

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT for the Year 2004-2005

Another interesting and productive year! Where does the time go? I do hope you have all had as much fun, friendship and learning from Watford U3A as I have.

A source of great satisfaction to me this year is the increasingly extensive use of our high tech equipment, the digital projector and the laptop computer, more than justifying the not inconsiderable financial outlay. Presentations have been given to the Science, History, Money Matters and Art Appreciation groups, the Study Group Leaders Meeting and at our main monthly meetings and a number of our members have used it to repeat their presentations to our neighbouring U3As.

A training programme was organised last May and June, run by Colin Richards and attended by a number of our members and many of our Study Group Leaders. Four participants, John Carleton, John Morgan, Bernard Steele and Robin Hurley are now the trainers. Thanks are due to all who took part in this programme making it such a success.

We have come to the end of an era with the retirement as Newsletter Production Manager of John Morgan. He has worked valiantly month by month for the past eight years since the formation of our U3A, continually learning 'new tricks' to improve the production methods and we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude.

Another innovation is the distribution of the Newsletter by e-mail for those able to receive this. It will save on our printing costs and ensure that members unable to attend a monthly meeting will not miss their newsletter. The quality is superb, considerably better than a photocopy. To maintain this quality our 'copy' is now sent to the printer by e-mail as a PDF file. Thus it is fed electronically into their print machine. The wonders of technology!

Another major achievement this year was to clear the membership waiting list by welcoming forty new members. This has taken our membership to 420 including the 4 honorary members but I am so pleased that all those who have waited so long have now been offered membership. At the moment we have not started a new waiting list despite numerous enquiries but the 'Way Forward for WU3A' is of great concern to the committee and I have therefore convened a sub committee to consider the various options available.

We now have 42 study groups and new ones are continually being formed. The latest of these are The London Theatre Group, The Bowls Group and the 2 Milers Walking Group. The Art Appreciation Group is so successful that a new venue at Hollytree House has had to be found.

Christmas saw a change of venue for our lunch and to many it was a great thrill to gaze out at the hallowed turf of Vicarage Road.

Four committee members retire this year so many thanks are due. To Eddie Francis who has manfully wrestled with the intricacies of his Computer in the management of our Membership list; to Terry Waterfall also retires from the committee this year after valiantly representing us at National Conference and the Hertfordshire Regional Meetings as one of our Regional Representatives and to the splendid team of Aline and Robin Burgess. Aline has conscientiously produced the committee minutes for the last three years and Robin has served his time as our Secretary. With his dry wit, broad smile and calm demeanour Robin has kept us straight on matters diverse and complicated and has wielded a mean 'shredder' when sorting through all the bumph we are sent. Guys you will all be greatly missed.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee, the almoners, our floor manager John Grainger and Technical Guru Robin Hurley for their support and for the work they do to ensure the smooth running of WU3A.

I wish you all a very happy and fulfilling year with Watford U3A.

Margaret Thompson Chairman April 2005