

# Aughton & Ormskirk u3a

## 2025 Chair's Annual Report

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to our EGM. It was a great honour for me to be asked to take over from John Tomlinson as Chair last year, and looking back at the wealth of knowledge and experience of my predecessors, I must confess I was a little bit daunted. However, I have had tremendous support from my colleagues on the Management Committee, and from the wider membership, and with their help and advice have been able to deal with the many different issues which have arisen during the year.

Our u3a continues to prosper, and at present we have just over 1500 members, which is the highest for a number of years, and getting on for 90 different Interest groups. Huge thanks must go to our Membership Team, Group Support committee and Group Leaders, without whom this would simply not be possible. It wasn't until I became Chair that I realised the truly phenomenal amount of work that goes into making it all happen, and we are truly grateful to all those involved. We are always open to suggestions for new groups, day trips and short courses, and this year has seen the introduction of a First Aid course for members which is proving to be very popular. The most recent suggestion has been for a short course or group to look at Artificial Intelligence, and the first meeting was held this week. There may well be more events to come, so keep an eye out for more news about that. Our new Speaker Secretary, Shirley Kirby, has already compiled a programme of speakers for next year, and is also branching out into organising a coach trip in the coming months.

Our Social committee has organised many events over the past year, and we are looking forward to the Barn Dance this Friday, then a Quiz Night and Christmas Social. Again, the amount of work involved in organising these events should not be underestimated, and huge thanks go to those who continue to make these arrangements for us.

I'm pleased to report that, thanks to the efforts of our Treasurer Derrick Fewings and his team, our finances are in a very healthy state, as you will hear shortly. So much so that we are now able to put forward for your approval a resolution which will extend the present membership year by 12 months – more about that very soon.

There have been some changes at national level this year, including the setting up of a new Council which aims to improve communication between the Third Age Trust, our parent body, and local u3as. One of our Management Committee members, David Blanchflower, is very active at regional and national level, and has been elected to serve on the new Council, thus providing us with an excellent link with our colleagues at regional and national level.

Speaking of the Management Committee, two of our members, John Tomlinson and Les Rippon, are standing down this time. John has served on the Committee for 7 years, three of those as Chair, but will continue to act as Assistant Treasurer and of course a very prominent member of the Drama Group! Les has done 5 years (sounds like a prison sentence!) as Minutes Secretary but will continue to lead our very successful Drama Group. Grateful thanks to John and Les for their continued dedication and commitment.

Technology is changing all the time, and as a former IT teacher I can tell you that it can sometimes be quite a challenge. During the past year our Web Team, led by Alan and Joyce Nolan, have been implementing changes to our website in line with national guidelines, and to the way we communicate with each other via email. We now have a new website address and a set of new, anonymous email addresses which link to individuals such as myself, Secretary, Treasurer etc. As you can imagine, this has involved a great deal of work, and our thanks must go to Alan, Joyce and the Web team for putting it all in place.

Also working very hard in the background are Liz Dixon and Deirdre Slater, who have taken on the mammoth task of investigating and updating all our policies. This is an ongoing task which will eventually result in a clear and unambiguous set of policies which will be available to all our members to consult.

Our Communications team continue to provide us with an interesting and informative magazine 3 times a year, with members working together with editor Bill Evans. Our regular e-news goes out every month, compiled and sent out by Bob Carlton. Our website provides a comprehensive source of information and we have several web authors, trained by the Web Team, providing regular updates. Our Facebook page, overseen by Bill Soens, continues to attract more visitors as new

sub-editors come on stream. Grateful thanks must go to all those keeping lines of communication open.

For many members, our weekly coffee morning, Horizons, is an opportunity not only to meet friends for coffee and a chat, but also to browse the book and card stalls, purchase tickets for social events, Philharmonic and Theatre performance, Drama and Musical Theatre events and Local History trips. You can keep up to date with events coming up via the slideshow and several members of the Management Committee will usually be around to answer your questions. Many, many thanks to all those who make this possible, not forgetting our lovely tea ladies, led by June Pardy, and also those who man the Welcome Desk and set up the chairs and tables for us every week.

In the early part of this year one of our Founder Members, Jeff Roberts (or Skip, as he was affectionately called) passed away. We are forever in debt to Jeff, together with co-founders Alex McMinn and Ted Morrell, for their vision all those years ago in founding Aughton & Ormskirk u3a and enabling us still to enjoy its many features. Sadly, at around the same time, Alex's wife Kath also passed away, and is greatly missed by all who knew her.

Looking to the future, we will continue to foster links with other organisations such as Edge Hill, local Police, and of course the 9<sup>th</sup> Ormskirk Scouts & Guides. We will continue to promote the u3a's motto: Learn, Laugh, Live, and to welcome new ideas from our members. You can contact me via the website and I'm usually at Horizons on a Thursday morning. I'm looking forward to meeting more of you and to another year as part of our marvellous u3a.

Pam Ball  
June 2025