

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
Basingstoke – Old Basing U3A held at the Elizabeth Hall, Hook
at 2.0pm on Wednesday 13th July 2016**

Welcome and Guest Speaker Topic

Linda Wain welcomed everyone and outlined the programme for the afternoon. She then introduced and welcomed the guest speaker Cherrill Sands who gave a fascinating account on "Gardens and Plants in Shakespeare's Time". This was an apt celebration of the 500 anniversary of Shakespeare. Cherrill cleverly used many lines from his various plays to illustrate the wide variety of plants commonly used in a typical English country garden 500 years ago. Of particular interest was the emphasis on medicinal and herbal plants. The strong fragrances of various herb used to disguise household odours and how some in stronger doses would be used as a deadly poison or strong sleeping potion e.g. Juliet's for sleeping draft, Romeo's deadly Monkshood draft and the Henbane poison used to kill Hamlet's father.

Another interesting aspect was the focus on formal design of green scrubs using the intricate knot designs widely used at that time rather than vibrant colours of our English gardens. It was during Shakespeare's time however, where garden approaches also changed with the introduction of New World flower varieties. With the careful designs and new varieties, gardens were treasured and walled to protect, both against theft and also the weather. Cherrill finished by using the famous sceptered Isle speech in Richard II to illustrate just how much a treasure a walled garden is:

*"This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall"
... This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England"*

Opening of the AGM

After refreshments of tea and cakes, Alan Robinson opened the AGM and thanked members for supporting the AGM noting that the minimum quorum of 120 had been well exceeded with the 140 approx. members present.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies have been received from John and Maureen Ashworth, Malcolm Bell, Judith Dixon-Patterson, David and Mary Lucas, Don and Edna Macnamara, Bronwen and Phil Males, Anthony and Sarah Tapping, Harvey Wallace, Pamela Waterman-Bell, Margaret West, Alex and Rosemary Ball, Wendy Wilson, Gillian Williams and Pauline Hughes.

Minutes of AGM held on 8th July 2015

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Annual Report

Alan stated he had been in the Chair role for 3 years - he will remain for one more year and then step down. He thanked everyone for their support over this time especially the time last year when his wife Liz passed away. He noted that learning approaches are changing e.g. distance learning and something he has not addresses but recognises it is an area his successor might want to. He noted that his chair focus has been improvements in the 'back-office' efficiencies, ensuring the U3A organisation reduces it's laborious man-handling approach of physical mail-outs by transitioning to digital methods. He had also taken steps to gauge the particular interests of members.

Alan then talked through his report which had been circulated at the meeting. He detailed the new database system, Beacon. He was positive about the significant administration benefits it will bring along with the full security for all data and the maintenance support that can be expected from U3A. He advised members that the new Beacon system will be used this year for membership and group management, and then over the coming academic year will transition into electronic financial management which will include tracking and on-line membership payments.

The benefits of email communication using the single button send of Beacon's member database has already been of huge benefit making such tasks far less laborious, time consuming and costly. Members also get any notifications straight away.

Alan then talked about the financial challenges and proposed savings e.g. discontinuing U3A Matters magazine in next academic year.

He finished by thanking members for their support and wishing them a good new academic year.

Annual Accounts

Copies of the annual accounts and Treasurer's Report were circulated to members at the meeting.

Ian talked through the increased costs and how these need to be covered by a combination of membership fees and cost reductions e.g. changing hall venues, consolidating some meetings or in some cases negotiating reduced rental terms. However, in spite of Group leaders ensuring hall venue bookings are cost effective, Ian advised that hall fees will be increasing over the next two years - some by 100%!

Ian pointed out that the contingency fund is short by about £3,000 being £10,000 rather than the recommended 50% of income.

He said that the solution the best solution the Committee had found was keeping the annual fee standard for all members, but to increase it from £23 to £35.

Minutes of Basingstoke & Old Basing U3A 2016 AGM continued:

Ian then answered questions posed by members about contingency fund total needed, and varied costs per member depending on which group and how many members attended. Various suggestions were made from the floor to avoid such a high increase:

- social events [quiz nights and barn dance] to raise funds
- a £10 increase as a temporary measure only, whilst the committee gave further consideration for varying membership group annual fees.
- setting a £35 minimum with invitation for additional voluntary contributions.

However, when the £35 annual membership increase recommended by the Committee was put to the vote, it was passed with a clear majority.

The proposal to accept the accounts was accepted.

Election of Officers

The committee member Jim Elverson [Member Representative and Asset Manager] was standing down. Alan thanked Jim for his support and Jim was presented with a gift of Berry Brother wines as a mark of appreciation.

Alan Robinson was proposed for the Office of Chair by Angela Powell and second by Ray Willshaw. This was supported by the members.

The following officers were prepared to stand for re-election

Treasurer	Ian Stimpson
Membership Secretary	Mel McMahon
Programme Secretary	Linda Wain
Member's Representative	Vee Holliday

New Roles or Changes Proposed:

Vice Chairman	Margaret Hayes
Business Secretary	Barbara Robson
Group Organiser	Joan Carnell
Database Manager	Liz Horner
Website / Asset Manager	Harvey Wallace
Members' Representative	Marie White
Minutes Secretary	to keep open for moment
Newsletter editor	to keep open for moment

The membership re-elected all current committee members and agreed to the new changed roles on the committee.

Confirmation of Independent Examiner

The motion for retain our appointed Independent Examiner, Hilary O'Connell was put to the membership and this was supported unanimously.

Open Forum

No other matters were raised from the floor. The business of the meeting was concluded and Alan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for coming.

Signed

Date