

Report on the Work and Achievements of Porthcawl U3A for the period January to December 2016

1. What are U3As?

U3As are learning co-operatives, most of whose members are no longer in full time employment. U3As are to be found in most of the countries of Europe and also much further afield. In the UK there are now 1004 U3As with a total membership of nearly 384,450.

2. U3A Principles.

Like all U3As in this country, Porthcawl U3A functions in accordance with the following principles.

- a) Members freely contribute their skills, knowledge, experience, effort and support for the benefit of all.
- b) We aim to make learning in our U3A fulfilling, enriching and enjoyable. Members come together to learn and to help and encourage each other to learn, sharing what they already know and seeking new knowledge and skills together in a friendly, relaxed and supportive atmosphere;
- c) We ensure that membership is affordable and open to all, no qualifications being required or awarded.
- d) We are always ready to assist, support, work with and learn from other U3As and other organisations.

3. Membership of Porthcawl U3A.

- a) Porthcawl U3A was established in January 1995. On 31st December 2016 there were 537 members.
- b) Our Membership Secretary maintains an accurate and confidential membership database.

4. Our Programmes in 2016.

- a) **Talks Programmes:** Eleven monthly talks were arranged. All these talks were of high quality, including of course the eight given by our members. In addition, we arranged a series of evening talks given by representatives of 16 other voluntary organisations in the town and surrounding area who were invited to speak about their work and its contribution to the life of the community. These evening talks were also of a high standard. They were open to the public, and two follow up discussion evenings were held.
- b) **Programme of Interest Groups** By December 2016 a total of 39 interest groups were meeting regularly on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. All were well-attended, purposeful and conducted in accordance with principles mentioned above. The Play Reading Group staged two performances and the Writing for Pleasure Groups arranged their annual Morning of Poems, Prose and Stories at the Prince. These events, which were open to all members, were well attended and much enjoyed.
- c) **Programme of Visits:** A total of ??visits were organised to concerts, plays, horticultural and food festivals and places of historical interest All were well prepared, well organised and well attended.
- d) **Programme of Social Events:** The following events were organised: A Celebration Evening for St David's Day, our annual Coffee Morning and Spring Fair, two welcoming coffee mornings for new members, two other coffee mornings, a Service of Nine Lessons and Carols and our Christmas Lunch. All were very enjoyable and attracted a large number of members. Our popular Sunday Lunch Club meets monthly at venues in the town and surrounding area, and after our monthly talks tea / coffee and cake is served to members for £1 to encourage them to stay on for a while to chat and socialize.

5. Accommodation and Equipment.

All our provision is appropriately located and equipped. Our equipment is insured and safety tested annually.

6. Finance.

- a) Although we receive our entitlement of Gift Aid annually, Porthcawl U3A is otherwise entirely self-financing.
- b) As the Hon. Treasurer's detailed annual report will be presented at the AGM, it is sufficient to note here that our financial affairs are very well managed and our financial position is sound enough to allow us to reduce the annual membership subscription for 2017.

7. Communication.

- a) At the beginning of each month every member receives a newsletter which gives full details of the talks, visits, social events and interest group sessions taking place that month. The newsletter is delivered to their homes either by hand, e mail or post.
- b) A paragraph is placed in Seaside News every month drawing attention to some of our forthcoming programme highlights, and occasionally there is also coverage in *The Gem*.
- c) We aim to give an information pack to those who enquire about joining and a joining pack to those who actually join.
- d) We arranged an Open Day in April 2016 at which we set out displays, put on presentations and gave out printed information to raise awareness about our activities and programmes among the general public.
- e) We have redesigned our web site and set up a Facebook page.....

8. Reaching Out.

- a) We have been represented at events arranged by the South Wales Network of U3As
- b) Nine of our members competed at the National Eisteddfod in a Welsh Learners Choir which was placed third in the competition. The choir sang outside the U3A stand at the Eisteddfod and attracted a large crowd after its success, and part of that performance was featured in a recent television programme. Other members of our U3A helped to plan, set up and steward the U3A stand.
- c) Our Annual Study Day, to which all U3As in the south of Wales were invited, was held in May 2016.
- d) Our Play Reading Group has again performed at Bridgend College for the benefit of its students.
- e) Several of our members have accepted invitations to give talks to other U3As and other organisations.
- f) Marcia Humphries, the convenor of our Writing for Pleasure Group One, is also the U3A National Adviser for Creative Writing. She and Jo Brooks, the convenor of Writing for Pleasure Group 2, have together run successful workshops in Creative Writing for U3As in several parts of Wales.
- g) At their request, we hosted one of the County Borough Council's mandatory public consultations on proposed budget cuts. Apart from this and despite providing the Council's responsible officer with a detailed brief of our aims and achievements, there have been no approaches from the Council or from the management of Bridgend College which shares responsibility with the Council for providing opportunities for adult learning and training in communities in the County Borough. This is disappointing, especially as Porthcawl U3A is by far the biggest provider of high quality adult learning in the Borough.
- h) However, we have continued to develop close links with Porthcawl Comprehensive School. The head teacher was a member of the panel at an *Any Questions* event we arranged in September. Students from the school have entertained us at social events and taken part in discussions at our Conversations (Discussion) Group. As in previous years, we arranged for a large group of members to attend the school's annual performance at the Grand Pavilion.

9. The Executive Committee

- a) At the AGM 2016, Handel Davies and Andrew Collier stood down as Chairman and Hon Secretary respectively, having come to the end of their term of office. Chris James was elected Chairman and Sally Corbett, Malcolm Cowper, Jan Fletcher and Chris Smart were elected as members of the committee. Pam Munro was subsequently elected Vice Chairman,
- b) Also at the AGM and at a subsequent General Meeting of members Handel Davies, Gwyn Davis, Dr David Parry and Rod Thomas were elected as Life Presidents of the U3A in recognition of their service in the office of Chairman and of their continuing contribution to and support of our U3A over many years.
- c) Except in August, the committee met monthly during the year with prepared agendas and minutes taken.

10. Assessment and Future Challenges

- a) It is hoped that members will agree that 2016 was yet another successful year for Porthcawl U3A.
- b) It has been efficiently and effectively managed, the range of opportunities for learning and association has been extended and quality has been maintained and even enhanced.
- c) However, we accept that we must not be complacent, especially as the economic, social, technical and learning environment is changing rapidly and significantly. Already people have to retire later, more are having to care for relatives as the population ages, more prefer to gather information and knowledge from their hand-held devices rather than enrol in learning organisations and more prefer to spend their scarce leisure time in relaxing pursuits or with their extended families.
- d) Porthcawl U3A will meet these and other challenges by setting short-term and longer term objectives which take into account the need to ensure that:
 - our management and administrative systems continue to be effective with workloads evenly shared;
 - our teams function effectively as catalysts for progress and development;
 - members who give freely of their time, energy, expertise and experience to our U3A feel that they are sufficiently valued;
 - the range and quality of our programmes are maintained and extended in accordance with the needs and wishes expressed by members;
 - members understand and subscribe to the principles of the U3A movement;
 - communication with and among members is a continuous, efficient and purposeful dialogue;
 - our U3A is well known and valued in the communities we serve;
 - younger people are attracted into membership, with provision adapted where necessary to suit them..

11. Going Forward Together

In 1947 the Chairman of the Oakdale Workers' Library and Institute ended his address to the members as follows:

We are the inheritors of glorious traditions of belief, endeavour and achievement. The vision now should be one of further achievement and progress, because in honour of the past pioneers.....our vision too should become a reality of accomplishment.

Let's go forward together in that spirit and with those words in mind.