

Chairman's Annual Report 2025/2026

At the 29th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Melton Mowbray u3a (MMu3a) held in March last year, I was re-elected Chairman of the Committee. Also re-elected to Committee were Janice Palmer as Business Secretary, Sharon Baines as Membership Secretary, Dolores Harvey as Groups Co-Ordinator and C.J. Rupp as IT advisor. Linda Newbery moved to being the Treasurer and we were joined by David Ramsden as Vice-chairman with Coral Batchelor and Vicki Reynolds as joint Speaker Secretary. Christine Bluett was re-elected as Newsletter Editor but stepped down early in the year and the role was taken on by Claire Abbot who was co-opted onto Committee. The Committee has been very hard-working and enthusiastic with lots of ideas and, as we move towards our 30th anniversary, Melton Mowbray u3a continues to grow and flourish with many new members and interest groups.

Throughout the year, the Committee has been reviewing what we do and how we do it as part of a continuing programme of improvement. I am grateful to you, the members, for your support and feedback which enables the Committee to ensure any changes made are improvements and benefit MMu3a.

This year, I am standing down from Committee as is Janice Palmer, our Business Secretary, as we have both completed a three-year tenure in that role. Janice has been an excellent Business Secretary ensuring all the necessary administration was completed, that we all knew what we should be doing when, making sure we had a venue to do it in as well as maintaining an excellent record of our Committee meetings. I am very grateful to Janice for making my role as Chairman much easier.

Linda stayed on the committee and transferred to the Treasurer role. Linda is a keen contributor to the Committee with her welcome advice and thoughts and has been a great support. She has worked hard to keep our finances in order and, despite many costs rising this year, we are able to maintain a low membership fee, increasing it by just £1, for another year. Considering the annual membership fee when MMu3a began in 1996 was £10 with refreshments at the monthly meeting having to be paid for rather than free, I hope you agree membership still represents excellent value for money.

Sharon Baines has worked hard as our Membership Secretary. She continues to introduce new ideas and follow them through. She took on responsibility for our Facebook and the general WhatsApp groups, improving communications between members. Sharon is continually looking at ways the membership process can be improved, whilst recognising that not all of us have access to the internet. Sharon has also looked after our Public Relations sub-committee this year who are giving MMu3a a higher profile in the community, so our membership continues to grow. This sub-committee has been very successful and now we are looking for a volunteer from our members to take this forward.

Dolores Harvey, our Groups Co-ordinator, is another who has worked hard and achieved a huge amount, increasing the number of our groups to around 90 – an amazing increase! Dolores continues to encourage and facilitate new interest groups and can be found at our monthly Speaker meetings suggesting yet more new groups and encouraging members to join. So much so, many of us are spoilt for choice! Dolores has been a great support in keeping the Group Leaders updated and in touch with each other, as well as organising our very successful annual Meet the Groups event and the Group Leaders meeting

C.J., our IT Adviser, has been very busy creating and looking after our new MMu3a website. This is more 'user-friendly' and provides lots of up-to-date information about MMu3a. This involved much work and all while solving various IT issues, patiently explaining them to those of us not so knowledgeable, as well as regularly reviewing Beacon database functionality and offering considered comments at Committee.

Our new Committee members settled very well into their roles. David Ramsden, our Vice-chairman has been a great support to me and looks after many varied tasks behind the scenes, not least ensuring our safety at the monthly meetings and arranging the rota for the Meet and Greet team. In December, David organised MMu3a's tree for the Christmas Tree Festival at St Mary's which showcased the talents of our two patchwork, quilting and sewing groups.

David also organised our highly enjoyable and well attended Christmas Social in December, enabling us all to enjoy the talents of our own Generation Gap, the Silver Tones, the recorder group as well as the newly reformed drama group

Our monthly Speaker meetings continue to be very popular and, thanks to Coral and Vicki who look after the Speaker Secretary role jointly, we have enjoyed many varied, interesting and entertaining speakers at our monthly meetings this year. These meetings not only offer us the chance to hear about many varied topics but also to enjoy the ever-important socialising with friends old and new.

Claire Abbot, our newsletter editor, has ensured our monthly newsletter is produced and delivered on time each month. The newsletter is eagerly awaited by many of our members and, thanks to Claire, it never fails to inform or entertain. It is always full of interesting information about our u3a as well as items about the local community that may be of interest to our members.

I can often be heard saying that the interest and activity groups of the lifeblood of any u3a. In MMu3a, I think we are particularly fortunate, and my thanks must go to the wonderful Group Leaders of all our interest groups. There is such a wide variety of interests catered for with many new ones starting up this year. The Group Leaders all put much effort into running their groups and this is reflected in their popularity.

Once again, I would like to recognise the members who work hard to ensure the monthly speaker meetings run smoothly. These meetings are not just about the speaker giving us much interesting information, but about the socialising afterwards at coffee time which gives us time with friends old and new. That the number of those attending seems to increase each month demonstrates how popular and important these meetings are. I thank our check-in volunteers, organised by Tina Porter; the Meet and Greet team who ensure each visitor and potential member receives a warm welcome; the Refreshments team, looked after by Angela Fielding, who keep us well-watered after the talk while we enjoy that all-important socialising; Brian Donovan and Alan Barton who look after the book and jigsaw tables respectively; and, of course, the Sound Desk Team, Dennis Hopkinson and David Slack, supported by C.J and Barry. They have had to overcome some frustrating technical hitches with the audio-visual equipment at the Baptist Church this year, but always do so cheerfully.

Also working hard behind the scenes to support our u3a, Peter Matthews has continued to look after our equipment, including PAT testing, and Jackie McMillan, who has taken on the task of examining our annual accounts this year. My grateful thanks go to them all.

Finally, I must also recognise and thank those outside the u3a who do much to support us. The teams at the Baptist Church and Sandy Lane Methodist Church as well as Southerington's storage on the Leicester Road, who allow us complementary use of a storeroom for our u3a equipment and other bits and pieces.

This year I step down after three years as chairman and, while I look forward to having more time available to participate in and enjoy more of our groups, I will miss the camaraderie of being on Committee. I have been extremely fortunate in working alongside many enthusiastic people over the time I have been on Committee. I am grateful for the support that has been offered to me by everyone, members and Committee alike, and am honoured to have been Chairman of MMu3a. I am looking forward to enjoying different aspects of MMu3a with all of you for many years ahead. My very best wishes go to those who will take MMu3a forward in the future.

Kathlyn Slack
MMu3a Chairman January 2026