

Chair's AGM Report 2025-2026

The report this year is again a summary of the Annual Reports given by members of the Committee. These will be published on the website shortly after the AGM. The Treasurer's and Group Coordinator's reports, together with my report, are included in this posting of AGM notices and will also be presented at the AGM. I hope you will be able to find time to read the reports and reflect on our endeavours over the past year. As always our intentions are to keep you, our members, informed of events, past and future, be as efficient and supportive as we can be, and ensure we all learn, live and laugh together.

The number and range of interest groups, outings and socials is the mainstay of this u3a and the reason for our involvement. It looks like 95% of the membership take an active part in one or more interest groups, with some involved in several. The number of groups continues to grow. The popular ones have offshoots whilst a couple have run their course and ceased or been put on hold for a while. The programme is reviewed and adjusted with regularity. This year evening engagements have made an appearance in the calendar. Quiz evenings, cinema trips and outdoor concert performances are gaining in popularity. For the coming year the 'stand alone' event programme is eagerly anticipated. The wide ranging proposals from members will enlighten, entertain and engage our curiosity. Ideas suggested include a behind the scenes experience at the Bombay Sapphire Distillery, a day at the races, an afternoon of bingo and an evening following the Sarah Siddons Street performers. Thank you to Geoff Warden for getting this venture off the ground and for keeping the interest group programme up and running.

David Morris continues to find inspiring visits for the popular 'Day Trip Dave's' coach outings. Hever Castle, Abbotsbury Swannery, and Savill Garden and Thames boat trip have all been very well supported. The September trip to the rich and lavish Waddesdon Manor may be relived again in the cinema. During our visit, a block buster movie was being filmed in this Rothschild mansion. Alas the security guards were not allowed to divulge the story or title.

Richard Whiting has continued to take on the responsibility for all matters dining, be it a pub lunch or the particularly well received Christmas Lunch at the Botley Masonic Centre. The Tuesday lunch group has functioned fairly well this year but is one of the interest areas due for review in the New Year. A Murder Mystery Evening is also being considered for early 2027.

My thanks to David, Richard and Geoff for keeping us all involved and entertained, and most importantly, thank you to the facilitators who continue to

do a grand job organising their groups, and also, to those of you who take on organising an event in those groups which share out arrangements.

On matters financial, Tony Luetchford is everything one could wish a Treasurer to be – meticulous with figures and the projection for future spending. Due to his expertise, BHED is easily meeting operating expenditure and is able to support current core activities through to March 2027. The next spending review, due in December, will set the subscription for 2027-2028. The Charity Commission requires an inspection of our finances, independent of the Committee, and I thank Keith Watkins for undertaking this task.

Our membership, looked after so efficiently by Lin Jeans, continues to grow steadily and currently stands at 190. The membership e-mail, sent regularly by Lin reminds us all of events and deadlines which can so easily be forgotten.

Word of mouth has been most effective in attracting new members. Thank you all for spreading the word and sharing your experiences and enthusiasms. Of the members who choose not to renew, moving away from the area and declining health seem to be the main reasons. Non-renewing members are of course welcome to rejoin at any time. There are more members now than at this time last year, and the challenge to be faced is the management of this growth without losing that personal contact gained through our shared interests and conversations.

The Newsletters, published quarterly, have been informative and reflected on events and achievements throughout this year. Carol Hussey has worked tirelessly to edit and produce these. I thank her and all those who made contributions to the issues published so far.

Through our own website, Facebook, and Hedge End and Botley Council Community sites, as well as proven traditional means, the many public noticeboards, posters, leaflets and articles in Parish magazines, Carol, together with Warner Baker, (Webmaster), has kept up our presence in the local area. News of our Knit and Natter group travelled further afield. The u3a Friends Magazine, in its May issue, featured an article on the blankets and soft toys made by this group, being used by displaced people in Ukraine. The blankets were spotted by an eagle eyed member in a television news bulletin.

The speaker programme endeavours to cater for a broad range of interest. Local history has been well represented with presentations on Netley Hospital and the Brickworks at Bursledon. Alternative interpretations on aspects of classical history have given food for thought, whilst talks on wild life

photography and gardening, by returning speakers David Bailey and Gillian Taylor, have reminded us how much our surroundings have to offer.

Finding speakers is no easy task. Recommendations and proposals are followed up and researched before speakers are invited to give their presentations. Sharon Whiting has been the Speaker Secretary for the last 3 years. I am sorry to say that Sharon has decided to step down. She has been assiduous, tireless and incredibly efficient in her role and has ensured that speakers are booked well into the next year, usually at least 12 months ahead. Sharon, thank you.

As you will see on the attached agenda, there are two proposals on which members are required to vote. First, the Committee wish to propose Richard Smith, currently co-opted, to become a full member of the Committee, though as yet his role is to be defined. The second proposal, supported and seconded by members, is for Monique Turner to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Sharon Whiting. I hope you will give your support at the AGM to both Richard and Monique.

The AGM and Committee meetings have to be conducted in accordance with Charity Commission and Third Age Trust regulations. The preparation and record keeping for these has to be meticulous. Anne Warden is the scrupulous secretary, who works quietly behind the scenes to make this happen. I work closely with Anne and my thanks to her are considerable. Her common sense approach to procedure is invaluable, as is her patience when my contributions arrive late.

As I have said before, I feel both lucky and honoured to be the Chair of this u3a Committee. Each member, talented in different ways, gives in spade loads, a great deal towards making this an enjoyable, friendly and fun organisation. Their advice, guidance, recommendations and sometimes caution is invaluable. There are others, too, who make this u3a buzz, the facilitators already mentioned, the friendliness of you the members, and importantly, those who are at each Members' Meeting, making tea, washing up, putting out the chairs and meeting and greeting guests and members. Thank you.

My best wishes to you all,

Sue Derrick
Chair
Botley, Hedge End & District u3a

