

## U3A THAMES VALLEY NETWORK

### Representatives' meeting held at Benson Parish Hall on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2016

Susie warmly welcomed all to the meeting and said she hoped to live up to the high standard set by her predecessor.

**Present: Committee** –Susie Berry Chairman (Ridgeway), Avis Furness Vice Chairman (Reading), Agnes Budagowska Treasurer (Swindon), Anne Marie Lord Secretary (Chinnor & District), Len Smith website support (Wokingham), Derek Randall (Thame & District) .

**Third Age Trust** Hilvary Robinson (SE Region Trustee)

**Representatives.** Geoff Young and Greg Sneddon (Aylesbury Vale), Ian and Josephine Wright (Carterton), Geoff Glover and Valerie Darbyshire (Chalfonts), Eric Magson and Derek Gardner (Chess Valley), Peter Metcalf (Chiltern), Anne Hales and Shirley Rouse (Didcot), Ann Walsh (Goring Gap), Sandra Matthews and Carole Campo (Greater Thame), Elaine Parkes and Gerry Michell (Haddenham), Sheila Allcock and Carol Morgan (Headington), Bill Teasdale, Jean Myhill, Nigel Roper and Janet Rose (Maidenhead), Brian Humphrey (Marlow), Brian Baldwin (Milton Keynes), John Taylor (Newbury), Margaret Lipscomb (Oxford), Jane Sellwood (Reading), Pat Fewell (Ridgeway), Colin O'Rourke (South Bucks), Glenys Bettley (Swindon), Peggy Miles (Thame and District), Neil Kelly (Thameside), Jill Procter and Margaret Edmundson (Wallingford), George Goldsmith and Joan Ford (Wantage and Grove), Margaret Sherrington and Beverley Birmingham (West Oxford), Pam Hares (Wokingham), Pam Rook (Woodstock),

**1 Apologies: Committee** Gillian Le Du (Henley), Patsy Thornton (Wokingham)

**Representatives from** Abingdon, Banbury, Chinnor & District, Faringdon, Thatcham, Tring, Wendover U3As and Liz Woolven (Wantage and Grove).

**2 Minutes of the last meeting (29/04/2016).** These were agreed as a correct record.

**3.0 Matters arising.** None that would not be dealt with on the agenda for this meeting.

#### 4.0 Chairman's report.

Susie reported that she had contacted the Third Age Trust as no voting papers for Conference had been received. The reason for this is that all who are standing for election are unopposed and no Resolutions have been put forward. She also gave notice of a celebration at the Friends Meeting House, Euston Road in London for 1000 U3As. This will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November with Baroness de Souza (Speaker of the House of Lords) as guest speaker. It may also be the last occasion on which the founder Eric Midwinter will be a speaker. The cost will be £5 and details will come from National Office shortly.

#### 5.0 Treasurer's report

The Chairman asked delegates to remember that we are never in a position to draw a line under the accounts as money comes in with applications for events long before the bills are presented, so we always appear to be better off than we actually are.

Agnes had circulated copies of the TVN Financial statement for the six months to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016. In future a half-year financial statement will be presented at the July Reps' meeting with a full statement at the AGM and Interim updates at the January and October meetings. The total balance to date £8263.44 .

The question of affiliation fees was raised and Agnes explained that these had been requested last year but with several Events adding a surplus to the accounts no such fees are necessary at present. Normally affiliation fees are 10p per U3A member.

Agnes thanked Derek Randall who had helped produce the statement presented at this meeting.

#### 6.0 SE Region Trustee's Report 28/07/2016

**6.1** The Third Age Trust is reviewing its current structure with a view to re-organising and restructuring, please let Pam Jones have your ideas/comments ([pam.jones@u3a.org.uk](mailto:pam.jones@u3a.org.uk) ). This will also be discussed at the AGM and could lead to a motion for the AGM 2017.

**6.2** Hilvary also reminded the meeting that she will be serving her third and final year as Trustee 2016- August 2017 and is looking for a successor. Do let her know if you are interested.

**6.3** She also mentioned the 1000 U3As celebration saying that currently there are 997 U3As with 366,293 members of which 77,000+ are in the SE Region.

**6.4** "Action on Hearing Loss" is a charity that can give advice to U3As and has grants available for sound systems. The NEC has a committee which is working on recommendations .

**6.5** The chairman of every U3A has been sent a "Committee Reference File" with papers covering the many questions that are asked about U3A and Committees including Trusteeship. Chairmen will be advised about new documents and up-dates and it will be up to each Chairman to keep the file up-to-date.

All documents will be available to view/download on the National website.

**6.6** Hilvary asked all reps to check their U3A website to ensure that it does not say “over 50” or that the U3A provides a service, for example. U3A is self help, self funded, mainly educational and not limited to those over 50. The Committee are all responsible for the content of their U3A website and newsletter.

**6.7** Samantha Mauger will take over as Senior Executive officer of the Third Age Trust at the end of The National Conference at Nottingham 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> August .

**6.8** Hilvary encouraged U3As to send someone from each U3A to Conference as they return with enthusiasm, which benefits their U3A. She had leaflets giving more information.

**6.9** Woking U3A is running the National Workshop “Participative Learning” on 24<sup>th</sup> October. It is free as it is a National Workshop, details on the SE Region website. This workshop is for group co-ordinators, group leaders and people thinking of starting a new group.

National Workshops are available for U3A clusters/networks on request but 30 delegates need to be guaranteed. Contact Third Age Trust if interested. Other workshops are “Managing your U3A” and “Planning ahead for more time to learn, laugh and live”

**6.10** Ian Nash, the Third Age Trust Journalist has produced a paper on “Writing letters to the Editor.”

**6.11** If your U3A is still sending bulk mail through the post the U3A on the Isle of Wight negotiated a special deal with the Post Office of 33p instead of 55p for second class mail, this was dependant on the cost of mailing being £1000 per year.

**6.12** “Handy hints for new Chairmen” is work in progress at present but it is hoped that it will be ready in postcard format for Conference.

Finally Hilvary reminded us that we are the heart of the organisation and thanked everyone for all that we do.

A question was asked as to who receives mailings from National office. Normally a U3A nominates a person to receive mailings, it would be that person’s responsibility to disseminate the information. The mailings are direct from National Office to each U3A and not via Networks such as TVN.

## **7.0 Network Activities**

### **7.1a Events Team Report 2016**

Jane Sellwood gave the report on behalf of Patsy Thornton.

Margaret Sherrington reported that the **Staying Connected** – Living with Hearing Loss event had now been taken up and run by several U3As countrywide.

**Kelmscott** was very well attended in April, a second day will take place on 4<sup>th</sup> August.

The **Civil War day** in May was oversubscribed and went very well. It was noted that the “question time” with a panel of the speakers was worthwhile and is recommended for other Events.

The **Wildlife study day** in June arranged by Jon Cole (Wokingham U3A) was very enjoyable but delegate numbers were disappointing.

**History of Railways** in June at Swindon Steam Museum organised by Glenys Bettley (Swindon U3A) was very successful with around 140 applications. Staff at the museum were particularly helpful and supportive.

59 delegates from 26 U3As attended the **Learning Languages in Later Life** event in July. Facilitators for this event came from National Subject Advisors and Summer School tutors and Susie reported that a “question time “ panel also worked well at this event.

### **7.1b Further Events 2016**

**24<sup>th</sup> September Children’s Literature** at Oxford University Press. Arranged by Fay Sinai.(Abingdon U3A). Places are still available. It was pointed out that no address has been given on the flyer/booking form.

**5<sup>th</sup>October Wine tasting day** at Benson Parish Hall , maximum number 80, places still available. Margaret Sherrington asked for 3 more helpers to pour the wine.

**21<sup>st</sup> October Network Workshop on running groups** at Benson Parish Hall.

**23<sup>rd</sup> November jointly organised Inter-generational study day “ Robotics is the Future?”** at Oxford Brookes University. Initially 3 applications per TVN-affiliated U3A will be accepted. After 5<sup>th</sup> August further places will be allocated on first come/first served basis. Recommended transport is to use the Thornhill P&R (NB not Redbridge as recommended on the original flyer.

**The next Events Team meeting will be on 26<sup>th</sup> October at Watlington Sports Pavillion.** Current organisers will be there, if you have any ideas for events/study days please let Patsy know, you will be very welcome to go along!

**Guidelines for events organisers** are on the TVN website. You will not be left to ‘go it alone’ unless you wish to do so.

## **7.2 Outline plans for 2017**

Many ideas have come from the questionnaire that Patsy circulated earlier in the year.

The following are planned: Kelmscott, Photography study day, Craft day, Crime and punishment in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Pre-history in the Thames Valley.

Other ideas include Family history, Modern communications, How earth and life developed, Empire- industry and nation. It was pointed out that there was a lack of musical subjects in the pipeline and that the opera days had been popular.

**7.3 Citizens 800 Project- a shared learning project with Royal Holloway College.** Colin O'Rourke (South Bucks) gave a brief overview of this Shared Learning Project. The research involves finding local heroes who have worked to improve human rights in our communities. Researchers will have the support of local museums and archives and will present their findings to Royal Holloway who will collate the research so that it can be shared and used by schools etc. To date 11 TVN U3As are represented by 20 members who wish to be involved.

There will be a briefing meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September with Dr Matthew Smith at the White Hart in Nettlebed, 10.30am for 11am start.

A second meeting will be held at Royal Holloway on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 10.30am for 11am start.

Currently museums who will be willing to co-operate with the research are being identified.

Patsy is also looking for more people to become involved. See flyer on South Bucks, TVN and SE Region websites.

## **8.0 Network Information**

**8.1 Speaker's Database** Avis thanked everyone who has given her information, an up-dated version will be sent with these Minutes.

Avis also collates a list of the Interest Groups in each of our TVN U3As. She has recently up-dated it to include Groups from Milton Keynes U3A, this will be available on the website shortly. As it is a large document Avis does not recommend downloading/printing.

Avis also shared with the meeting news of the "Big Sing" that took place at on 24<sup>th</sup> July at Bracknell with several music groups taking part, this was a very successful event.

Maidenhead U3A asked if anyone knew of a speaker on "mudlarking on the Thames".

**8.2 TVN Contacts List** This is maintained by the Chairman. Fewer than 50% on the current list had responded to Susie's e-mail re this meeting. Susie sent a list round so that Reps could up-date and amend it. She reminded reps that anyone nominated as a rep needs to circulate TVN information to their membership.

**8.3 Events Contact List** This is maintained by Mike Price and covers all delegates who have attended Events (1100 names). He e-mails these with details of Events direct. The problem he had with sending bulk e-mails is now sorted. Please let him know if you wish to come off the list.

**8.4 Website** Len said that the number of hits varies with an increase being particularly noticeable when special events are taking place. 242 hits to date in July. Reps were asked to make use of the site especially as a lot of work goes in to keeping it up-to-date and informative. [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk)

**9 The Beacon System** Nigel Roper (Maidenhead U3A) gave a short presentation on this records management system. The process of keeping records of members can be very time consuming and having considered a number of options to make it less so Maidenhead chose the Beacon System.

The initial integration into the system may take a while and U3As were advised to ensure that when migrating to Beacon all data is up-to-date and entered into the correct columns (ie it is clean), lapsed members should also be included.

Set-up is via a log-on ID.

Records can be versatile as a record can be kept of members for each interest group, it can be used to generate a calendar and to send out information regarding activities to target groups. Member's details can be used for example to generate badges. Group records can be maintained. It can be used to send individual e-mails rather than group or blind copy mailings and maintains an e-mail log. It can also be used to record any payments. There are other features not used at present by Maidenhead.

Resources include an on-line forum <https://forum.u3abeacon.org.uk/>

and a user guide <https://www.u3abeacon.org.uk/userguide.pdf>

There is also a South East Regional Support Team led by Sally Ingledeew Beaconserst (Google group)

Data is held on a professional hosting central server and is encrypted with an encryption key unique to each U3A.

Concerns were raised over who has access to this data. Third Age Trust advise limiting this. At Maidenhead Group Convenors provide data but only one person keys this in and a Convenor can only access his/her own group.

Questions were raised regarding recovery if the system fails and how long it takes to make any changes.

Hilvary commented that the Third Age Trust had identified the Beacon System as a risk in that it relied on one person (John Franklin) as the programmer of the system which could be jeopardised should anything happen to him. The Third Age Trust does not run the system. At present 50p per person is charged at the Third Age Trust for those using the System, the intention being to build up a fund that would enable the Third Age Trust to take over the running of

the system should anything untoward happen to John Franklin. It is too dependant on John Franklin which is why the Third Age Trust is very cautious.

### **10 U3A Memory course**

Janet Rose spoke enthusiastically about running the Memory Course that had been devised at Ormskirk U3A. She explained that the course tells people what is going on in their brain and shares ideas on how to overcome any problems. Each participant has a personal record.

The course has 4 meetings each having a 45 minute session followed by a break and a further 45 minute session. Maidenhead hold a pre-meeting session to introduce the course and familiarise people with the course venue as each meeting has a strict schedule. The Course is limited to 10 people. Three people are needed to run the course, one as administrator and 2 as facilitators.

Preparation is key : identify who is running the course (allocate tasks), where and when. Meetings need to be on 4 consecutive weeks.

Planning includes advertising, obtaining the materials, contacting people who have expressed an interest and arranging a pre-course meeting.

Finance needs to be agreed.

Everything needed to run the course is in the handbook. Concern was raised over the prescriptiveness of who should run the course as many understood that it was to be run by professionals in the field of medicine. Maidenhead have not used professionals as the course is very detailed and explanatory.

The course is standard but new research can be discussed; it is advisable to check on the Alzheimers website as information given in the media can be misleading.

### **11 AOB**

i) with reference to “mudlarking” Reps were advised that a licence needs to be obtained for this activity.

ii) Didcot have a creative writing group that has requested funding for self-publishing. The comment was made that a U3A does not fund its groups, they should be self-funding.

Susie closed the meeting with thanks to all Reps.

**Date of next meeting** Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at Benson Parish Hall. 10am for 10.30am followed by lunch if pre-booked.

date .....

Chairman .....

29/07/16