

EALING AND DISTRICT UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

ANNUAL REPORT

March 2026

Today, I have the honour and pleasure of introducing the Annual Report of Ealing u3a for the year to March 2026.

This has been my second year as Chair of Ealing u3a, and looking around me there are so many familiar faces for we see one another on three Thursday mornings in a month. I would like to point out to you how unusual an arrangement this is. Here in Ealing, we are unique among u3as in organising a talk on three successive Thursdays. Most u3as have only a visiting speaker once a month. I value these occasions enormously not only for what we learn from those who come to address us but also the sense of community which we experience. During the last twelve months we have had 35 presentations of which 10 were given by members of Ealing u3a. Patricia Plummer and Derek Atkinson are to be heartily thanked for arranging a splendid selection of speakers and adroitly combining themes such as our two summer talks in August on 'British Heroic Explorations of Antarctica in the early 1900's'. In addition, I would like to thank those who set out chairs on Thursday mornings. They play an essential role, and I want to stress our gratitude for their contribution. We must also formally thank Ealing Green Church for allowing us to use their facilities and Derek Atkinson for liaising so successfully with the Church's management.

We are reliant on our technical team for their help on Thursday mornings. This is no easy matter. Two laptops are used in the hall, one to run the speaker's presentation shown on the screen and the second to link to the church sound desk and video camera. Both these laptops also run Zoom to allow us to share

the talk with our members watching from home. A third laptop is set up in the foyer of the church to monitor the Zoom session. There have been problems when speakers require sound input to their presentation and the team are working hard to resolve this. We intend to buy a new projector this coming year to give us a better quality of picture. The technical team comprises Alan Browne, Paul Sawbridge, Phil Broomsgrove, Chris Freemantle and Sue Peach. Three of the team are usually involved on any Thursday morning. I would like to record our sincere thanks for all the work they do, sometimes under challenging circumstances.

The experience of many of our members centres on the special interest groups. Groups are advertised on our website, and we also hold an Annual Groups Showcase where convenors and inquiring members can come together. In 2025 the Groups Showcase was held on 29th May and was so successful that the sound level became uncomfortable. The committee is looking to resolve this issue. In 2026 the Showcase will be held on Thursday 30th April. In addition, there is a Convenors' Event planned for Monday 30th March and anyone thinking of running a new group and wanting some support and advice is very welcome to join it.

During the last twelve months fourteen new groups have been founded, and I will list them to give members some idea of the wide range of activities we are undertaking. Two new walking groups have been established in response to popular demand. A backgammon group has been set up and Mahjong now has a third group. Languages are represented with a second German conversation group and Beginners Italian. We have new groups in Economics and Current Affairs and Art History and classical civilisations are represented with the History of Roman Britain

and Classical Literature. When members are not visiting gardens, they are juggling.

If you have an interest which you would like to share with others, why not consider becoming a group convenor. This would not mean that you were perpetually in harness. It is possible to set up a group to discuss a particular theme or themes and then bring it to an end when discussion of the subject is concluded. Think about it.

I want to pay tribute to our Groups' Organiser, Sue Peach. Sue has worked tirelessly to set up new groups where existing groups are full and is unfailingly helpful to members who are trying to establish new groups. Most of you will be aware that Sue has also produced our monthly newsletter and I would like to thank all members who have contributed items.

We have also had coach excursions to places of interest, such as Cambridge, Winchester and Bury St Edmonds, and two trips to the Sky Gardens in London. Once again we have held the holiday trip to Torquay in late February, with over 50 of our members taking part. Patricia Plummer intends to extend the number of short holiday destinations in the forthcoming year. These excursions and holiday trips were greatly enjoyed during the year.

Our series of seven London Revisited outings were organised by Derek Atkinson between May and September 2025. Of special note was the visit in October to the Supreme Court, Westminster. So many of our members were interested in taking part that two visits were arranged. We are enormously grateful to Derek for his organisation.

Rosemary Hart continued to arrange theatre outings to our local Questors Theatre throughout the year, including to the "Cinderella" Christmas pantomime. She has been able to

organise group discounts, which are greatly appreciated by the many members who take part.

Our membership has grown in the last year from 651 in March 2025 to 734 today. Lyn Duffus is our Membership Administrator and along with our Treasurer, Liz Major, has dealt with processing new memberships and renewals. Our renewals season of November to February is a busy time for them both and I would like to register our thanks for all their work.

We use the Beacon system, managed through the Third Age Trust, to record our membership details and Beacon also provides the facility to record details of our special interest groups and enables us to send emails securely to our members. Phil Broomsgrove is our Beacon Administrator with Jurek Narozanski's assistance.

Other events which took place during the year, were our annual Photographic Competition, which attracted a record 168 photographs and 25 prizes were awarded totalling £300. Our thanks are due to the judges and all those who took part and whose contributions gave us so much pleasure.

The Summer Picnic in the Park, on July 31st 2025, which had been carefully planned to take place in Walpole Park was rained off but the organisation rose splendidly to the occasion and the festivities took place in the back hall of Ealing Green Church. Approximately 50 people attended and members kindly donated food and drink.

We were forced to abandon our traditional venue for our Tea Parties at Ealing Golf Club and Jim McWilliams swung into action and re-booked us into the DoubleTree by Hilton on Ealing Common. This proved to be an exceedingly popular choice with 163 people attending and many members found the

venue much easier to reach by public transport. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Jim McWilliams for organizing these events.

Our new website has been running successfully for 18 months now, using u3a Siteworks, a product developed by u3a volunteers nationally and used by the majority of u3as across the country. Phil Broomsgrove and Jurek Narozanski carry out most of the updating with help from Sue Peach, Jenny Sturt and Teresa Kelly. It is intended to allow those Group Convenors who are interested to update their own group pages later this year.

Our financial situation remains very positive, and we have been able to maintain the low membership fee of £20 in 2025 for a further year. Our Treasurer, Liz Major, will provide a full report on our situation and I am very grateful to her for keeping the committee so well informed.

Ealing u3a is incredibly fortunate to have so many activities and so many members - too many to mention by name - who have run groups, and helped in many different ways in order to make this organisation such a success and so important to its members. I am well aware that a number of our volunteers who keep things running so well are not very visible to the general membership.

We have been sad this year to lose a number of members, as is inevitable in an organisation such as ours, and they will all be missed. However, I want to mention in particular, Margaret Martin, who died earlier this March. She was the Secretary for some 17 years, and greatly supported the committee in our earlier days.

In conclusion, it only remains for me to express my sincere thanks to all members of the committee. Without them, Ealing u3a as we know it could not exist. In particular I would like to

thank Patricia Plummer who is now stepping down as speaker organiser for arranging such interesting speakers during her time as speaker arranger and our secretary, Sylvia Stirling, who not only carries out all the administrative tasks but also reminds us of our responsibilities as trustees of this organisation.

Jill Stern, Chair of Ealing u3a