a high priority issue. As a result we have been able to set up at no charge due entirely to the lottery grant, teach-in sessions in the use of phones, tablets and computers. There has been significant take up by the membership and is proving very worthwhile and certainly encouraged members to step up to the challenge, seeing other members facing similar challenges.

On the more social side a Canasta group has taken off amazingly well where Friendly Bridge failed to attract support. Latterly, the 2 Tai Chi Groups, the Sketching Not Painting and Singing Together groups have all instantly take off to nearly full capacity on their opening sessions.

So looking back attempts at refreshing opportunities for members throughout the year have made great strides. **Stuart Barnes, Interest Groups Coordinator**