

**Torrige U3A
Chair's Report
8th November 2017**

Thank you for taking the time to attend this AGM and for your continued support of the groups and wider events during the course of the year. My thanks also to those who have put in time preparing the hall and refreshments. Thank you also to those who have put out table top displays to demonstrate their groups' activities. A special welcome if this is your first AGM especially if you are here to find out about Torrige U3A or if you are a member who has joined during the course of the year.

Current membership = 399 including affiliates the total rises to 421.

Groups

There are currently 46 groups although in a number of cases there are parallel groups covering the same area of interest such as 4 book groups and several groups that approach art in various ways. There is a healthy mixture of groups that enjoy learning established subjects such as history, science or a modern language. Others are physical activity based such as walking, table tennis, badminton and petanque. There are groups that are hobby based, although I expect almost anything could be classed as a hobby but I am thinking of groups such as drama and folk dancing, listening to music or perhaps arguing in the best sense of the word in the Philosophy group. While others specialize in the thing I like the best, eating good food in good company.

Whatever the group does there are huge benefits to mixing socially, pursuing an interest and keeping alive our capacity to learn. Thank you to the group leaders and Trustees who facilitate the groups on behalf of all the membership.

Trustee issues

Firstly I want to pay respect to Colin Lambert, our Treasurer who sadly died early on in the U3A year. Colin was a good friend to many and a good friend to Torrige U3A. I personally miss Colin and he is missed by many. Our special sympathy goes to Annie who remains a U3A member. Sadly as well, Sue Butterworth, our membership secretary, became seriously ill and could not continue with the role and is stepping down at this AGM. Carolyn Kelly has doubled up the role of membership secretary and general secretary for the majority of the year. We owe Carolyn a big debt for undertaking this. It is a role that needs constant attention as about a quarter of the membership is added mid year and there is a great deal of individual communication required.

The Trustees also remember and acknowledge the loss of Sylvia and Dougie Spiller this year. They tragically died within a short time of each other. They were long standing members and leaders of the Devon Inns group.

Simon Gibbon is retiring from the Trustees. Simon has been a Trustee for seven years. His role has been of great value in producing the newsletter each month, managing the U3A database and creating the U3A website. Simon has also provided additional input into a number of other areas over the years. His detailed knowledge of the activities of the U3A and carefully thought out suggestions have always been of the highest value.

I would also like to thank Shirley Jewell and Sandy Madden for faithfully posting the newsletters. Shirley would like let members know who have a posted newsletter that there are times when the newsletter is posted after the 1st of the month especially when the month beginning goes over a weekend.

Sue Beer joined the Trustees mid-year as Treasurer and brings considerable experience and expertise to the committee. We have been looking at our processes with Sue's guidance to ensure we keep to the financial guidance appropriate for small charities such as ours. We are grateful to Sue for the amount of work she has done.

The issues caused this year by serious illness has highlighted the importance of having administrative processes that enable roles to be easily transferred and learnt when the need occurs. For this reason and for reasons of general efficiency we have adopted ready for full implementation the national U3A integrated management system. The software is called Beacon. Gary How has led on this and done a huge amount of work to get it into place. There are significant gains from adopting this system and the cost is absorbed into the general subscription fee. It will make the data held on members more secure as it is fully encrypted and not held on any individual's computer. It means that all systems follow the same menu system and therefore it is easily learnt and accessed by any Trustee. It will improve communication with members and group leaders. It will provide more up to date and accurate information for both the Trustees and Group Leaders. Because it enables a detailed system of permissions to be set up, Trustees and Group Leaders will only see and be able to update those things that are relevant to them. It will also enable any transfer of role to take place much more efficiently should there be in the future a need to do so due to an unforeseen change in circumstances.

During the course of the year a number of improvements have taken place to the Upper Room. Roger has decorated the room and the kitchen, apart from anything else improving hygiene. The room has been tidied, thanks is due to Jane Bellworthy who has been the driving force behind this. A number of items that were stored in members homes are now stored in the Upper Room, where this inconveniences groups, I apologize. New equipment has been purchased to support groups.

This year we changed our approach to coffee mornings. We have been trying to have a Saturday morning coffee morning every other month and provide a speaker. Coffee

mornings provide a social opportunity for members to meet others who attend different groups. The speakers have also provided valuable information in areas related specifically to our stage in life. Hopefully groups will increasingly participate in providing presentations or talks on the activities they do. Thank you to the groups who have already done that this year.

Membership cards being sent out were delayed this year by two factors. Firstly many members did not renew their membership promptly. As the cards are printed in one print run and after that have to be hand written there was a delay while we tried to encourage people to pay their subscriptions. This causes significant problems for group leaders. The change over in role of membership secretary also complicated matters. Therefore this year we are asking for all fees to be paid by the end of December. We will be able to print membership cards this year using the Beacon software.

We have also been working on refreshing the new membership information. We will distribute it to all members in the new year.

The monthly lunch continues to be well supported, there has been an excellent range of speakers. The lunch along with other social events have to be self funding. Mostly the costs associated with the lunch are the speakers' expenses. Up to now the raffle has met these costs. However costs have risen and we will no longer be able to cover all of them through the raffle. In the new year it is intended to bring in a £1 charge to cover expenses.

Overall I believe 2017 has been a very successful year for the U3A. I wish to thank all those who enable it to happen. I hope you gain a great deal of pleasure, friendship and fulfillment from your membership
Geoff Williams November 2017.