

A MESSAGE FROM CAROLE

This AGM is my final duty as Chairman and at the outset I have to say that it has been a privilege and a pleasure to serve as your Chair.

We are part of a national organisation with over 425,000 members in 1033 U3A's and this of course, is forever increasing. Indeed a new U3A is opening today in Sheppey and Meopham's own Fran Dunk is there helping with their inaugural meeting. The U3A is a fantastic organisation that offers something unique and very special to us "third agers" and enhances and enriches our retirement. Retirement used to mean just that ...to withdraw from the world....well not if you become an active member of a U3A it doesn't!

On reflection, today seems a good time to look back at the work of the original steering committee under the chairmanship of Francis Hart. It was they who had the vision, drive and commitment to start Meopham U3A in 2015 and then put in the time and effort to get it established. I feel we owe them our gratitude and our thanks because what they started has truly made a difference to so many members' lives. I trust they are very proud of their contribution to our organisation.

It is quite remarkable what has been achieved in those four short years since that inaugural meeting. Our membership has grown from 125 to 400 and the number of groups on offer from 20 to 50. We are seen as a friendly and vibrant U3A, offering our members a wide range of activities including our sell out outings. Personal highlights for me include the Bumble bee talk that led to the creation of our Bee Watch group, the spine tingling last post at the WW1 monthly meeting, the outing to Constable Country, the cream tea and the German group's contribution to our Christmas meeting...indeed all our Show and Tells. Your stand out moments are probably different but we must be doing something right as over 100 of you have already renewed for next year ...

I would now like to take the opportunity to thank each and every member of the committee, both past and present, for their commitment, enthusiasm and dedication. To say that we wouldn't be here today without you is an understatement.... My sincere thanks and gratitude to you all. As you all know I am stepping down as my term of office has come to an end and other retirements today are David Burkett who is also standing down since his term of office as Vice Chair and outings supremo is complete, Moira Green who is stepping down as Membership Secretary and one woman publicity machine, Linda Doyle who is relinquishing her role as Monthly meeting co-ordinator and Chris Hague Smith who is passing on the mantle of web master. Thank you for everything you have done from us all.

On behalf of your committee I would also like to thank all of you who give up your time to keep Meopham U3A going, most especially our wonderful Group Contacts but also those who help with refreshments, hang banners , act as buddies, operate the sound system, organise trips, collect money, run the coffee mornings and quizzes etc etc . Your contributions to the running of our U3A are vital to its success. Thank you all.

I have said this before but it is worth repeating. If there is anything that you would like to do, an activity you would like to enjoy, a skill you would like to master then speak out, let your committee know. Meopham U3A is your organisation. It is run by you..... for your benefit and your enjoyment. The Committee are simply your representatives and while it is their role to help and guide the running of our U3A the ideas and suggestions are best coming from you. It is you, our members, who will ensure the continued success, vitality and growth of Meopham U3A. I am a firm believer that the more you put into an organisation like the U3A the more you will reap the benefits; therefore I would encourage you to go on taking full advantage of all the activities and opportunities which are on offer to you.

At this point it is traditional to allude to the new Chairman and the new committee and talk of “passing you onto a safe pair of hands” or Wishing them all the luck in the world” but to me that sounds like a load of patronising clap trap. Let’s not forget that we are very fortunate to have members who are willing to volunteer to form a committee...they shouldn’t be a safe pair of hands ...when needed they should shake us up a bit and they don’t need luck ...they need our support and backing....so please offer it to them during 2019-20 and beyond.

I was very touched by your gift of the beautiful flowers and the kind messages. Thank you all for three great years.

Carole 9.7.19