

## Chair's Report 2025

This is our Twentieth Anniversary Year, so I thought I would start with a little bit of our history.

Back in 2005, 2 people decided they would like to start a u3a in the Wyre Forest Area, they were Val Jarrett and Ann Tyler.

They arranged a meeting in Kidderminster library and after a further meeting in The Grange, Kidderminster, a Steering Committee was established, with Val as the chair.

The **Monthly Meeting** moved to Trinity Methodist Church, which proved not to be suitable and so St Ambrose parish Hall was chosen.

With numbers rapidly growing, the monthly meetings soon moved on to the Town Hall, where we stayed for several years, before having to change to the Harriers Social Club, because the Town Hall was being shut down for major renovations.

Back in the early days, we had membership cards with membership numbers on them, and member number one was Liz Struckett, who had not long moved into the area. She was so keen, she cycled along the towpath from Stourport to Trinity Methodist Church for the first meeting! Liz volunteered to go on the Steering Committee. We have 12 of those very first members still in our u3a today:

So many thanks to them for planting the seeds of our u3a, which today has one thousand and four members!

Our first Group was Handbell-ringing, led by Liz Struckett and it is still going strong today!

Over the last 20 years we have had many hard working Committee Members and 7 Chairs:

- Val Jarrett, who was Chair of the Steering Committee
- Rydwen Foreman
- Dennis Plant
- David Struckett
- Sue Langley
- Barry Walmsley
- And me!

**And so to the present day.**

In reflecting back on the past 12 months, I can report that our u3a is thriving. We are a popular organisation, with a steadily growing membership.

Our **New Members Meetings** are well attended by Group Leaders and Committee Members, all of whom help introduce new members to the opportunities we have to offer.

We now have **57 Groups**, which cover a wide variety of activities and opportunities for our Members including educational visits, exciting indoor and outdoor activities, arts, crafts, dance, discussion, exercise, games, history, language, music, and science, not forgetting day trips, holidays and even cruises!

**This year** has seen new groups start up, past group ideas revived and popular groups expanding to form second groups.

We have a wonderful group for Members on their Own whose hard-working Group Leader, Roy Leigh, has also helped other u3a's in the West Midlands establish similar groups.

**Our Kidderminster Station Adoption Project** has been both brilliant and very successful, even winning National awards, with representatives going to Award Ceremonies in Newcastle on Tyne and Westminster Hall in London. I believe Allan Walmsley, who is here with us today has been very impressed and keen to encourage other u3a's look into similar projects.

Several groups also share their skills with the wider community by exhibiting their work, performing on a regular basis at Care Homes and Community Centres and taking part in gatherings with other u3a's.

And to celebrate our **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year** our Groups have been encouraged to organise their own celebration relating to their subject area, if they wish to, with grants being made available from our funds towards their costs. I am pleased to say that over two thirds of our Groups have taken up this idea and we have some wonderful photos of their very varied events.

Our **Group Leaders** do a wonderful job. All are volunteers, as are all the many other people who work on your behalf, organising monthly meetings, various visits, holidays and social events, providing refreshments, setting up rooms and doing all the many and varied jobs that need to be done.

We would not have such a successful organization without the people who give their time and energy so freely!

We have an excellent Wyre Forest & District u3a Newsletter, edited and produced by Ralph Bramley, assisted by Ann Jager, who do a marvellous job putting together a newsletter, which not

only looks good, but is a pleasure to read, with many articles and photos produced by our members.

A **major initiative for our u3a** this year has been the development of a new website, using the Siteworks system developed by the National u3a. We have had a superb team working on this for us and the new website was successfully launched in the early summer. Many thanks must go to our member, Tim Yates, who developed and has run our previous website since 2012 until February this year. I can certainly attest to the very many hours he has spent on this over the years.

**There are so many people to thank for all their hard work this year:**

- **Group Leaders**, for their energy, enthusiasm and the time they put in to make their groups so successful and enjoyable.
- **Members who volunteer** their services when there are jobs to be done.
- **The Committee**, who have worked hard all year to keep our u3a running so well.

I have thoroughly enjoyed this year and I am very excited about the future, because we have a great team ready and waiting to lead us on into 2026.

Thank you!