

Alcester U3A Groups Reports 2012

Good afternoon everybody. It is a traditional part of the Annual General Meeting to accept reports from Group Leaders and for these to be read out to the audience.

In view of the time this would take if performed literally, it is necessary for me - as Groups Coordinator – to make a precis of each team leader's response. From this distillation is this presentation made.

To all group leaders I would like to express my thanks for your efforts and apologise for any shortcomings I reveal in my editorial skills: your full reports will be put in the club's archives -unbowdlerised!

So to begin:

May I please ask that each group leader stands for a moment when I introduce their individual reports so that members may identify them. Thanks

Art Group - Group Leader Joy Whybrow. A successful year in which the group has continued with its use of a variety of media, pencil, water colour, oil, acrylic and charcoal. Membership is full but a there is a waiting list.

Black Country - Group Leader Eileen Stone. In existence only since August and a monument to Eileen's determination to set this up. Only 3 members so far but their enthusiasm has made up the gap. The dialect, customs and history of the area have led to lively discussions without recourse to computer/internet use. An earlier idea to perhaps create a written record is currently frustrated by the lack of numbers; 6 or 7 would make an ideal group.

Church Visits – Group Leader Ann Fox. Eight churches were visited. At each of these a member of the congregation gave up their time to tell the group of the church's history. An average of 20 members attended. Photographs taken superbly by John Ruffell and John Puzey are among the highlights - as were the pub lunches which followed!

Computer Support – Group Leaders Margaret Bakewell and Kath Lloyd-Jones. This self help group meets irregularly either at The Bear or at members' homes. Numbers are healthy at around 12 and computer problems are resolved (hopefully) through use of email, internet or sometimes by home visits. The essence is to encourage those who feel intimidated by their perceived limitations to join in the discussions more freely in a relaxed atmosphere.

Crafts Group – Group Leader Linda Bradley. A relatively new group with around 6 regular members. Please join in if you feel you could learn new skills such as embossing, quilling, stamping, gilding and making boxes – just a few of the past year's activities. There is space for new members.

Folk Dancing – Group Leader Elizabeth Humphrey. Started only in the last year but immediately was dependent on the enthusiasm of known devotees. Any absences were keenly felt and although not dead the group will not be able to restart whilst Elizabeth is unavailable for the early part of 2013.

French Conversation – Group Leader Pat White. A small but devoted group which enjoys the presence of other local U3As to swell the numbers. Topics are usually agreed in advance but often lead to more general discussions. English is spoken when tea is served!

Garden Lovers – Group Leaders Linda Cooper and Joyce Collins. A new group which met firstly in August. The plans of this group are to meet informally at members' own gardens. Weather considerations have led to activities to be confined to the period April to October (inclusive). The direction of the group is still evolving but 14 members is a healthy start.

Gentle Yoga - Group Leader Christine Rumsey. A good year with membership maintained at its maximum of 9. Yoga teacher Christine Noble monitors each participant individually and sticks very much to the principals of Yoga – with the gentleness of course.

History - Group Leader Gerry Barker. An enjoyable and successful year with 26 members and good average attendances. Iron and steel, clocks and watches, Winston Churchill, Switzerland and the Great Exhibition of 1851 were among the wide variety of histories presented and discussed.

Keep Fit – Group Leader Gwen Sellicks. This group meets weekly but in spite of advertising within the Alcester U3A numbers have remained static. The benefits are obvious; the initial attendance is free so the door is open.

Maths for Fun - Group Leader Derek Spencer. Each meeting starts with a puzzle through which members attempt to find solutions – without using books. Numbers are at around 7 but the nature of the structure precludes too many becoming involved. Hopefully it will continue through 2013.

Meditation – Group Leader Beryl Colloff. A membership of 6 listens monthly to speakers drawn from around the world who present various ways of understanding meditation. These are primarily to support members' daily practise.

Music Appreciation – Group Leader Jan Rowe. The group thrives within the format of members providing their usually quite eclectic programmes each month. The range covers symphonies, concertos, choral music and occasionally jazz and eastern music. One month we heard Florence Foster Jenkins sang for the members – interesting but excruciating! Familiar favourites as well as challenging newer items create a good atmosphere. Currently around 15 members attend the meetings. Newcomers are always welcome.

News Reviews – Group Leader Sheila Giblin. A small but fulfilling group. Each member presents a topic from a newspaper or other journal. These have included the Reform of the House of Lords, the Blue Planet and the effect of the Olympics on our national pride. Currently full.

Outings – Leader Judith Wharrad. Not strictly an interest group because its activities are open to the full membership. But it is successful thanks to the indefatigable leadership of Judith who brings New World insights to the programme. Elgar's Birthplace, Barn Court Museum, Wightwick Manor and Witley Manor were among the places visited in 2012.

Philosophy – Group Leader Adrian Madge. A group of 7 who make no claims to be seriously academic sometimes may veer from the chosen subject to general discussion; so prospective members need have no fear of deep water. Buddhism, other Eastern philosophies and beliefs and more recently morality, virtue and legality have stretched minds.

Poetry Too - Group Leader Bob Andrews. There are 15 members averaging 10 per meeting. Instead of choosing a subject for everybody to follow each meeting a change was made whereby members picked their own subjects individually and chose poems to suit. This has worked very well leading us, among others, to the Spanish civil war, railways, Gilbert and Sullivan and even the 'beat' generation poets of the 50s and 60s. Old favourites have obtained a new lease of life by this approach so classics are being revived as well. Full membership has not quite been achieved so please be quick if you would like to join.

Pub Ambles – Group leader to be announced. The group found itself without a leader for much of the year so activities were suspended. However a new leader has emerged and a new programme for 2013 is in the offing

Pub Walks – Group Leader Trevor Wraight. A good year with walks of 4 or 5 miles based mainly around Bredon Hill and the river Avon. The Alne valley was also covered during the autumn. Longer distance walks are not as popular as in the past. Average groups of about 14 members have been the norm. Curiously no rain fell on the 3rd Friday in any month for 3 years –this has not been retained recently however! New walkers are always welcome.

Reading – Group Leader Karyl Rees. A regular membership was retained. Members' homes have successfully been used as venues. The Library Service has provided a variety of books which have led to stimulating discussions. Book exchange is a popular feature.

Science – Group Leader Bill Bayley. This is another relatively new group with around 6 members. Subjects have ranged from topical issues like the Higgs Boson project, global warming, atomic structure, gravity and water. There is room for new blood.

Yoga with Lesley – this group lost the teaching skills of Lesley Morton at the end of the year (though happily she intends to remain a member of AlcesterU3A). The maximum number of ten has been maintained. The group will reform as Yoga on Monday with a new group leader yet to be confirmed.

So there you are – all finished. The number of groups increased from 19 to 23 during the year and absolutely *anything* that members feel could be of interest for new groups will be pursued. You know who to approach. There is plenty of room for expansion.

Prepared by Bob Andrews, Groups Coordinator.
5th March 2013