

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Coquetdale u3a held at the Jubilee Hall, Rothbury at 10.30am on Monday 15th April 2024

PRESENT	Vivienne Fleet	Chair
	Ian Mayfield	Treasurer and Membership Secretary
	Susie Amodio	Group Co-ordinator
	Sue Ogilvie	Secretary
	Jan Gordon	Committee Member

Approximately 40 members were present.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Vivienne welcomed our members and introduced the committee.

2. Apologies: - Stephen Hall (Health and Safety Officer), Abigail Hall, Christine Bell, Geoff and Ros Hoskins.

3. Thanks

Clive Wilkinson registered his thanks to the committee for taking care of our u3a during the past year.

4. Minutes of the last AGM on 17th April 2023 – these had been e-mailed to all members. They were accepted as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

5. Coquetdale u3a Annual Chair's Report 2024

Well goodness me, what a year we've had! It's gone by in an absolute flash! For those of you who are relatively new to our u3a, the committee you see before you today, except for Jan, were all voted into office last April while Jan and Stephen, who can't be here today, were co-opted during the year. So, we've all been on an immense learning curve, but we've achieved an awful lot and I make no apologies for things being perhaps a little different to how they used to be. When you have so many new trustees on the committee, there were bound to be changes. But rest assured, all along our motivation has been to do the right thing and to do the best for all our members.

Now, one of the purposes of the AGM is to keep our members informed about the management of our u3a. So here goes...

The guidance from national u3a is that committee meetings are held every 2 to 3 months in other words between 4 and 6 times a year. Well, your committee has had 10 meetings since last year's AGM, 3 of those were interim meetings to discuss additional issues that cropped up between the regular 7 meetings. In addition to that, we've attended u3a training courses. I attended 'How to run your u3a' and 'Keeping it

Legal' & I then took every committee member through the detail of both workshops. Ian also did a workshop for Treasurers, and we've attended 3 regional network meetings on zoom.

There were some changes in the committee during the year. Sue and David Willoughby stood down from the committee although I am glad to say David has maintained his role as Webmaster! (There'll be more news from David on IT developments later in the meeting). I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their help on the committee. This of course necessitated a few changes within the committee. Susie Amodio moved from being Membership Secretary to the Coordinator for the Interest Group Coordinators and Ian Mayfield took on the Membership Secretary role alongside his Treasurer duties which has been no mean feat. Many thanks to them both for their flexibility and their huge efforts. Jan Gordon was co-opted to ensure we met the requisite minimum numbers on the committee and soon made a valuable contribution, not just through discussions at our meetings, but by stepping in to cover the refreshments at our members meetings along with her husband Simon. So, a big thank you to both of them!

We also realised from the Keeping it Legal training workshop that we would need to write and implement risk assessments. And that's when Stephen Hall joined us. With his background in civil engineering, he volunteered to manage that process and was duly co-opted on to the committee.

Stephen also brought in our new Health & Safety Policy and has become our Health & Safety Officer. So, we owe a debt of gratitude to Stephen for this very important work.

Health & Safety wasn't the only policy we brought in. Our Business Secretary Sue Ogilvie worked on the implementation of a number of policies: Data Protection; Privacy; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Safeguarding as well as a Code of Conduct and procedures for Complaints and Disciplinarys. These can all be found on the website through a link on the Welcome page. As can the various risk assessments which will also soon be going on the various groups' pages.

As well as dealing with the policies, arranging our meetings and minute taking, Sue also issues the monthly newsletters to keep everyone abreast of what's going on within our u3a as well as opportunities beyond Coquetdale. These are excellent documents so a very big thank to Sue for everything she does.

And then there's been the publicity we've brought in this year. Susie has worked on a new publicity poster and leaflet which we have taken into as many outlets as we can think of, including all the bus shelters up the valley! She has also written regular pieces for the last 4 Over the Bridges. Plus, we created a new Facebook page this year which our lovely member, Su Atkinson, is the main admin for with me as her deputy. So, we

really are getting our name out there. If you can think of any other ways we can raise our profile, even if it's simply letting us know where else to take the leaflets, do let us know.

Recently we agreed to move our website to the new Siteworks format, and I am delighted that John Dalrymple volunteered to be our Assistant Webmaster to help David Willoughby with that transition.

We've had an interesting run of monthly meetings this year (see Appendix 1) and I'd like to thank Tony Henry, our former Chair, for having arranged a number of those meetings before he left office.

Pete Burrow has also continued to provide social activities. There were trips to 4 shows during the year, 3 at the Theatre Royal (the ballet 'Sleeping Beauty', the musical 'The Commitments' and the comedy 'Noises Off'), plus 1 show at the Alnwick Playhouse: 'Magical Mozart'. All were very enjoyable. Pete had proposed 4 further events ('Jamie' musical, an opera, ballet, and Raby) but none had sufficient interest.

Both Pete and I believe the lack of interest is the result of Covid, rising cost of living and, perhaps the choice of events. Pete is no longer our Social Secretary and we have been unable to find anyone willing to take this on so it doesn't look like there will be many future events. So, a suggestion for our members who enjoy trips to the theatre... Might one of you or perhaps a few of you consider setting up a theatre group run on a team or a cooperative basis? Please speak to the committee if this would be of interest. We will help you to get this established. Be aware folks, going forward without a theatre or trips group or a Social Secretary there will not be many future social trips. However, if we can resurrect this, depending on his availability, Pete is happy to continue driving the minibus for the next 13 months or so. After that and we will also need another minibus driver. So do consider if you could help with that.

Last year Pete also set up a series of quarterly quizzes with the Jubilee Hall trustees. They have gone down very well with good support for the first three events and Pete reports that he will continue doing these until at least the Christmas Quiz this year. I would like to extend a huge thank you to Pete for all his work on the trips and the quizzes, which have also helped to raise our profile in the area.

Finally, the interest groups (see Appendix 2). In our publicity material we said they are the lifeblood of the u3a, and I firmly believe they are. This year we resurrected the 2nd book group who promptly renamed themselves the Border Readers, the Cycling Group and set up a new Spanish Conversation group and Board Games group. So we now have 19 interest groups which for our size is excellent.

Apparently, the number of groups that make for a healthy u3a equates to 10% of the number of members. Well I don't want to steal Ian's thunder on our membership

numbers, but I can tell you we have beaten that target! You know, these groups don't just happen. It takes a Group Coordinator or a team of Coordinators to make them happen and the committee really appreciates all that they do for our members because, quite simply put, without the Group Coordinators our groups would not run.

The majority of the coordinators also recently attended a 'New Members' meeting - and the success of that event goes to their commitment and enthusiasm. So, thank you very much for all that you do and we hope that as our membership numbers swell, some further groups will start up this year. If you have an idea for a group, perhaps a hobby or an interest that isn't represented in this list, please do come and have a chat. The committee will support you every step of the way to help the group get off the ground.

So, in conclusion, my thanks to everyone who gets involved in our wonderful Coquetdale u3a. It's thanks to every one of you that we are so vibrant and that we are continuing to grow.

Vivienne Fleet, Chair 2023-2024

MEETINGS SINCE APRIL 2023

- April: Nick Redmayne on taking a fire engine to Ukraine
- May: Mike Todd on his BBC Journey
- June: the annual garden party
- July: Clive Wilkinson on Rhodesia's move to independence
- September: Bill Bland on Ordnance Survey maps
- October: Chris Mullin on his latest diaries
- November: The Annual Lecture from David Jones on the archaeological work at Linbrig in Upper

Coquetdale

- January: David Medd on the Northumbrian small pipes
- February: Brycchen Carey on climate change
- March: Nicola Whiteside on Newcastle's first female GP

COQUETDALE U3A INTEREST GROUPS AS AT APRIL 2024

- Art Appreciation

- Board Games
- 2 x Book Groups
- Ceilidh Dancing
- Creative Writing
- Cycling
- Discussion Group
- Food and Drink
- Gardening
- Music Appreciation
- Nordic Walking
- Photography
- Poetry
- Railways and Modelling
- Spanish Conversation
- Table Tennis
- Vegetarian Food
- Walking Group

6. Treasurer's Report (with membership information)

The end of the 23-24 financial year finds Coquetdale u3a's finances in a healthy position. There was a small increase in member numbers and hence slightly higher membership income. Two successful and profitable quizzes, were held, run jointly with the Jubilee Hall Trust. These made a profit of £185, which was shared with the Trust. One of the u3as in the north-east region folded and their assets were shared amongst other u3as in the region; our share was a donation of £49.93. The region also decided not to raise a levy this year, which saved just over £20 compared to 22-23.

Although financial affairs ran smoothly from our local point of view, our dealings with our bank were extremely problematic. Our dissatisfaction with the poor service was such that the committee decided to change banks, despite the extra work and potential difficulties that might cause. In fact, the change was relatively smooth – no thanks due to our old bank. The committee decided that the change of bank presented an opportunity to close the events account; there seemed to be no compelling reason to run two separate accounts and having one account will in many respects be simpler, for example a number of payments were made this year into the 'wrong' account and had

to be transferred back. This included income and expenditure for the St Abbs walk which would in retrospect have been more appropriately recorded in the Events account.

Our membership has increased since last year. At the end of March, we had 169 paid up members. At the time of this AGM 93 members have renewed their membership.

7. Election of Committee –

Jan and Stephen were co-opted onto the committee during the year. It is therefore necessary formally to propose their committee positions.

Jan Gordon was proposed by Susie Amodio, seconded by Joan Wilkinson and Janet Blackburn; Stephen Hall was proposed by Clive Wilkinson and seconded by Mike Jevons. Both were unanimously voted on to the committee.

The full committee was unanimously voted to remain in post, with no additional nominations having been received.

8. The Coming Year

Vivienne presented the committee's plans for the coming year as follows:

- April: Peter Kerr, Northumberland Rivers Trust & WIs on the River Coquet
- May: Walter Riddell on Rewilding and Hepple Gin
- June: the annual garden party
- July: Nick Lewis, National Trust on Lutyens at Lindisfarne Castle
- August: possibly a guided foraged walk
- September: Heather Devey on the Reintroduction of Beavers
- October: the Rothbury Ringers on bell ringing
- November: The Annual Lecture from Dr Chris Ferguson on Anglo-Saxon Northumbria
- December: the Christmas quiz

SiteWorks: Along with many other u3as, this year our website will be transferring from SiteBuilder to SiteWorks with David Willoughby and John Dalrymple leading that process for Coquetdale. The new website will have a more modern feel to it. During the transfer period, no updates to the old website will be allowed but fair warning will be given to all those involved. Group leaders/coordinators will be given training on the new system once it is in place.

9. Any Other Business – Vivienne plans to visit each of the interest groups during the coming year.

Larry Lampert was unanimously elected as the examiner for next year's accounts.