

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT for the Year 2005-2006

It is with a tinge of sadness that I sit down to write my final annual report as your Chairman. How time flies when you are having fun and I have had a lot of fun over the past three years. Sometimes it has been hectic and sometimes I have had to field the brickbats and grumbles and make difficult judgements but I have tried to run a 'tight ship', adhering to our Constitution and 'The Regulations'. If I have upset anybody I am sorry as this was never my intention. One of the nicest things a young person once said to me, when I was teaching, was 'I like you miss you're fair'. I hope I have always managed to be fair and unbiased in my decisions.

We have had another splendid year, seeing the complete removal of the ubiquitous waiting list, through the introduction of Associate Membership. Thus the enthusiastic 'wannabes' are waiting for full membership 'within the gates'. This initiative has enabled many new people to participate in our Study Groups bringing in fresh thoughts and ideas without increasing the attendance at the monthly meetings. One of my pleasant final tasks will be to host a gathering for Associate Members at Hollytree House on April 27th from 2.00pm-4.00pm. Associate Members will have the chance to meet members of the Committee, some Study Group Leaders and each other. We continue to monitor, 'total non attendance over a four month period', to ensure that full advantage is taken of our U3A and that Associate Members do not have to wait too long for their full membership.

We have seen the development of new Study Groups, expanding the opportunities for walking, for creative activity in the Greeting Cards Group, visiting the London Theatres, learning German and clicking our knitting needles with the Whit-Knits.

The laptop computer and digital projector are increasingly used as SGLs hone their PowerPoint presentation skills. This has been helped by the continued successful collaboration between WU3A and The Watford Grammar School for Boys in the provision of the computer courses in the school's IT suite.

I have been concerned about the annual scramble to find new committee members and so have introduced 'Succession Planning' this year. This hopefully will encourage members to put their names forward for future years to ensure smooth continuity.

This year will see the planning and implementation of the WU3A website thanks to Alan Betts and his team. This will facilitate better communication between SGLs and their members and with other study groups and other U3As. We will also be able to include the Newsletter each month so that anyone wishing to download it can do so. What better way of spreading the 'word' about U3A.

I shall miss chairing 'The Watford Area U3A Management Forum' which will now rotate with the other U3As. This is another innovation introduced on my watch. Representatives from the committees of Watford, Rickmansworth, Bushey, Harrow, SWHerts and St Albans meet to discuss issues which concern us all, proving invaluable, learning from each other and interpreting Third Age Trust guidance.

I would like to thank the present committee for their wonderful support over the last three years and all their behind the scenes hard work on your behalf. In particular my thanks go the retiring members: Peter Andrews retires as stalwart Vice Chairman and documents officer; Arthur Driscoll leaves the role of Study Group Coordinator in the very good hands of Dennis Fitton, after a magnificent three year stint and Peter Birkett and Johanna Woodmansterne have represented us at Regional and National conferences as Regional Representatives. Peter has also diligently written the Committee Notes for the Newsletter over the last three years and Johanna has managed our publicity, preparing the introductory information packages for new members. Elizabeth Tohill who has provided us with such excellent speakers for the past three years will also hand over the reins. Our new Speaker Secretary will be David Helliwell. We are a great team.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who work quietly to ensure the smooth running of our organisation, the Almoners who respond to distress among our membership, as well as manning the 'front desk', in particular Joyce Hoffbrand and Barbara Harriman who retire this year; our floor manager John Grainger and our Technical Guru Robin Hurley.

I hope we all continue to have a happy and rewarding experience, learning new skills and making new friends with WU3A.