



Dates for your Diary

3rd December - Christmas Lunch

2022

7th January - Members Coffee Morning

18th March - Inter U3A Quiz

Monthly Meetings 2022

**19th January ... The Story of the British
Forces Broadcasting Service
Speaker - Alan Grace**

**16th February ..Al Bowlly, Britain's First Pop
Star.
Speaker - Jerry Ward**

**16th March The Flying Girls.
Speaker - Anita Mays**

Visits 2022

30th March ... 3 Night Stay in Lincoln

April / May ... Bowood House

Tbc British Aerospace Bristol

Computer Group

PC and Tablet Workshop

The repeat session of the 2021 November / December Workshop scheduled to start on 10th January 2022 to date does not have any enrolled members.

The type of topics covered include :

Windows, Apple & Android Operating Systems, WiFi and Bluetooth

- *Memory media such as USB memory, SD cards and Portable Disks*
- *Installing Programs and Apps from trusted sources, Internet and Email*
- *File Management - use of free tools available.*
- *Backing up data to internal, external hard disks, USB portable drives plus the 'Cloud'*
- *How to download, save and do simple processing of photographs from cameras and smart phones etc*
- *Computer and Tablet Security, Firewalls, Anti-Virus and Anti Malware.*

Part of the session includes assisting with individual computing problems.

If anyone is interested in attending the Group please contact me at RHJFielding@aol.com

**Your Committee wish you all a Happy and
Healthy Christmas and New Year**

Chat from the Chair

If it seems strange to you that this piece is not coming from Paddy's pen, let me assure you it's even more strange for me. Fleet u3a was very fortunate in having Paddy Powell to steer us through the challenges and uncertainties brought on by Covid19. All the more so because we had persuaded her to take on a fourth year in office, given the exceptional circumstances we faced. Paddy's cheerful, upbeat, 'can do' attitude, combined with enormous energy (and some well-timed and very tasty cakes at committee meetings) sustained her fellow trustees through unprecedented times. She is the ultimate 'hard act to follow'.



Indeed, her only weakness is one the Advertising Standards Authority would spot in an instant: neither I nor they would recognise the character described in her last 'Chat from the Chair' as her successor.

She has created a cohesive, supportive and enthusiastic team: that fact and her willingness to stay on the committee give us all encouragement for the future. For my part I will endeavour to follow her excellent example as, with luck, we make our way back into a more familiar world.

All your committee members have been struck by the resilience of the membership in Fleet and District, and how highly they value the activities and friendships the u3a provides. The way we have resumed our activities this term has been quite remarkable.

So it will come as no surprise if I conclude by saying that, as your Chair, my twin goals of increasing our membership and encouraging more members to take an active part in running their organisation will be ones I will take every opportunity to promote.

Thank you all for your confidence in me. **John**

AGM - November 2021

The AGM Report, given by the Chair, is attached to this Newsletter for all to read who were unable attend the meeting. See pages 7 - 10

Pilates

Please note that all Pilates classes have been cancelled.

Creative Writing Group 1

A Christmas Story by Margaret Garrod

Pauline took advantage of her husband's absence to phone her sister.

'Hi Suzy, how's tricks?'

'Not bad. Just about ready for Christmas. What about you?'

'Well, everything was going well until John saw how much I was spending. I don't know what it is about Christmas, but he turns into a right Scrooge. "How much?" He said when he saw I was going to pay £12 for a Christmas pudding. But John, I said, "this is not just any Christmas pudding; it's an M&S golden blond chocolate star Christmas pudding."' "

"I don't care what they call it," he said. "That's a ridiculous price and now we're pensioners we need to watch the pennies."

'I tell you Suzy. If we can't push the boat out at Christmas, when can we? It's not as though we've had any exotic holidays recently. And then would you believe it, he suggests we make our own. "We," I said. "I'm not having anything to do with it. If you want to make one that's up to you, but you're on your own."' "

'So, he gave up the idea?'

'Did he heck? Called my bluff, found a recipe, and went out and bought all the ingredients. Of course, he didn't realise the reason I always buy one is not laziness, but the fact that I have nothing to cook it in. So that meant he had to borrow a steamer from next door. I reckon Rosie's one is at least 50 years old and would probably have lasted another 50 if John hadn't....'

'...Oh no, what did he do?'

'Didn't keep the water topped up did he, so it boiled dry. I came back from volunteering to the most awful smell in the house. I tell you no amount of air freshener can mask the smell of melted plastic basin and burnt Christmas pudding and as for the steamer...'

'What did Rosie say?'

'She doesn't know yet and John says it will be better coming from me, but if he thinks I'm going to tell her it was my fault, he's got another think coming. I dread to think how much a replacement will cost.'

'Oh dear. So, relations are a bit strained then?'

'You could say that. Instead of saving us money he's costing us a small fortune and I still don't have a Christmas pudding. Oh, and you'll never guess where he is now.'

'Go on, tell me.'

'He's on a Christmas wreath making course.'

Suzy giggled. 'Really? But he doesn't have a creative bone in his body.'

'Try telling him that.'

'But aren't those courses expensive?'

'Oh, this one was only a tenner because it's run by the local rangers, and they provide all the bits, but it would have been so much easier to have paid £20 for the one I wanted. You and I know the chances of John coming back with anything I'd want to hang on my front door are close to zero.'

'Bless him. His heart's in the right place. You never know you might be pleasantly surprised. I'll call you tomorrow for an update.'

Next morning when Pauline saw who was ringing, she took the phone into the study and shut the door so John couldn't overhear the conversation.

'So,' asked Suzy, 'how did it all turn out?'

'Well, I popped round to see Rosie. She saw the funny side fortunately and isn't bothered about a replacement. She can't even remember the last time she used it. Anyway, I've bought her a nice floral arrangement for being so understanding and she was pleased with that.'

'And the wreath?'

'Well, you said I'd be surprised, and I was. He came home looking a bit sheepish, but with this most wonderful wreath. Stunning is the only word for it and as good as the one I'd been eyeing up at the florist. And then I realised.'

'Realised what?'

'It was the one I'd seen in the florist's window. And if I'd been in any doubt, I found a price tag caught in the greenery.'

'Oh no! Please tell me you didn't say anything.'

'I was going to, but then I remembered what you'd said about his heart being in the right place and it is Christmas after all; goodwill to all men and that.'

'Well done and with any luck he's learned his lesson.'

'That Suzy is what I'm hoping.'

© Margaret Garrod

Visits

What a great pick me up for all the members lucky enough to get on our two nights stay in Norwich. After an early dinner at the hotel there was great excitement for the members who were new to our overnight stays and visits as to what was to expect. Fantastic! was the response. After the dancing girls in feathers opened the Thursford Xmas Spectacular show with all the men smiling, it was down to the girls with precision chorus lines to wow us all. Kev our compere who was a very funny Albanian and talented pianist. He told us he came to the "Uk" (Kev's pronunciation) on the third attempt and was living in the 'doghouse' of the producer. All make believe, as he came from North London. But what fun, as he barracked the audience. Christmas decorations around the venue added to the 'Spectacular' wonderful costumes, music singing and choreography. The strength of the acrobats was phenomenal, and the Ethiopian jugglers were spectacular. Carols, choral singing, rock & roll, organ music, all performed with the backing of a wonderful orchestra. The whole cast is so very talented, and worthy of any West End or International show.

The next day saw some of our group do their own thing in Norwich, while the majority went on our mystery tour and a drive along the coastline. First stop Cromer where we had a walk along the prom, we seemed to have arrived on the wrong day to buy the famous Cromer crabs. Hunstanton was totally different, where we had a longer break for lunch.

Kings Lynn, one of the most important ports from as early as the 12th century, was our final destination. One of our group went down memory lane as he lived there as a boy. The Lynn Museum was closed so we explored the quay side and the old town. The Minster (dedicated in 2011) built in 1101 AD, with its stunning stained-glass windows was situated in the Saturday Market area, which has been in existence since 1700. William Shakespeare appeared at the Guildhall which was in danger of being demolished but between 1945-1950 the NT turned it into an Arts Centre. So many medieval buildings to explore in the cobbled streets. I feel another visit coming on!



Kings Lynn

Time to go home, well, not quite! As the first stop was Great Yarmouth most of us walked along the prom again on our second day of warm sunshine, some braved the beach. Others saw the 'Venetian Water Way', while I found the 'Tide & Time' museum which showed the history of Great Yarmouth and the fishing industry. Interestingly Birds Eye fish fingers were first made in Great Yarmouth in 1955 after Captain (yes really) Birds Eye discovered, in 1914, that fish caught from beneath ice, froze solid after being exposed to the air on defrosting weeks later still tasted fresh. This was the beginnings of the frozen food industry. Again, a lot of history with no time to explore, but the prom has turned into the slot machine heaven.

Next stop for lunch, was Ipswich, which was a real surprise, I don't think any of the group realised how historic it was. The market by the Town Hall sold really fresh veg and fruit at amazing prices. The fish stall had a very long queue but had run out of crabs! Some made it to the quay while others explored the 'old town' which was the same as Kings Lynn and ran into the new shopping precinct.



Great Yarmouth



Ipswich Town Hall & Market

Continued page 4

It is so sad when you see our history being gobbled up by the big chain stores and shopping precincts which are so soulless.

As so many venues that we could have visited were closed either because of Covid or time of year, as someone said, we saw so many unplanned interesting places.

What a success this visit was, sunshine, great show, hotel, food and best of all, good U3A members company. Our single travellers never felt left out, and the noise at meals times as people chatted and laughed was lovely to hear. I believe new friendships were made and certainly new to visits members will come on our overnights stays again. As we said our 'goodbyes' when we arrived back in Fleet, we had done so much in such a short time we all felt we had been away longer.

We are all looking forward to our next over night stay in March visiting Lincoln.

Carole Matthews

Ukulele Groups

Thanks to Geoff and Sue's 60 plus Zoom sessions over the lockdown periods we hit the ground running as soon as normal face to face Group sessions restarted in September. To our, and Ray Llewellyn's surprise, local concert requests started almost straight away and by Christmas we will have performed at 6 venues, needless to say we are so happy to see all the smiling faces in the audience again. They even ask for encores !



Playing for the Forget-Me-Not-Café at St John's, Hartley Wintney

New members have joined both Players and Improvers Groups and the current Beginners should be ready to join the Improvers after the end of the Autumn Term. Counting all the Groups we have about 80 ukulele group members.

Brian's Fingerstyle Group has grown to a regular dozen or more with a 1 hour of face to face tuition before the Players Group plus he holds an evening Zoom class on alternate weeks. Carole's Harmony Group continues to develop harmonies to many of our songs and now has both female and male members.

Kevin Fox continues to spend many hours keeping the Songbook updated with new material and any song changes we think will improve the performance. To date in the main Songbook we have a repertoire of 124 songs, plus dedicated Beginners/Getting started and Christmas (24 songs) Songbooks.

We continue to try out the use of supporting instruments to enhance our performances including, bass, kazoo, mandolin, bazouki and more recently Tim Cansdale and his harmonica - his intro to Where Do You Got My Lovely transforms the performance into another league. What's next....maybe banjo, cahon who knows where the journey will take us. Its all about fun.

As Group Leader I am indebted to all the Ukulele Committee members that help run the Groups, it makes my life so much easier just to manage the membership and finances. In the meantime I can just sit in the corner and play the bass, something I had to relearn since my band days in the 60s and early 70s. I think I'm getting better....

If any U3A members want to come and join any of our merry Groups then please feel free to contact me at RHJFielding@aol.com for more information.

Richard Fielding

Members Coffee Morning on 7th January 2022, 10.30 - 1200 at the Baptist Church Basingbourne Road, Church Crookham.

Top Hat at Sonning Mill

On Sunday morning, 24th October, 55 members of our u3a set off from Cody for the twice Covid-postponed visit to The Mill at Sonning to see Top Hat; Irving Berlin's song and dance stage musical made famous on the big screen by magic couple Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Fortunately, everyone was on time (at the Fleet Road pick-up point and at Cody) and we were able to board the coach and set off on-time and arrive at The Mill after a remarkably quick journey.

Covid safety measures had reduced the capacity of the venue, and it was much less crowded than usual. With time to spare we were able to enjoy a pre-dinner drink in the Watermill Bar before heading up stairs for an excellent meal.

Then into the small intimate theatre, where we all had good seats in the central block.

The show, set in 1935 in hotel locations in London, New York and Venice, was a lively spectacle of singing and tap dancing performed by a youthful and energetic cast and based around a slightly flimsy story line. It was a miracle of staging and set design that enabled this Hollywood spectacular to be performed in this delightful venue by a relatively small cast, most of whom performed in both lead and ensemble roles.

We enjoyed the familiar songs – 'Putting On The Ritz', 'Cheek to Cheek', 'Top Hat, White Tie and Tails' to name but a few, and after the rousing ensemble finale, the performers received a standing ovation from the enthusiastic audience.

We then made our way back to our coach for the trip back to Fleet - an uneventful journey, made possible by Scott, our usual driver, who always impresses by his ability to manoeuvre his vehicle out of seemingly impossible situations.

Having returned home after a very enjoyable day, we are now looking forward to learning what show The Mill will be offering next Christmas. We wonder what they will choose, to follow their successes with the current show, and in previous years with 'My Fair Lady', 'Singin' In the Rain' and 'Guys 'n Dolls'. The coming show is usually announced in February, and we offer tickets at our Monthly Meeting as soon as possible thereafter. Tickets sell out really quickly, so if you would like to go, do keep an eye on our Newsletters for detail.

Chris Porter

Advance Notice to All Group Leaders

In January 2022 I will be starting to look at the 2022 - 2023 Programme preparation. I will be asking Group Leaders for their 2022 - 2023 meeting dates.

Alan Jones

Art 8

We have had a most enjoyable Autumn Term with expert tuition and encouragement from Judith and Simone.

Our subjects ranged from painting big Suffolk



skies in landscapes, vibrant autumn leaves, complementary colours and Christmas cards to animals and birds in exotic patterns.

We are living in strange times so spending two hours painting in a bright airy room with friends is not only pleasurable but good for one's mental health.

Simone Tyson



John, our new Chair, presenting Paddy, our former Chair, with a thank you gift for four years sterling work on behalf of all Fleet u3a members.

Monthly Meetings

The Monthly Speaker Meetings are the flagship occasion each month in the U3A calendar. They are when we all have the chance to meet up for a chat beforehand, book a visit with Carole's team, talk informally with committee members and listen to a talk from an expert in their subject. As your new Monthly Meetings Secretary, I would like to rethink the event but I can't do it on my own. I need at least six volunteers to help with meeting and greeting members, setting up the IT in partnership with the Harlington staff, welcoming the speaker, coming up with ideas for new speakers for the next programme and innovative thoughts for enhancing the meetings. Please contact me at paddyu3a@gmail.com and be prepared to meet in December or early January to make our plans. I can't wait to hear from you.

In November, Richard Wigram, bravely took on the post-AGM slot to lead us through his 'Search for Elgar'. And what an interesting journey it was that Richard described from Elgar's humble beginnings in the Malvern Hills to becoming the composer of such ground-breaking pieces as the Enigma Variations and then some of our most recognised and nationally loved music. Richard used contemporary illustrations of Elgar's far from smooth career, modern photographs of Richard's own visits to Elgar's numerous homes and excerpts from Elgar's music to bring the composer to life for us. Richard held us enthralled and we willingly stayed well past our usual finishing time. Thank you, Richard.

Our next speaker will be another Fleet U3A member, Alan Grace. Alan will talk to us about the story of the British Forces Broadcasting Service or BFBS as it is known to those who relied on it for all of our news and entertainment when working abroad. Put January 19th in your diary now.

Happy Christmas from **Paddy Powell**

Visits experience

Not sure what to expect a group of novice 'visitors' set forth for Thursford in Norfolk. I think we were all amazed at what a wonderful time we had, it was like a three day party. Carole makes sure all are included and no one is left alone, unless they want to be. We saw some very interesting places and sights including, well I never, our leader standing on a high balcony above the Cromer Promenade and "flashing" us. Or was she about to go for a dip? I'm certainly going on more trips. **Ed.**



photo taken by Anne Morley

COMMITTEE



Chair	John Gawthorpe	chairman@fleetu3a.org.uk
Secretary	Jan Glasscock	secretary@fleetu3a.org.uk
Treasurer	Neil Morley	treasurer@fleetu3a.org.uk
Membership Sec	Fiona Godfrey	memsec@fleetu3a.org.uk
Group Leaders' Liaison Sec	Stephen Grosvenor	groups@fleetu3a.org.uk
Events Sec	Andy Kirk	events@fleetu3a.org.uk
Webmaster	Chris Porter	webmaster@fleetu3a.org.uk
Monthly Meetings Sec & Vice Chair	Paddy Powell	meetings@fleetu3a.org.uk
Newsletter	Sandy Redman	news@fleetu3a.org.uk
Enquiries	Jenny Teagle	enquiries@fleetu3a.org.uk
Programme Sec & Beacon	Alan Jones	programme@fleetu3a.org.uk
Minutes Sec	Barbara Jones	minsec@fleetu3a.org.uk
Venues Sec	Barbara Jones	venues@fleetu3a.org.uk
Outreach Sec	Jenny Teagle	outreach@fleetu3a.org.uk
Publicity Sec	Adrian Van Klaveren	publicity@fleetu3a.org.uk

PLEASE AVOID TELEPHONING MEMBERS BEFORE 9 a.m. OR AFTER 5 p.m.

Find us on Facebook

Find us on Facebook - Fleet U3A has its own Facebook Members Group, our Facebook page can be found by entering "Fleet U3A" in the search box at the top of any Facebook page. You can then request to join our private Members only group, you will be asked for your Name and Membership number.

Fleet and District U3A

Chair's report for 2021 AGM

Good morning, thank you for attending our AGM. This is the opportunity for your committee to tell you what we have been doing in your interests over the last year. Sadly, it is my last Chair's report. I have had a great time as Chair of Fleet U3A for the last four years. I have been fortunate to work with some very hardworking and committed volunteers on the committee and elsewhere in this super organisation. Thank you all for your support and encouragement over my time in office. It has made the difference between what could have been an onerous responsibility and what has been a busy and gratifying honour. As your Chair I set out to make our U3A even more open, friendly and inclusive but I couldn't do any of that on my own. It is your backing and acceptance of change that has made any improvements possible. We began our U3A year in the second national lockdown when everything we did was online or out of doors. The committee tried to steer a course through the crazy times of confusing and often contradictory messages about Covid rules in late 2020 and the 'shall we/ shan't we?' be able to start up our group meetings again in the spring of 2021 leading to the 'four tier system' of covid restrictions and yet another postponement of our plans. The committee met at least once every month during this time and everyone was in constant touch with each other as rules and advice changed with alarming speed. We attempted to keep you informed at every stage and are very grateful for your understanding and support especially as we had to go back on some decisions because the ground unexpectedly shifted under us at the last minute.

One important decision made by the committee this year has been to increase what used to be termed 'Attendance Fee' but is better described as 'Venue Contribution' and also to collect the contribution at the start of each term, where possible. We made this tough choice when we realised that we had maintained the same number of groups, post pandemic but our venue costs were about to rise and our membership had shrunk. Our financial security was at risk. We are all very appreciative of your understanding of and compliance with this new way of managing our finances.

We would like to thank, again, all our outstanding volunteers, especially our Group Leaders (GLs), who have ensured that Fleet U3A has survived the pandemic reasonably intact. They all reacted as quickly as possible whenever there was a change in government advice and adapted their working practices rapidly to guarantee that we would continue to meet our promises to you, our members.

We have to say thank you and farewell to several Group Leaders at this AGM. They have all been thanked personally but this is an opportunity for a public note of appreciation for all that they have done to encourage new learning and just having fun in their groups over many years. They are:

Peter Lucas from Art 2, Acrylics

Evelyn Dansey, John Dansey and Michael Spicer all from Art 10, Painting

Craig Handyside from Indoor Bowls

Helen Newman from Italian

David Pinder and Marion Simpson from Philosophy

Sheila Arthur from Scrabble

Lyn Hodges from Tai Chi

Ann Bauer from Talking Poetry

Penny Skelton from Walking C

Alan Hayward from Wine Appreciation and

Barrie England from Philosophy

We wish them much pleasure in their newfound free time.

Brian Robinson, who stepped down before the SGM and who led Financial Affairs for more than 20 years, was nominated to become a Life Member of Fleet U3A. This nomination was discussed in committee and I am delighted to report was agreed unanimously. Brian was delighted to be offered this accolade and was very gracious about Fleet U3A in his acceptance of it.

Sadly, we have lost members to Covid 19 and, where we were informed, we sent condolences to family members and, if possible, representatives of Fleet U3A lined the route as the funeral party left their home. This mark of respect was much appreciated and strangely comforting as we all reverted back to customs that I am sure we remember from our own youth. The pandemic has certainly given us cause to

rethink some aspects of behaviour from our past that we may want to revive. We have to hope that a more respectful, inclusive and caring society emerges as we move back to normality.

We have managed to keep a full-strength committee throughout the various lockdowns and are inviting you to approve the appointment of 12 elected members as set out in the AGM papers you received recently. We also have one co-opted member. There are no new faces on our committee this year but we are always keen to welcome new volunteers. We are a hard-working team, helping each other to manage the various elements of the work we do while enjoying the fun and friendships that have emerged from our time together.

Fiona, our Membership Secretary, reports that membership has continued to fall for this second renewal period of the pandemic and we currently stand at 1,625 members. On a more positive note, the number of new members we are enrolling is currently at 233% of last year's total and we hope that this number will increase over the next six months. Last year at this time we had enrolled 42 new members and to date this year we have enrolled 98. Please do all you can to encourage your friends and family to join our U3A. Remember, there is no age or status restriction, you just have to be available to attend group meetings during the working day.

During the membership renewal round this year there was a mix-up at the post office and some 'couple' members were asked to pay extra postage to claim their printed programmes from the collection office in Fleet. The committee and I apologise for any inconvenience this caused and did offer to reimburse members affected by this fiasco. On investigation it transpired that the dispatching post office accepted the envelopes with the customary postage without demur. But unknown to us they were actually too heavy by a small amount for a second-class stamp as the printer had used heavier paper. The receiving post office spotted this shortfall and proceeded to hold up delivery of the programmes until extra postage was paid. I can assure you we will be super vigilant next year to make sure we put the correct postage on each envelope. At the time some members suggested sending only an e-copy of the programme to all members thereby saving postage altogether but far more members said they wanted to continue to receive a paper copy as they used it for reference and to scribble on during the year! From next year we will re-introduce hard copies of your membership cards, also due to popular demand.

Adrian, our Publicity Secretary, tells me that much of his year has been spent preparing for reopening after lockdown and thinking of ways to attract new members. The biggest event was U3A Day in June of this year where we had a well-visited stand in the Hart Centre, walkabouts by committee members, displays by different interest groups in shop windows around Fleet and lots of members dressed in U3A blue and yellow to advertise our charity. We did sign up some new members on the day and posters and leaflets around the town will have contributed to our healthy tally of new members. Adrian has also had articles published in a number of free magazines locally. Online the Facebook members' page has steadily grown during the year and now has almost 300 members, do sign up if you're a Facebook user as we use the page to advertise our events even before they appear in the newsletter. Adrian's plans for next year include trying to secure a booking at Fleet's Pop-Up shop so that we can advertise our U3A and offer a coffee and a chat to anyone who calls in. He also plans more advertising in local magazines and taking part in the second national U3A Day which will be in September 2022.

Talking of the newsletter, Sandy, our Editor, writes that over the past year she has tried to keep you all informed and entertained with the Newsletter and our interim publication, *Between Times*. Some members were very generous with sharing reports of meetings or writing stories and memoirs. She is very grateful to all the contributors so far and hopes they will continue to submit regular articles. She also hopes that in future more members will feel able to submit articles so that she is able to continue the rich array that is our monthly newsletter.

Alan, our secretary, has kept us on the straight and narrow all year, ensuring we meet all legal requirements as a charity. He has also set up and managed our two Zoom accounts uploading Zoom recordings, where available, to our YouTube account. He is our point of contact with the Third Age Trust (TAT) and forwards newsletters etc. to all members. (Please remember that you can subscribe directly to TAT newsletters, details are in our programme booklet.) Alan is also our Beacon guru; Beacon being our financial and membership IT management system. Alan is stepping down as Secretary at this AGM but will remain on the committee as our Beacon and Programme Secretary. I know you will all join with me in thanking

Alan for all he has done to manage the business of our U3A. Personally, I owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for all the support and encouragement he has given to me. He is handing the Secretary's role over to Jan and I know we all wish her well in this new post.

Stephen, our Group Leaders' Liaison Secretary reports that he is just completing his second year in the role and so has spent most of his time in post during the pandemic. He says that during the last year it has been wonderful to see so many group leaders keeping their groups going, whether through the use of Zoom or in person where possible. He also celebrates all the new groups that started up and is pleased that only a few groups decided to close due to Covid - 19. We currently have 110 groups running, and Stephen is hopeful that this total will continue to grow in the next few years as we return to a post-pandemic world. Stephen spent most of 2021 talking to Group Leaders and others on the phone and via email. Sadly, he had to miss the annual Group Leaders' meeting due to being in self-isolation. Hopefully, the 2021/22 year will allow him to meet many more members in person, starting with this AGM!

Jenny, our Outreach Secretary, says her role is to "reach out" to all our GLs and members to ensure everyone is included as much as possible in activities, groups, venues, gatherings and outings. At National level the U3A is working to encourage every local U3A to seek greater diversity within their membership. In the next year Jenny is planning to "reach out" to local communities who are under-represented within our current membership. She will begin by establishing a link with the local Nepali Community. She asks that you contact her with your suggestions for future planning. Jenny is also taking up the role of Enquiries Secretary and is hoping the overlap between her two jobs will be beneficial to everyone.

Chris, our Webmaster, reminds us that our website provides information on our U3A's activities for members and the public. It is our shop window, showing those who are not yet members the benefits they will gain from joining us. It needs to reflect the range of U3A experience, and to do that depends on input from members. He is always on the lookout for new content especially any helpful advice for new members, especially those who may be concerned about joining already established groups. Photos of members enjoying their activities are particularly desirable - remember that picture is worth a thousand words. Chris is in the gradual process of altering the layout of the website to make it more succinct and also easier to view on smaller screens e.g., tablets and smart phones. As a result, some menu items will change their positions, but they will still all be there.

Barbara is not only our Minutes Secretary but is also our Venues Secretary, a very hardworking lady! She says that the last year has been challenging, the Covid -19 pandemic resulting in ever changing rules being implemented by venues. Many of our venues are staffed by volunteers who have often been working from home so difficult to contact, therefore it has been hard for her to answer questions from GLs in as a timely manner as she would like. In spite of the challenges, venues have been very helpful trying to get all groups to restart in September in a safe environment. Perhaps due to the lack of revenue over the last 18 months some venues are raising their hire costs and imposing stricter conditions. Barbara and her deputy Venues Sec, Anna White, continue to look for new venues as new groups start up and in order to swap venues around if groups require larger spaces due to Covid concerns.

Thanks and appreciation must go to Carol Howlett who had to step down from being Events Secretary for family reasons and to Sue Dee who stepped into the breach to organise such a successful quiz afternoon in October.

Andy, previously our Programme Secretary, has taken on the Events role and his baptism of fire is fast approaching; the Christmas Lunch. I am pleased to say it is proving very popular and the last few tickets are on sale today. Andy has a good team to support him in his role, especially Peter Murray our Catering Team Leader. However, he does need help in setting up the hall and clearing away afterwards. Please let him know if you are able to assist him. I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas lunch soon.

Jan is our Enquires Secretary, the first contact anyone has with our U3A. She tells me she has had a particularly busy time recently with the increase in interest from people wanting to join our gang. Jan is stepping down from Enquiries and stepping up to the important role as Secretary of our U3A. I know she will be her usual hard-working and conscientious self in her new job.

Neil, our hardworking and very accommodating Treasurer will be delivering his own report to you very soon. I would like to thank Ann Guerin for all the help she gives to Neil.

Last but by no means least, I come to John. He has been our top-notch Monthly Meetings Secretary and

is about to become Chair, if you vote for him! He describes how the constraints of the pandemic obliged us to investigate technology that could enable us to proceed with a programme of monthly meetings online. We began by seeking inspiration from our own members starting with the history of cinema in Fleet by local expert Maurice Kent. Maurice still holds the record for the number of viewings on YouTube of any Fleet U3A recording! Two other members, Yvonne Hockey and Dr Ann Bauer re-started our in-person programme this autumn. Yvonne revealed how very few of us could recognise Chanel No 5 given a chance to smell it! Ann Bauer's passionate championing of youngsters with additional needs was inspiring to hear. John is passing the Monthly Meeting role to me so I am delighted that he has planned the 2022 programme, again inviting our own members to display their expertise. Beginning in January we will be addressed by broadcaster, Alan Grace. He will be telling the story of the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) and the well-known presenters who started their careers there.

Our U3A continues to be outward looking through our members serving as National Advisers, chairs of regional committees and as members of many national and regional TAT groups. We are regularly approached by other U3As for help and advice and we give it willingly.

The past 18 months have been difficult for all of us as we have found ourselves living in ways we never expected. As U3A members, we have benefitted enormously from our membership of Fleet U3A. Without the huge amount of voluntary effort by so many people, our U3A might not have survived. As U3A members, we belong to a movement built on the principles of mutual aid and self-help. Although we may join in the first place to learn a new skill or to enjoy meeting new people, we also join a movement where we are all volunteers with something to contribute. Now is the time to make that contribution. We need new Group Leaders to take over existing groups and to set up new ones. We need innovative ideas on the committee. We need you to step up to the mark if we are to continue to live, laugh and learn together post Covid - 19.

As John F. Kennedy said, **'Every person can make a difference, and every person should try.'**

Goodbye and thank you,

Paddy Powell