Silchester Association Chairman's Report April 2015

Last year's AGM saw a large majority of long standing Committee members resign and the challenge was made that, if the people of Silchester wanted to continue to have a vibrant Association to organise Village events and foster Community spirit, then new people would have to come forward and participate on the Committee.

Many people took up the challenge and the Association ended up with 17 people agreeing to be on the Committee for the year.

Alan Fairhurst (Spike) took over the role of Chairman after the last AGM, but had to resign when he moved away from Silchester. It was then that I was asked, as Vice Chairman, to take over as Chairman. Thanks go to Spike and I think we all hope he will continue to be MC at our various events in the future.

As with any substantially new Committee, the question of what we were trying to do as the Silchester Association was raised at the first meeting. This led to much discussion and debate about our Aims and Objectives and the Constitution, which has continued throughout the year. Sara will be talking about this later and I hope we will have your support to vote in a new Constitution that better reflects what we do and is consistent our current situation.

A key realisation from these discussions was the need to improve our insurance cover to better protect the Association and its volunteer helpers. David Westwood has done a great job in negotiating and arranging a new insurance policy for the Association .

While the list of key events organised by the Association has been substantially maintained, it was sad that we were unable to hold the Fun Run in 2014. I am sure you all know this has been rectified and on 9th May 2015 we are looking forward to what promises to be the best Silchester Fun Run yet.

Tony Stanley gave us his all in his final Quiz Night in June, before leaving the Village with his wife Jo, our Chairman last year. They are missed. As always, the questions were challenging and fiercely contested and, in the end the prize was won by the football enthusiasts who managed to name every one of the world cup team.

In conjunction with Nick and Biddy West there was a Barn Dance with the "Diggers" at the Old Manor House, to celebrate their last dig at Insula IX. A great night was had by all.

Derek Monger took control of the Silchester Beer Festival in September and there was a fascinating array of regional beers and ciders. The band Moonfly played out the evening and the wonderful summer weather allowed everyone to enjoy the event both inside and outside the Village Hall.

We were also really lucky with the weather for the Bonfire Night. 1200 people turned up making it one of the most successful ever. Paul Baker and his team had things planned perfectly. The pumpkin competition, the amazing bonfire, lit by Richard and Robina Rand (they will also be missed), with the guy made by Derek and Hannah Monger's children. The fireworks were amazing, but the mulled wine ran out too soon.

The annual Boundary Walk of the Parish, in conjunction with St Mary's, was in October with about 40 people doing the 8 mile walk through our beautiful countryside. Thanks go to Brian and Debbie at Haskers Farm for our lunch stop.

With the Association wishing to foster community relations, many on the Committee felt they did not know all the other people in the Village who worked voluntarily for their own organisations to enhance our community. It was felt a better understanding of, and communication with, other organisations in the Village could improve coordination and avoid clashes of dates and duplication of activities. The Association, with Derek Fawcett in charge, arranged a Village Get Together in February, which proved very successful.

March saw another fascinating talk by Professor Fulford on the last stages of the dig at Insula IX. While the site has now been filled in, it is obvious that there is much more activity planned in area for the future and we hope to be able to invite him to speak to us again.

The next day saw an Exhibition of Art by nine local artists, coordinated by Lesley Brewin, in the Village Hall. There is an amazing amount of talent in our village and it was wonderful to welcome over 150 people to come and appreciate the artists' work.

During the year, the Silchester Association has made many donations to other organisations in the Village who help further our aims and objectives.

We have a full programme of events for the coming year, so look on the web site, Facebook page, or in the Village Magazine for details . Put the dates in your diaries.

That just leaves the Thank You's. The new Committee has risen to the task of maintaining a vibrant calendar of community events for the Village. They have been able to call on help from a large number of Volunteers. Dave will be detailing just how much work is involved in organising something like a Bonfire Night. Thank you to all who have helped and we have a sheet for people to sign up if they would like to help with future events.

Finally, a special thank you to Irene Spillane. She is leaving the Committee after many years of commitment to the Association and hours of work behind the scenes . It is people like her that that really help bring a community together.

Thank You.