

# Ferndown & District U3A



Ferndown and District University of the Third Age

Registered Charity No. 1073206

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 10am in St Mary's Church, Ferndown

**Committee members present:** Brian Williams, Bob Reeve, John Mullett, Richard Tucker, Judith Hodges, Jenny Bass, Maggie Shew, Clare Clayton, Yvonne Warner, Gerry Lewis, Jean Stone and Glyn Bosanko

1. **The Minutes of the AGM** held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016 were proposed by Derek Holden, seconded by Rita Burke and agreed by all present.
2. **Chairman's Report:** Brian said that it had been another great year with regard to an increase in membership and the number of courses we run. The more successful we got the more pressure we create for the organisation. With over 1700 classes to house in the year, we were always on the lookout for suitable accommodation. Equally, we did not want to be dependent on any one site. We were all aware of the hiccup with the Barrington centre which caused much panic amongst the whole of Ferndown and certainly a number of sleepless nights for the Committee. Fortunately, this situation appeared to have settled but now we have lost the use of Heatherlands for a year. The newer sites had cost more to hire and this had affected the figure for accommodation this year. These extras had resulted in the £4,000 loss shown in our accounts.

However, with the good reserve built up over the years we could cope with this. We were doubly grateful to those leaders who not only offer their time but their homes as venues for their groups. The savings made were proving important in keeping our costs down and offering comfortable and safe venues for our members. Despite this increase in accommodation costs it will never stop us looking for new groups and we were always looking for members to come forward and share their skills with us.

Friday mornings had become very important to us for members to socialise as well as to be informed on subjects not in our regular timetable. The first and third Fridays of the month after tea and coffee we had speakers who entertained us on a wide variety of subjects. The alternate two Friday mornings were devoted to Discovering Wessex. The first introduced an area of local interest and the other Friday morning a visit was made to the area discussed.

All courses and activities were only possible because of the generous contribution of time, effort and professionalism from our team of 70 volunteer group leaders. Without them we would have had no courses. Thanks go to them all for the wonderful job they do for us.

As the U3A is a self-help group, for the regular classes to function smoothly we needed those enthusiastic group of volunteers in each group who helped prepare and clear rooms for each activity. Thanks went to them and we hope that they would continue the good work.

Apart from group learning, we offered many activity events. There were groups such as Table Tennis, Badminton, various Dance groups and Keep Fit. For extra-curricular activities every month we offered 3- and 5-mile walks and less energetic Nature walks. We also organised day trips such as the recent visit to the Met Office near Exeter. However, we became more adventurous last Easter when Bob Reeve organised a 4-day trip to Normandy. All who went had a great time and enjoyed themselves very much. As a consequence of its success, this Easter we are going to fly to Girona. The numbers attending have increased by 50%. Again we are anticipating a great few days and hope the Catalonians do not declare independence whilst we are there!

We had a great 20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party in November when well over 100 members attended. As well as good food we had an entertaining quiz which covered the 20 years 1997 – 2017. We heard much about our start and the life of Gerry who has been with us since day one. The pantomime was also a great success last week with about 80 members attending. We thank Peter for his original script and the Drama group for all their hard work.

We will again end our academic year by having an Open Day in May. At this event we are able to advertise and display the activities and skills we have to offer to the residents of Ferndown.

A Chairman's life is made much easier by the quality of the Committee he works with. Brian assured everyone that we had a great Committee, as they had proved most conclusively in the last couple of months. He thanked them for all their effort and commitment in making all lives more interesting and fulfilling. It was with great pleasure that he introduced each member of the current team. He said that some would further our message and tell every one of their plans for next year.

The following members were then introduced:-

**Bob Reeve – Group Co-ordinator and Vice Chairman;**

**Glyn Bosanko – Minutes Secretary;**

**Jenny Bass – Bridge Co-ordinator;** On behalf of the Bridge Groups Jenny wanted to thank Clare Clayton for finding them new accommodation after having to move from Heatherlands to the Barrington, where there was also storage available for the tables etc.

**Richard Tucker – Membership Secretary and Database Manager;** We had at this time 541 members, the most recent having joined just last week. Nearly 90% of the membership were on email, which made our task of keeping you informed of changes and new events a lot easier. He mentioned a few words about Beacon, the new database, which had now been in use since mid-year. It had brought a number of benefits for the Committee who used it but also for the membership at large. This included the ability to personalise emails and address you by name rather than the impersonal 'Dear Member'.

Richard wondered how many members had used Beacon Members Portal via the website other than to check their Group allocation? The response was encouraging. He wanted

to emphasise that it could reduce our workload considerably if it is also used for the following –

1. Checking dates and times of Groups
2. To see if there is a vacancy in a Group
3. To leave a group – this will then automatically notify the Leader by email
4. To get the Leader's email address if needed to advise of absence.

If anyone had any queries or problems relating to the use of the database, they were welcome to come and see him after the end of the AGM.

**Judith Hodges – Course Programme Compiler & Newsletter Editor;** Judith wanted to thank those who continued to send in copy and photos for the Newsletter. She asked members to remember that any member could submit news or comments to the Newsletter, and as long as it wasn't immoral or illegal, it would get included! Her focus over the next year would be to find new software to produce the brochure as our current package had been discontinued and was no longer supported. The long-term future of hard copy printed items was uncertain as paper costs increase and printers retire or go out of business but for now our printer was still working and meeting our needs. As with any forward planning nothing was likely to happen in the near future, and the brochure for 2018 - 2019 (and hopefully beyond) would still be in the familiar format.

**Maggie Shew – Website Co-ordinator;** Maggie told us that as the software for the Website came from the same company as the Brochure, the Website was affected in the same way. However, she had found an alternative and was presently looking into it. She reminded everyone that the Website was the first place to look for news past and future. But she needed news from the groups or else there would be nothing on the Website. Members were encouraged to get in touch with her and to remember the Website address – [www.ferndownu3a.co.uk](http://www.ferndownu3a.co.uk)

**John Mullett – Treasurer;** see item 3.

**Clare Clayton – Accommodation Officer;** Clare reminded us of the past difficulties that we had had with the Barrington, now resolved by the takeover by Prama Care. The result was a more stable outlook, as they have a similar 'raison d'être' and client group as we have. Hopefully this would lead to a more business-like approach. However, this would inevitably mean price rises and the possible decline in facility availability. As everyone knew, the closure of Heatherlands for refurbishment resulted in Bridge groups having to be accommodated in the Barrington at increased costs. Despite Heatherlands expecting to re-open in November 2018, it was unlikely that we would be able to use it for Bridge due to the lack of storage facilities. It was likely that other groups might be able to be accommodated there, but increased costs were to be expected. Clare thanked all groups who had been flexible with regards to venues and timings. We did have new venues in use during the year; upstairs at the British Legion and downstairs at the Village Hall. Looking to the future we would have to source new venues hopefully at affordable prices, and that might mean casting our net wider afield. It was becoming more difficult every year but we would still endeavour to accommodate everyone. Health & Safety Risk Assessments would continue to be completed for all venues, and should an accident happen, the Accident Book at the venue should be completed, along with our own Accident Form which should then be forwarded to Glyn Bosanko. Anyone with ideas for new accommodation should meet with Clare after the AGM.

**Jean Stone – Publicity and Leader Co-ordinator;** Jean thanked all the Leaders for their contributions in making FU3A so successful. Also the members who had helped out with the refreshments over the last year. The expertise of the Leaders ensured our members

had a varied and interesting range of groups to attend. We were already thinking about next year's Brochure and the need to get suitable accommodation in place. To that end she would be sending out the Green Forms in the first week of January 2018. It would help greatly if the Leaders could return them promptly even if they were continuing with the same group. It takes quite some time to plan the Brochure and to match groups with appropriate accommodation. We were always looking for new subjects and interests to be catered for. If anyone had some knowledge about a subject but were unsure about running a group for one or two sessions or perhaps a term, we would be able to provide information and support. Alternatively, if there were something that members would like to see included, please let us know. We could then make an appeal for offers to start that particular group.

**Yvonne Warner** – our newest Committee member who had introduced some excellent speakers for Fridays and organised a new members' survey.

**Gerry Lewis – Social Secretary** and our oldest member; The Chairman reminded members that in the new Constitution last year, there was an item regarding an Honorary President, for which post he now proposed Gerry Lewis. This was seconded by Maggie Forson. He hoped that this would enable Gerry to step back a little in the future. The Honorary President told us "that it is a great honour to be so chosen. Looking back on the last 20 years, I see the hotchpotch of outstanding natural talent that has proved so successful in allowing us to increase the membership to more than 500, from a start of just 51 members. The first Chairperson was Angela Dennett who came to us from Bournemouth U3A. We were very lucky that her daughter ran the Riffs Youth Club and allowed us to use their facilities. This was possibly because we used the building when not needed by the Youth Club. Unfortunately our success ended in insolvency and boy did we learn from this. But we overcame this dire financial problem perhaps because of the Wine Course which was under my control! Having learnt this costly lesson, we proceeded in a time-honoured fashion to right the wrongs of the mass (or was it mess?). This was achieved by a restructuring and trimming of the timetable, making more efficient use of the Youth Club facilities. A positive recruitment drive attracted more members and so we grew and prospered. We have over the years been fortunate in attracting high calibre Committee Members and Leaders, who have expertise and a wide knowledge of modern business, education and other diverse subjects. All were and are willing to give their valuable time and energy freely and at no cost. (This is, as you all know, very dear to my heart.) It has meant that so many members over these 20 years have enjoyed learning new things and explored new topics with the 'emphasis on sharing experiences in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere' to quote from the Brochure. A lot of the narrative around age and ageing is so very negative and focuses on its adverse social consequences. However, the U3A is a positive experience for us all and so I am very honoured to be a part of this world-wide movement and heartily thank you for this honour. Long may the U3A continue and prosper!"

Now that the Committee had been introduced, the Chairman told members that they should feel free to approach any one of us with any ideas they may have to improve the activities or courses we offer.

Because we were unsure of the effects of the increased accommodation it was felt that it would be prudent to hold the membership fee at £47 and not to offer any bonus to current members.

Finally, Brian thanked all members who contributed so greatly to the success we enjoyed as an organisation and he looked forward to next year being even more successful.

- 3. Treasurer's Report:** "Metaphorically speaking we are in good health. There is always a balancing act to consider when we hire the venues, negotiate the room hire charges and pitch our membership subscription. Your subscription has to cover the cost of the rooms,

capitation to the Third Age Trust, the purchase of necessary new equipment, plus the coffee morning speakers, refreshments and the administrative costs of our U3A. Our income was up by almost £2000 on last year – this is due to an increase in membership and the knock on from this is that Gift Aid was also increased by just over £600 – ticking the 'Gift Aid' box costs you nothing but gives us a substantial amount of money. The only other money we get is from interest from the money we invest, which, because of the low interest rates was less than £200.

The cost of accommodation is always an important consideration. You wouldn't want to have a class in a cold, dark room so we hire the best we can at the price we can afford and it cost over £3500 more than last year. This is a cost that will continue to rise and is the main consideration when reviewing our running costs.

Capitation is an important on-cost – it is £3.50 per person, so the more the membership, the higher the Capitation cost and at present it is nearly £2000.

The only items of new equipment we have had to buy this year were some new bridge tables and a projector – but these cost almost £1000.

All of the printing with the exception of the brochure is done mainly by one of the Committee, but with posting out newsletters, etc. it comes to nearly £1000.

One of my columns is for 'Sundry' items. This covers refreshments (such as today's), computer security, guest speakers, etc. totalling over £800.

The detailed spreadsheet showing the complete breakdown is available and anyone who wishes to see and discuss it can see me later.

It goes without saying that the accounts have been properly audited in line with all legal requirements and for presentation to our trustees, HMRC, The Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission.”

4. **Adoption of Annual Accounts:** The Adoption of the Annual Accounts was proposed by David Oddy and seconded by Keith Banks.
  
5. **Election of Committee:** The Chairman told the members that all of the Committee would be staying on with the exception of himself. He had always had 80 years of age as the time to finish and he had done 5 years as Chairman. In addition to the existing Committee members we had 3 new members; Ralph Weeks, Derek Holden (who was a returning Committee member) and Malcolm Gill, who had been a co-opted member but would now become a full member. The Committee would be auto-elected as the total was below 15. This was proposed by Betty Ford and seconded by Roger Pettengell.
  
6. **Election of Honorary Accounts Examiner:** As our 'turnover' was in excess of £25000 we needed a tight audit and an accounts Examiner. Ian Burr had done this year's Accounts and was happy to continue. In his absence this was proposed by Roger Pettengell and seconded by Sheila Goode.
  
7. **Any Other Business:** Ray May asked if the Website address could be repeated – [www.ferndownu3a.co.uk](http://www.ferndownu3a.co.uk) – and there was also the opportunity to just 'Google' it and it would come up.

Bob Reeve then addressed the AGM and said “it was his privilege to be able to thank Brian Williams for the outstanding job he had done as Chairman. Our U3A was in a very strong position with great groups and courses where everyone could enjoy themselves and learn.

But it doesn't just happen. The Committee meets on Monday and we sign to commit to FU3A, have integrity regarding finances and to do the right thing for the organisation. Brian has had rigorous expectations, was generous in praise of others and the Committee

has always worked as a team.

There is a duty of prudence in the area of finances and Brian brought his expertise and leadership to this area. There was also a Duty of Care regarding Health & Safety and accidents etc, a point which was fully tested on Brian's EasyJet flight to Crete which ended with a stay in hospital as a precautionary measure.

Brian had always been even-handed except in the Current Affairs group where he encouraged members to see both sides of the argument.

He hates bigotry of any kind, but particularly in the area of the National Press, with the exception of The Daily Mail – the paper of all truths!

He leaves Ferndown U3A in a strong and enviable position but there is still a lot going on and a lot still to do.

And of course, none of this could he do if he didn't have the support of his wife Ann.

Thank you both and we hope that you will enjoy these presents from us all.

A Happy Christmas to you all and enjoy the brunch!"

The Annual General Meeting for 2017 closed at 11.05am.

The next meeting of the Committee is on **Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017** at 10am in the Village Hall, Small Room.