

## Shropshire Network report 2022-2023

As most of you are (or should be!) aware, the Shropshire Network was formed some time ago to allow u3as within our region to collaborate, to offer help to others and also to share best practice. This proved invaluable in 2022 as we emerged from the pandemic and restarted our face-to-face meetings, helping people to talk about issues and find the best way forward for their own u3a. All of our u3as have worked hard to improve the loss of members that they experienced during that time - some have advertised with posters and leaflets, whereas others have organised 'open' events for people to find out more about the u3a and what we do, with great success. Numbers across Shropshire are increasing, although there remains a concern that we need to recruit some younger members for our u3as to continue to thrive.

This year, there has been some sadness within our Network, as we lost two of our long-standing members – Robert Toft (a former treasurer from Much Wenlock u3a) and Sheila Etherington (Wrekin u3a). Many tributes were paid to them by members of several u3as, demonstrating the close ties that we often have within the Network. The make-up of our Network has as a result inevitably changed, but this brings in new ideas and, dare I say it, 'fresh faces'.

On a more positive note, after 2-3 years of continual zoom meetings, we finally decided it was high time that we organised a face-to-face meeting. We wanted to include not only the 'usual' Network representatives, but also committee members from the different u3as, so that we could allow a greater degree of networking between everyone. After a flurry of activity trying to organise things (we only had a few months), it was finally held in Shrewsbury last week. Feedback is still coming in, but it does seem to have been a successful day, with new ideas, new contacts and a renewed enthusiasm for the role of the Network. As a consequence, many u3as now feel that they should become more involved in setting our Network topics when we meet, which will mean an increasingly important role for us in helping u3as to improve and grow.  
What more can I say?

Take care

Glynis

*(for my sins, still Chair of the Network...)*