

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

Chair's Report – Year ended 31st December 2022

Some nervousness understandably continued as the Covid pandemic came to an end, and though most study groups met again in person, some decided to continue to use Zoom during 2022. A few groups closed during the year, but new groups formed and others that had previously ceased were revived. Study groups are the backbone of Ludlow u3a and we currently have 57 groups, with more in the pipeline. My thanks go to the excellent work of our coordinators, and to the Study Group Adviser.

Members attending the monthly Monday meetings were quite low at the start of 2022 but increased as the year progressed, with several visitors coming along to get a 'taster' of Ludlow u3a. My thanks to the members of u3a and particularly to Gillian Sharpe, who welcome new members at the monthly meetings and try to ensure that everyone has the chance to talk to others over a hot drink. We have had some excellent speakers at the meetings thanks to the efforts of our Speaker Secretary. Subjects have ranged from 'The Gardens and Houses of E L Lutyens' to the story of 'Jumping' Joe Byerle, the only World War II US serviceman to fight with both the American and Soviet Armies. Who would have guessed that the story of a busker at a monthly meeting would be so moving and entertaining? It's not every Monday that we walk from Oscars to the Auditorium accompanied by a piper.

A new committee was elected at the March 2022 AGM. Robert Hodge came to the end of his 3-year term as Chair and I was elected to succeed him. Six other members of the existing committee stood for re-election. Unfortunately, one of the elected committee members had to resign soon after the AGM, which resulted in us being a committee of only 6 members. We were able to co-opt two members onto the committee and I am extremely grateful to Derek Ball and Sue Curthoys for their work during the year. Being Chair has been a steep learning curve for me, but with a strong committee and an excellent Secretary and Treasurer in place, my task has been made much easier.

After the AGM we were without an editor for our usual monthly newsletters. It was decided to send newsletters to all members just 3 times a year, in January, April and September. In addition, a monthly update of study group news is produced by the Study Group Adviser.

In 2022, we arranged get-togethers for new members to give them the opportunity to meet each other and the members of the committee. It has given me great pleasure having the opportunity to meet so many new members and to be able to put faces to names. Nearly 100 people joined us during the year, bringing our total membership to 553 at 31st December 2022. We already have 514 members as I write this report, so 2023 could bring our numbers back to pre-pandemic levels nearing 600 members.

With a 'cost of living crisis' started during 2022 and predicted to worsen in 2023, the committee decided to maintain the present annual subscription of £12 for another year. In addition, the membership fee of new members joining late in the year, will now cover the whole of the next year as well, and members of other u3as can apply for a rebate of their Third Age Trust subscription. These financial decisions will involve careful budgeting by the committee through the year.

I look forward to a successful, if somewhat challenging, year ahead and hope that you will enjoy your study groups and monthly meetings.

Janice Haines,

Chair, u3a in Ludlow