

## **SILCHESTER ASSOCIATION AGM 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024 CHAIR'S REPORT**

Thank you all for attending our AGM, it has been another packed year with events and changes for the Association. I will try very hard not to cover matters that Stephen will be bringing up in his finance report, but I apologise as there will I think be some overlap. At the end of last year's AGM, we were about to have two large village events the Fun Run and the Kings Coronation. Both events were a great success.

As many of you know the Fun Run has been under the auspices of the Association via a very competent Sub committee for many years. This event has been extremely successful and has developed into a serious running event pulling in competitors from far and wide, and discussions were had last year as to the future development of this event. A decision was taken that the Fun Run would be handed over to the newly constituted Sports Pavilion charity which seems the most appropriate place for a serious sporting event to be administered from. This will of course mean that they will benefit from all profits made, instead of the usual 50% split between them and us. However, the Association did give the Pavilion all the profit from last years event to assist with the rebuilding, so we have already taken the "hit" to our finances, more of that later.

The King's Coronation was another great village event. We were able to raise funds from several sources, and this enabled us to put on a no cost event and provide free entertainment. Many people have expressed a wish for this type of event to be an annual fixture, but it is quite difficult for us to do this as unless we have access to grants etc, it would be costly for us to run and difficult to make is a ticketed event as it's on the village green. I also cannot underestimate the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to ensure that these types of events run smoothly. But I am quite sure that any opportunities that arise to do something along these lines then the Association would look to trying to do something similar.

We had our usual events, such as the Boundary walk, Professor Fulford the Quiz night and a new event, Rock and Roll Bingo! This was such a fun event, and we had a great cross section of people and ages which was lovely to see.

We also had our first Burns Night, this event sold out extremely quickly, and was a bit of a riot. Those who came will I am sure remember the Dancing.... It was shall I say chaotic, and I remember at one point the caller just laughing, I am not sure he'd seen anything like it. This was a jointly run event between us and the Village Hall, with all the profit going towards the village hall improvements.

I have left the Beer Festival to last as this needs a little bit more discussion. Normally, this is a big fund raiser for us, however this year we about broke even. This led us to have a serious look at what went wrong, and it was a number of matters all coming together, shall we say the prefect storm.

The event was attended by 160 people and whilst these numbers were down it still cannot be looked on as a poor event, all of those who did attend had a great time, and I lost count of the number of people who came up to me to say that they noticed numbers were down, but were at pains to say that they hoped this would not result in us cancelling the event next year.

We had a hard look at why the numbers were down and came to the conclusion that we were up against both a football and a rugby fixture that evening, and the previous week the village had held the church Fete and the Silchester 24. There was in our opinion an element of event fatigue, and these type of external factors were looked at when fixing the date this year.

There are other issues that need to be addressed such as the number of Beers available, the cost of the glasses etc, and these are all being

looked at by the Sub committee to ensure that we keep a very tight reign on the fixed costs.

This brings me to what I think is the most important part of my comments this year. The Association is going through some big changes. For a long time, we have been in the fortunate position of being able to raise quite substantial funds, which we have then been able to distribute in the form of grants etc. The loss in recent years of the Fireworks, and now the Fun Run has changed the dynamic. Our purpose remains the same.

To encourage all aspects of Community life, to engage with locals' groups, to foster the rural character and amenities of Silchester, and to raise fund to ensure we can achieve these objectives.

So, the committee will continue to do all these things, but with more of an emphasis on community and facilitating and less of an emphasis on raising money to give out as grants, although if surplus funds are available then these will still be used for the benefit of Silchester.

Finally, after five years as Chair, I am standing down, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee over my tenure for all their help. I also would like to thank the following people for their contributions as they stand down from the committee, Sally Thomas, and Lesley Brewin. Sadly, Lesley cannot be here today, but has been a stalwart of the committee for some 14 years, and I would have loved to have been able to embarrass her personally with the praise that she deserves for her support and contribution to the Association.

I would also like to acknowledge all the volunteers that have given their help to make sure that the Association can achieve its objectives.

Thank you all!