

SILCHESTER ASSOCIATION 2020/2021 CHAIRMANS REPORT

What a strange year 2020/21 turned out to be and I for one did not think that we would be in a position of holding a virtual AGM, and yet again as Chair I am unable to give my report in person, but hopefully this Zoom AGM will compensate in some way.

With all the COVID restrictions we had to think on our feet to arrange events that complied. This meant that many of the usual events such as The Beer Festival, Professor Fulford's Talk, the Brownies Christmas meal had to be cancelled, but to keep morale high we looked at arranging different "socially distanced" options.

The first of these was the Virtual Fun Run, which was very well supported with entrants from across the globe. Amazingly the Fun Run committee managed to turn what was looking to be a loss-making event into a very successful profit-making event and we were able to make substantial donation to the British Legion and the NHS charity.

We did manage to put on the Scarecrow trail in the Autumn half term and had even more entrants this year. The theme was once again Halloween, but with a Jim Henson Twist, and this year the winner was Kermit as a Roman Legion. I would like to thank my Subcommittee for all their help, and hope that we can arrange this again, this year with the Disco as well.

We had a socially distance Boundary Walk attended by 21 people and 5 dogs, groups of no more than 6 were sent off at intervals, it was a beautifully sunny day although a little cold. The Macklin family very kindly allowed us to congregate in their garden for lunch and some restorative wine.

As I am sure you are all aware the Church has had an interesting year as it has been required to hold virtual services etc. for most of it. This type of restriction inevitably impacts on funds and we at the Association wanted to see if we could help. Out of this thought developed the Photography competition, where we saw 120 pictures entered by 28 photographers with pictures all related to Silchester. These pictures were then put online and we asked people to vote for their favourites, the ultimate winner being Angus Macklin, with a fabulous picture of a Pheasant, the top images were then made into a Silchester Calendar, the costs of which were met by the association, and all profits from the sale went to the Church. This proved extremely popular with a total sell-out of the calendars, and whilst not confirmed yet we may be looking at making this an annual event.

Social distancing restrictions meant that the Brownies could not hold their usual annual Christmas Meal, so the idea of providing hampers to the usual invitees was put forward. This was quickly taken up by the Brownies, and the list of recipients climbed to 50!

The Hampers were extremely well received, with a great combination of purchased items and those crafted by the Brownies themselves, we at the Silchester Association were very happy to provide the funds for this venture.

Another Annual project we get involved with is the Village Christmas Tree, this is usually funded by ourselves and the Calleva Arms, but this year it was jointly funded by ourselves and the Parish Council, to help alleviate any more pressure that our local has suffered during COVID. Whilst we were not able to have the Carols round the tree etc. it was still comforting to have the tree as a focal point in the village.

Following on from this we also arranged a “Decorate a Christmas House “ event which was well received and supported, and just like the Christmas Tree it was lovely to see so many people make the effort and brighten up our village.

Over the year we have made some significant grants which you will see more about in the Treasurers report, and whilst we have run at a loss this year, we are still in very good shape to continue putting on community events and reengage the great community spirit we have here in Silchester.

When talking about community support, I would like to thank Amy Donnelly for arranging our village response to lockdown. Whilst I think it is fair to say that we were not inundated with requests for help, when one came in it was actioned quickly usually with more than one person offering to assist. From talking to people in the village we have such a good community spirit that many people did not need formal help from us, because they had neighbours or local friends that helped them, yet more confirmation if any was needed of how lucky we all are to live in a strong community.

Let's look forward to the next year with the hope that things can return to some sort of normal, some great village events, and who knows even a “real AGM” next April.