

U3A FARNHAM

Minutes of the 2009 AGM held at Farnham Maltings at 2pm on Monday 14th September 2009

Present: Officers: Rosemary Thomas (Chairman), Bernard Whelan (Hon Treasurer), Di Huddleston (Hon. Secretary); Committee Members Brian Arthur, David Cook, Ann Vickers, Pamela Brown, Rosemary O'Hara, Sarah Miller, Tony Price, Pamela Taylor and Eileen Williams; 76 other members.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from eleven members. It was confirmed that the Meeting was quorate.

2. Minutes of the 2008 AGM held on Monday, 8th September 2008

Copies of the Minutes having been made available to members, there were no corrections: the Chairman therefore signed the Minutes as a true record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

None.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman, Dr Rosemary Thomas, said that the Annual Report for the year ending 30th June 2009 indicates a continuation of the same trends that have made Farnham U3A such a successful organisation in the past; people come and go, and Groups appear and disappear, but the U3A in Farnham goes on for ever! It is always the membership which controls our development, and as Chairman she had held to this principle that if a topic is suggested and people attend it, then the Group will run. It is a completely anti-discriminatory policy. Whilst she had herself been conscious of using her particular academic expertise and those of her friends to keep a balance of the intellect, the imagination and the physical in widening the range of our curriculum, we have not closed a Group, or restricted the number of Groups, except due to the wishes of the organiser, or the failure of an organiser to appear. The Committee remains open to suggestions for any new subject if a Leader can be found. Most of the difficulties that a Group had experienced had been due to the fact that the availability of rooms at the Maltings has to be subject to the demands of the Maltings' own programme; she wished to pay a special tribute to Eileen Williams, Tony Price and Ann Vickers in their negotiations which somehow produce the right Group in the appropriate-sized room at the right time.

The membership of the Committee had remained largely the same in her four years of her Chairmanship, and that is a tribute to all of them for being able to respond in a positive way to new and perhaps suspect ideas. Equally, as the introduction of an Annual Project became firmly established there was considerable re-division of the responsibilities that appertained to each Committee member's title. We were now looking at a Programme which at times offers a choice of ten sessions per day from which members can select options. It was therefore decided to re-introduce the post of Director of Studies, separating it from the Chairmanship, and also to establish a Project Organiser who again would take-over that responsibility from the Chairman. This was done earlier in the year when the initial arrangements for the Victorian Project needed to be started. Pam Taylor volunteered for this position, and sensibly chose a new timetable for the events. Her suggestion was that the Inaugural Day should not be in the Spring, but should be established in the Autumn Term and be pursued as a theme through two terms, ending with a celebration at the end of the Spring Term. The Programme would thus have a more leisurely feel, and take away some of the pressures on members who wished to join all or many of the sessions on the Programme. Janet Wall accepted the position of Director of Studies, having impressed the Committee with the accuracy, speed and succinctness of her Minute-taking. Sheila Arthur had been a wonderfully efficient membership Secretary, and her resignation led to the introduction of a completely new Committee member - Sarah Miller - who has been finding her way very ably through the ever-increasing membership list. Brian Arthur has remained as Controller of the data-base, and continues to have overall responsibility for Communications; although he was replaced as Editor of 'The Owl' by Pamela Brown, and was therefore relieved of one of his three jobs, he continues the overall management of our audio-visual equipment. Pamela has introduced many new features into 'The OWL' - a very popular one being the

photographs and biographies of some of our Committee members in previous years.

These new positions left us without a Minutes Secretary, and Di Huddleston - our Hon. Secretary - has also accepted that job too. Paul Callow was responsible for putting the Programme together in printable form, assisting Janet in this as a non-member of the Committee, and also for managing and up-dating our Website. Bernard Whelan and David Cook managed our money, and David has also taken charge of the Garden Project which beautifies the area by the river where we have placed the Tony Collyer memorial seat. Rosemary O'Hara has been an enormous asset to the Committee in helping new Group Leaders to adjust to our sometimes very peculiar customs.

An item on the Committee's Agenda this year was the question of our possible disaffiliation from the Third Age Trust, given that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the large increase in fees payable to the Trust, and the not very obvious gain. Was it a reasonable increase? What did we get for our money? Should we declare UDI? The question was reviewed by Bernard and after debate it was decided that Farnham U3A, whilst able to run its own branch more or less as it pleases, still benefits from the reputation and the good name of the national association. [Sec.'s Note: see also Item 5 - Hon. treasurer's Report]

Our increased membership does, of course, provide the national body with more funds, as well as increasing our own income. As of June 2009, we had 991 members; the expectation is that we gain about 200 members each year, whilst losing around 100.

The Mediaeval Project exceeded all expectations of success. It lasted for the Autumn Term only, and finished with a Mediaeval Miscellany of short talks in the morning followed by a Mediaeval Lunch with mostly mediaeval entertainment in costume. Part of the Project's attraction and its popularity was the superb design of the promotional literature which was produced by Brian Arthur. In colour, and appearing as decoration on the Programme itself, the tickets, the menu, and the name badges - it featured in the Presentation on 'Projects' given by the Chairman to a U3A Regional Conference in East Grinstead, and caused amazement that we did it ourselves! Highlights of the Programme were without doubt Eric Buesnel's lecture on Mediaeval Cathedrals, David Graham who spoke on Mediaeval Farnham, and the two Rosemary's' course on Chaucer, and the introduction of a Series of Mediaeval Icons.

New Groups formed last year included a Film Club, Russian Language and Literature, the Art of Writing, a series of Architectural Seminars, a Sunday Club, the 18th Century Novel, a new French class, Spanish, German and Italian Conversation classes, Computers for Beginners, and a second Book Club. A new format was found for a revitalised Oral History Group; some Groups opted to be self-led rather than to close, and some amalgamated to retain Group viability. The total number of Groups was around 75-80.

A new annual feature was introduced by our Patron, Sir Ray Tindle, who offered to finance a lecture on a theme related to the Project of the year, recognising that we would then be able to afford to pay a sufficiently high sum to attract an expert in that field. While this offer was made during the Mediaeval Programme, it was not able to be used until the Autumn Term of 2009, so it will now be used to support the lecture on the Victorian Vision. At the end of the year Tony Macklow-Smith brought his group on 'Talking about Music' to a silent finale, and was thanked by a visit from the Chairman bearing gifts. Psychology also faded away after a trial period, and the Cookery class closed when Betty Wesley could no longer lead it.

Our organisation has benefited this year from the particularly helpful Maltings staff. Complaints from both those who provide and those who enjoy, the catering facilities have been minimal, and where necessary, apologies have been offered. The car park surface has been greatly improved, and we hope that future renovations will include some sound-proofing, as noise outside the lecture rooms remains a problem. However, we remain guilty ourselves in one particular area - as on the establishment of audio/visual technically-competent persons in each Group, the Chairman could only report failure.

Although the Chairman had mentioned Committee members individually in her Report, and rendered them great praise for their conduct of their own special business, she wanted to pay tribute to them for their ability to work as a team. She had never before experienced a group of people who have been so adaptable in picking-up on the numerous activities that are not in the job descriptions of any of them, but arose from the wild imagination of their Chairman! She tendered her thanks to all of them

5. Hon. Treasurer's Report

The Hon. Treasurer, Bernard Whelan, presented the Trustees' Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 June 2009. He drew attention firstly to the column in the Statement of Financial Activities headed "Restricted Funds". Although there had been no income or expenditure under this heading during the year, there was a balance, consisting of the residue of grants from the Farnham Institute and the National Lottery, towards the Maltings Garden Project. It was expected that there would be some expenditure from the Fund during the present year.

Secondly, Bernard mentioned the capitation fee payable to the Third Age Trust - the national body in the UK, to which Farnham U3A is affiliated. The fee paid in 2009, at the rate of £2.50 per head, was £2468, and next year, when the rate is to increase to £3.50 per head, we would be paying £3454 if the membership numbers remained the same. The Committee had explored the possibility of disaffiliating, and had enquired in particular as to the cost of arranging our own insurance, which would be necessary if we no longer insured through the Third Age Trust's group scheme. The premium would be £1950, as opposed to the premium of £135 which we pay at present; and in addition we receive a good deal, through the Third Age Trust, on licences for copying copyright material and playing recorded music. All of these reduced the apparent saving we would make by disaffiliating. A non-financial benefit was the public perception of Farnham U3A as part of a well-established national movement which has good prospects of expansion as the retired population increases and government funding of adult education reduces. For these reasons the Committee has decided that we should stay affiliated.

There being no questions on the Accounts, Roger Bradley proposed and Sue Kelly seconded, that the Annual Report and Accounts be formally accepted: this was carried unanimously.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members

Bernard Whelan up-dated the list of candidates contained in the Notice of the AGM, stating that there was now a volunteer - John Carter - who had come forward to be our new Hon. Treasurer; also, Di Huddleston was not eligible to stand for re-election, but would be co-opted by the new Committee to continue as Hon. Secretary as there was no other candidate for that post.

The candidates were:

Officers	
Chairman	Bernard
Vice-Chairman	Rosemary Thomas
Hon. Treasurer	John Carter

Committee members	
Director of Studies & Programme Co-ordinator	Janet Wall
Project Organiser	Pamela Taylor
Membership Secretary	Sarah Miller
Groups Treasurer	David Cook
Venues Secretary & Monthly Speakers	Eileen Williams
Social Secretary	Ann Vickers
Communications & Training	Brian Arthur
Newsletter Editor	Pamela Brown

The meeting having acquiesced to Bernard's suggestion that the candidates should be elected 'en bloc', this was formally proposed by Roger Bradley, seconded by Pamela Leggatt, and carried unanimously.

Bernard - as the new Chairman - then requested Rosemary to continue to chair the remainder of the meeting.

7. Appointment of Hon. Examiner for the Accounts

Christine Stevens having intimated that she would not be carrying-on in this role, we would be seeking a replacement. Fortunately, an instant volunteer appeared in the shape of Michael Mitchell, and his

appointment was immediately confirmed.

Bernard - on behalf of the membership - expressed our grateful thanks to Christine for her many years of service in this role, which followed an even longer stint as Hon. Treasurer, starting in 1999.

8. Report on the National Conference and AGM of the Third Age Trust

Tony Price said that - at the time that the Agenda was drawn-up - it was anticipated that he would be attending this function in Edinburgh. In the event, he was unable to do so - hence no Report today! However, there will be full coverage in the next issue of U3A News, due out in October.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 U3A Badges

These were now being worn by the Committee, but they are available to all members (price £1). A suggestion was put forward by Frauke Stuart that it would be helpful if all U3A members were to wear name tags when attending classes: the Committee will look into the feasibility of doing this.

9.2 Visits/Tickets

Mary Bell said that she still had 7 places available for the visit to the Globe Theatre on 8 October. Pam Taylor has 3 places for the visit to the V&A on 5 November. She also has tickets available for the Project Inaugural Day, and for the Christmas function.

9.3 Publications

The Writers' Group has published a selection of short stories written by members - on sale for £1. Some remaining copies of the Enlightenment booklet are available - free!

9.4 Maltings 'Access all Areas' Project

Eileen Williams gave a summary review of the aims and timetable of the programme, which is due to start on 23 September. The areas concerned are :-

Toilets (near our Notice Board) - there will be 'Portaloos' outside the building

Undercroft, with new stairs and a Platform Lift

New Kitchen

New Served

Foyer - new floor

Detailed plans are posted in the Foyer, and are to be placed on the Website.

9.5 Hans Dumoulin said that he was honoured to have been asked to pay a tribute to the retiring Chairman. Some five years ago, he learned that the candidate for Chairman was both a former Waverley Councillor, and an 'Academic', and wondered how this would work out. In the event, the answer proved to be 'wonderfully well'. Her enthusiasm, her new ideas - not least the concept of cross-curriculum Projects which have been such a great success - coupled with her many personal academic contributions, and her willingness not only to be a 'hands-on' Chairman, but also to get her hands dirty when necessary, have all led to significant raising of the academic standards of our U3A - thus contributing to its popularity and to its healthy growth. She had created a great atmosphere, and although standing down now, he hoped that she would continue to develop cultural interests in our U3A, and - no doubt - would also be making a significant contribution to the affairs of the Farnham Society.

The new Chairman then presented her with a bouquet, and also a more practical gift to Richard Thomas, for all his support to Rosemary, and for his tolerance of the side-effects of her commitments to U3A.

After the meeting, there was a talk by Councillor Roger Steel on "the Farnham Town Statement."