

## **CHAIRMANS COMMENTS 2022**

At long last after the strangest two years, I get to welcome you all to an actual AGM, not a virtual one. So, firstly I would just like to explain that as we have not had formal meetings there are no minutes to propose and second, but apart from that I hope that this AGM will follow the usual format and should anyone wish to query anything then please come and see me at the end of the meeting.

Over the last 12 months there have been a few ups and downs, but I am glad to say that the balance was definitely biased towards up! There are two things which I think the Association do well, and these are putting on community events, and making donations to help village groups realise their aims. COVID 19 severely curtailed both activities, but this year we seem to have come out of the shadows and got back to what we do best.

Since the last formal AGM we have not been able to have the Fun Run, although the committee did run a great virtual Fun Run in 2020. As I am sure many of you are aware this year's Fun Run is planned for Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of May. Usually, we try to avoid clashing with the Village Market, but this year it proved very difficult to get a date and following the success of running the market and the Church Fete on the same day it was agreed that we would try this format for the Fun Run. So, fingers crossed for good weather and I for one look forward to a great village day out.

We were lucky this year, that although COVID tried to knock us off course at times, we were able to go ahead with our usual events.

Who can forget the Beer Festival, this is always well attended, but this year we needed to turn people away as we were at full capacity. The weather was kind and many people were able to sit outside enjoying the Beer, Gin fish and chips and perhaps most importantly getting together again to socialise in a normal environment.

Other events were the Scarecrow trail, the Boundary Walk a return of the Professor Fulford talk after a 2-year break, and in February we had the hotly contested Silchester Quiz Night.

As I mentioned I think that we do two things well, the second is making grants. This year we have been able to help several groups with donations. The Pavilion committee for a new or should that be reconditioned mower. We also made a substantial donation towards the funding required for the new Playground tower. A donation towards the setting up of Sustainable Silchester, and then a further donation towards the setting up of the Brownies new Sustainability badge, in conjunction with Sustainable Silchester.

We again ran and funded the Silchester Calendar with all profits being donated to our beautiful St Marys Church.

Again, this year due to COVID concerns the Brownies did Christmas Hampers instead of the Christmas Meal, and we were very happy to be able to financially support them.

At this time, we also have several grants committed, but not yet made, to Silchester Primary school to help pay for the school leavers books, and also a grant in process to help the Historical group fulfil their aim of producing a book about the overall history of Silchester.

All this activity has meant that we have made or committed in the last 12 months approximately £6,000. Which bearing in mind our fund-raising opportunities have been severely curtailed over the last couple of years due to COVID restrictions is testament to Silchester's community spirit. We the committee run the Association but couldn't do it without the support and help of all our volunteers, not only in giving time to help, but attending the events and making them successful, thereby enabling us to make money to distribute, and not forgetting the very kind annual donation we receive from a well-known local couple to whom I would like to say a personal thank you for their support.

Our next major event is the Platinum Jubilee and plans are afoot to make this a great afternoon. It will take the format of a Picnic on the Playing field. So far, we have the choir performing, a Jubilee Dessert competition, fancy dress and Music through the Decades of the Queens Reign, there are a few other events we are looking at, but not yet confirmed, but it certainly looks like another great family/community event in the making. So please make a note in your diaries for June 7<sup>th</sup>.

As will become apparent later a couple of longstanding members of the committee are standing down this year. Simon Brewin and Hannah Monger, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for all their help in the past. In respect of Hannah, she has kindly agreed to stay on our Beer Festival subcommittee, principally organising the Beer! The live music and the Fish and Chip van Cods and Rockers, so sorry Hannah if you thought that you were going to make a clean break, I know where you live! Simon, unfortunately for us cannot be here this evening as both he and Lesley are having a well-earned Holiday down under with all their family. Whilst I am sorry to see Simon step down, I have explained to him that with Lesley still being on the committee I am working on a 2 for 1 basis, and even before he tried to rest on his Laurels got him on the Jubilee Subcommittee. We are fortunate to be able to welcome some new committee members, but we are always looking out for more, and if anyone is interested in helping, please come and have a chat with me at the end of the meeting.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my committee for their commitment to helping run this Association. It quite simply wouldn't be possible without all their input, and I think we would all agree that Silchester would be the poorer not only in financial support, but more importantly fostering community spirit.