

Wythall Community Club AGM – 1st March 2024

Chairman's Address

I've never been much of a one for speeches.

The only two I have ever made that really mattered were as 'Father of The Bride'. And whilst I would have loved to have modelled them on [Rowan Atkinson's classic work](#), the humour tended more towards [Rick Astley](#) than [Rik Mayall](#).

Firstly, I wanted to remind everyone that the Club is separate from the Park and run by a separate committee. The Club rents space from the Park and pays a Service Charge for staff and overheads. In return, the Club provides social activities to bring the community together and aims to generate funds for the Wythall Community Association Charity. So, although the Club is an integral part of the Park Community and works closely with Wythall Community Association, our Committee is responsible solely for the Social Club and bars in Wythall House.

Whilst it's not quite a full 12 months since the last AGM, and that one was only four and half months after the previous one, where you elected a new team of officers; and we also held an EGM in September to ratify the new Constitution which is hopefully easier to read and understand and reflects our current objectives and rules.... that shouldn't be taken as an indication of an enthusiasm for AGM'S!. The last 16 months has been more than a bit of a roller coaster, but there are many different ways of measuring our success, some of which I will try and cover this evening.

Finances

Let's start with the easy one ... finances.

When you elected us in October 2022, the Treasurer, the ultimate keeper of the purse, told us that we, the new officers at the Club, had 4 months in which to achieve a complete 180 degree turnaround on finances otherwise we would run out of cash and we would have to close. Not 'you might struggle', or 'it will be tight', but 'you will close'.....

We got to the March 2023 AGM still, just, afloat and opening slightly longer hours. I won't steal Chris's thunder and reveal the final 2023 results, but one of the key objectives of the Club is to financially support the charitable aims of the Association. We've not been very good at that in recent years. This year we have changed. And in spades.

I would say that the improved position is all down to you members out there, but I feel a special mention needs to be made of Chris and Ken who are almost religious in their support of our weekend trading! There was even a suggestion that they should be identified separately in the accounts!

So by the measure of money, we're not doing too badly. Chris will be able to tell you more about that in a minute ...

Membership

The other reasonably easy measure of success is membership. We are getting better in telling you when renewals are due, more of you are choosing to renew, and more of you are choosing to join or rejoin, in some cases after many years away. We are also finding more of the clubs that meet on the park are choosing to take club membership as well. They obviously feel that after a few hours hard exercise, a restorative beverage goes down very well!

Currently we have 990 paid up club members (up from about 800 in October 2022). We are still missing quite a few email addresses, so more than a few renewal notices are hand-delivered by Liz, or posted (at which point the treasurer sees the bill and has a hot flush!). We have a further 250 who are 'Association only' members only, but the gap is narrowing.

Communication

We've been concentrating on improving our communication with both members and potential members, promoting our events using our Facebook pages and our website has been developed and is constantly updated with events and information.

Most importantly, we are keen to listen to members and understand what you want from us and from your Club. Any time you see any of us in the club and want to have a chat or make any suggestions, we're not hiding! Please do approach us with feedback, ideas or any concerns.

The other benefit of having email addresses for members is that we can tell them what has been happening, and what is to come, on a regular basis. I know it would be lovely to have the regular printed newsletter that I recall my elder daughter delivering as a teenager, but the 1,300 plus newsletters we target deliver every week, that cost us nothing, would cost us in excess of £750 a time for a printed and delivered option.

We have to thank Richard Burn for the work involved in managing the website, mailing list and producing and delivering the newsletter. Come rain or shine. And that is in spite of some of the dire jokes in the content!

Activities and Events

We know that putting on activities and events is important to bring our community of members together. And also to raise much-needed funds.

I am aware that Club and Association are not legally the same beast, and this is the Club AGM, but most people just see that something is happening "...at the Park".

We've encouraged more of our members to use our facilities to play skittles, pool, darts, dominoes, cribbage, poker, and, of course, chess.

And in between times, because we - as in the Club committee members - don't want you getting bored, , we have run a number of other events. It must be pointed out that NONE of which would have happened without your unstinting support; by your turning up and enjoying them, but also more importantly your support by helping out.

On an ongoing basis, our monthly quizzes have grown to the point where they have nearly outgrown the lounge! For our Saturday quizzes, seats are sought after with quizzers arriving early to bag their spot. And our dynamic duo, Helen and Jules, do an amazing job of writing and hosting the quizzes themselves. As they still like to contribute more, they have also hosted a few Bingo nights in the lounge which have been a great success particularly with families. The Monday Quizzes are now a monthly fixture with Richard and Liz alternating as hosts and encouraging a few more into the lounge on a quieter night of the week.

The two events dearest to my heart (and stomach) were the inaugural Cider and Sausage Festival, and the annual Beer festival. Dearest to my heart because they were run by you.

The Cider Festival - which really was Liz's brainchild - had you all packed into the Brit Room - mostly because it was absolutely pouring with rain that day, but between the cider, the ukulele band and the sausages, we all had fun. We thought that training the volunteers to help behind the bar might be a challenge, but with a cry of "it's just like a big wine box" all the helpers from 18 to 80 got stuck in.

Our 'new look' Beer Festival attracted more than double the people than the previous year, more local beers to try - thanks to Kevin Ell - and nearly 1,000 pints of beer sold!

To round off the calendar year (although strictly speaking the next financial year) in December we put on a very lively Children's Christmas Party - thank you Jonathon - and our annual New Year's Eve Party.

We have so much to look forward to with all of these events being re-staged this year and new ones, such as our Live Music night with Vehicle in April - being added

We have an endless list of ideas ... and are only constrained by how much time volunteers can give to put them on.

Perception

All of that is about the easy to measure stuff - numbers. People turning up, spending money.

The best bit of doing what we do, is coming in here, with you members talking to us about what you like and what you want. And I do rather like when you tell us we're doing the right things!

But we are also aware that we don't hit the mark 100% of the time, and that's why your feedback is invaluable, as is meeting up with members to discuss the improvements you would like.

On social media, people refer to us as a welcoming, family friendly social club more and more. And it's you who are the ones welcoming new people and returnees into the Club.

To close, then, thank you to our hard-working staff who get everything ready for service and keep the drinks flowing on a daily basis. Thank you to our Committee of volunteers who willingly give up their time to ensure that the Club is still here for you. But, most of all, thank you for helping to turn your Club around.