

Annual General Meeting of Rowlands Castle Association

Date: 26 February 2024

Time: 7 pm

Location: R.C. Parish Hall – Large Hall

Present: Committee – Caroline Hadley (Chair) Martha Dombey (Treasurer) Chris Stinton (Vice Chair), Pete Rhymes (Committee Member) Alan Evers (President)

Audience : 12 members.

Apologies: Julia Connolly, Fiona Charlesworth, Gordon Charlesworth

Chair of Committee Speech – Caroline Hadley

Welcome to the 2024 RCA AGM. You may remember from my last Chair Speech that 2022 was the year the committee you see in front of you today was formed and the year we reviewed how the RCA operated and went back to basics of “What is the RCA?”. 2023 has been a year of building on and enhancing this foundation and rebranding to take the RCA into the future.

I would like to introduce you to our new logo. The new logo has been designed by the whole committee to represent the RCA as it is today and going forwards. The green is to reflect the village and its prominent feature, the Green. The circle reflects the inclusion of all village residents and the continuation of the RCA being part of village life. The Castle acknowledges the rich history of the village.

So, I would like to take you through a reminder of the RCA foundations. Our constitution states that we:

Provide a channel of communication on matters of local interest.

Enhance the life in the village.

Conserve the character of Rowlands Castle

So, what did the RCA committee do in 2023?

We continued to host 4 means of communication.

Firstly, the Grapevine. This is the closed email chain that lets us know about events coming up in the village and surrounding area, and things like the lost and the found. In 2023 there were 1033 email addresses signed up to the Grapevine and 395 emails posted, one of which was for a lost and found back page of a passport.

This communication channel requires prompt and diligent reviewing of every message requested for posting to ensure each message is suitable for this channel of communication and meets the criteria set to ensure we are not all inundated with spam messages. This year Martha and Chris shared this duty.

Secondly, we have a Facebook page. This has been managed successfully by Martha. Any messages for the village that may not work on the grapevine, for example those that work best with a picture have been posted on Facebook. For 2023 there were 2400 followers on this page which is 300 more than in 2022. On the slide you can see the most viewed post of the flooded ford on Woodbury Lane, in Dec 23 with a whopping 9k views!

Next, we have the RCA website. This has been managed by Mark who is not a committee member and without whom the site would not exist. The website holds a wealth of knowledge of events going on in the village, it has links to other groups around the village and pictures from past events to name a few. It also contains the details of what the RCA do. Over 2023 there were 5476 hits on this site.

Finally, the RCA facilitate the village magazine, Village & Valley. Now without the fantastic editor Kelvin this magazine would not exist. Not only does he collate the articles sent for publication, he reviews these articles, ensures the magazine is fabulous to look at and read, by providing several of the photos himself. And, if that is not enough, He then co-ordinates the printing of the magazine. Julia co-ordinates the adverts and Gordon coordinates the distribution of the magazine. There are 1600 households that receive a copy through their letter boxes 3 times a year. Sadly, Kelvin is stepping down after 7 years as editor.

During that time, he has voluntarily produced 20 editions of the Village and Valley at a very high standard. I would like to thank Kevin for his fantastic contribution to our community and wish him all the best for the future.

I am pleased to announce that Kitty Carruthers has agreed to produce and edit the Village and Valley. The RCA will be reaching out to all you keen photographers within the village to ask you to capture our beautiful village and the life in its village, to then use some of your photographs in the magazine. A grapevine will be communicated, explaining formats and how to submit your photographs to our new editor.

So, moving on to Enhancing life in the village and conserving the character of the village. The RCA hosted and enhanced 3 events this year and facilitated the enhancement of one other. The RCA conserves the character of the village either through donations raised by the events, given to good causes in and around the village or by hosting the events themselves.

In chronological order, we hosted the May Day Picnic, the RCA Quiz night, the Rowlands Castle Fireworks and supported the Christmas Carols on the Green.

So, starting with the May Day Picnic:

2023's May Day Picnic contended with showers but in true British style, that did not stop the event from being the best attended May Day Picnic yet. Thank you to the residents who lent their marquees and gazebos enabling the BBQ, Brass band and attendees to dodge the showers. The enhancements this year were 1) The date was moved to align with the coronation and the "BIG HELP" bank holiday weekend, 2) as part of the BIG HELP we had volunteers from the Rowans friends attending, taking buckets around and answering questions about the Rowans Hospice. We had the volunteer Scouts manning the BBQ. Lisa Walker manning the megaphone and announcing each aspect of the entertainment during the afternoon and 3) we had an Ice Cream van and village groups hosting stalls. Overall, the event raised £1000 for Rowans, £150 for Blendworth brass band and £150 for the Scouts.

Next came the Quiz Night:

Yet again what a night it was! We had 11 teams for the evening and the event was started by a thank you and demonstration from the South Coast Ambulance Service, showing us all what the donations from the 2022 quiz night enabled them to purchase and what a difference it was making to those needing the call out from our very own Rowlands Castle first responder. This year the Quiz Night raised £1000 for the South Coast Ambulance Service.

Then came the big event of the year, the Fireworks.

The committee did a fantastic job this year in hosting the iconic event that is such a large part of the character of the village. We had more choices for food & hot drinks

than ever before and board walks which turned out to be an absolute god send, as it had been raining since September (And is yet to stop). For the second year in a row, the heavens opened but again the utter deluge paused for our 20-minute display before driving the 1407 brave souls who attended the event to exit. Even the never-ending queue for doughnuts that always lasts after the display, evaporated in seconds as the deluge hit. Fortunately, the following morning was dry and the annual post fireworks litter pick went ahead.

Now, to the financials. The positive is that the Fireworks event covered its costs this year but only just. Thanks to the forecast being heavy rain and it being the second year in a row where the event was a soggy one, we had less than half the available tickets sold. This means the RCA do not have the funds to donate to other good causes in the village this year like we have in recent years post the fireworks. Good news is that the committee have come up with an approach to ensure good causes around the village don't miss out in 2024. As the chair report is about what has happened rather than what will happen, I will leave my successor (please do vote him in) to share the details.

Then on Dec 24th there was the Christmas Carols on the Green.

The Carols on the Green was held by St Johns the Baptist Church and The Church on the Green. This year the RCA arranged for 6 members of the Blendworth Brass Band to accompany the Carol singing and a donation of £50 to the band. I am assured by many longstanding residents of the village that this year had the biggest turnout. The Brass Band players added a festive feel to the event and of the carol singing residents I have spoken to, the feedback was that they felt it started their Christmas with festive spirit.

Finally, I would like to end this speech by thanking the committee for supporting me in my role as Chair over the past 2 years, for all their hard work that goes on often behind the scenes to ensure each event happens and happens with the professionalism and the success that they do year in, year out. I would also like to thank them for everything they do to ensure communications are provided around the village and ensuring the RCA continues to exist. It is a lot for only 6 people to do and achieve each year voluntarily. I would also like thank all their partners for the support they have given to each of the committee members and to all the committee at events. Also, a massive thank you to all the residents who helped out during events or are part of the communication distributions. It's this very sense of community and support that makes Rowlands Castle the village that it is and the amazing place it is to live in.

Treasurer Speech – Martha Dombey.

Hello everyone, It has been a difficult year for the RCA as we haven't generated the funds we have in the past to donate to good causes due to the rain at the Fireworks.

However, we have donated from funds raised at other events a generous amount to village groups throughout the year as you will see on the Statement of Accounts, Scouts, Rowans, South Coast Ambulance and Youth Group.

If you have any questions regarding the accounts please ask me after the meeting.

Election of Officers by Alan Evers

Chair Chris Stinton – Proposed Caroline Hadley – Seconded Martha Dombey

Secretary Julia Connolly – Proposed Caroline Hadley – Seconded Chris Stinton

Treasurer Caroline Hadley – Proposed Martha Dombey – Seconded Julia Connolly

Committee Members – Pete Rhymes and Martha Dombey

Incoming Chair Speech – Chris Stinton

Thank you for coming this evening and for electing us as your committee for the coming year. Our roles may have changed a little but we have nearly all worked together for the last two years; except for Peter who was a welcome addition to the team last year. We have great confidence in each other and are pretty sure we know what we are doing; at least we think so.

At present we are a very small Committee of only five. This is possibly the smallest number to have served as a Committee for the RCA since its inception just over fifty years ago; all officers and no enlisted men or women. It is only with the active support of our partners and the volunteers from the community at the various events, that we are able to do what we do.

We really would welcome more people to join us on the committee or to offer to help us on one or more events in the coming year. Under the present circumstances it would be difficult to commit to additional events without putting ourselves under intolerable strain. There might be an additional way to overcome this problem but I will return to that in a minute.

In her presentation this evening Caroline alluded to the discussions we have been having recently about “moving forward”. We would like to help to support more local groups and causes and to enhance our programme of events and activities. The Film Show we arranged for the children the classic cartoon version of Peter Pan, partly to mark the RCA’s fiftieth anniversary, was a great success. It might be good to have another afternoon or evening film screening if we thought it would be well supported or even a series of screenings as with the Compton Film Club. We are sure that you can think of other events and activities too.

We have been considering how such initiatives could be introduced and sustained without putting too much additional pressure on hard pressed committee members. We are proposing to link events more closely with the beneficiaries of the funds raised; both existing events and any additional one proposed. Groups requiring funding could bid for funding from an existing or new event and in return commit themselves to actively participate with the committee in the planning and organizing of the event and providing their own members to assist in running it on the day. In a sense that is what we have already done with the May Day Picnic in recent years. The chief beneficiaries are the Rowlands Hospice and the RC Scouts and both actively participate on the day, the Hospice by providing banners and publicity

material and providing people with buckets to circulate, collecting donations, and the Scouts by providing a team to operate the barbecue, cooking the burgers and sausages and providing and selling the other refreshments as well as organising and running some of the activities for children. This approach can be applied to all events.

Finally, we plan to actively explore the feasibility of approaching local firms and businesses to provide sponsorship of events, such as the Fireworks, to maximise the money available to distribute to the groups we support.

Chris welcomed questions to the committee:-

Councillor Stanley suggested an assertive and vigorous campaign to attract more volunteers.

Pete Rhymes asked is there something we as the RCA can do to entice more people? If you are interested in the events, we put on, please volunteer as we can't do this without more volunteers. Pete also mentioned that we are looking into integrating with other village groups to provide more assistance.

Malcolm Johnson suggested adding a speaker to the AGM event to make it more attractive and to advertise the event more often.

Andrew Callender also mentioned that AGMs are notoriously dry events and to add an interesting speaker might attract more people.

Katherine Schafli – What sort of people are we looking for?. With regards to the AGM event, it might help to change the day and time.

Alan Evers – We have lots of new residents some of whom are younger with more commitments and children. The RCA needs a mix of generations to build enthusiasm.

Andrew Callender – confirmed the suggestion of building into the application for donations, the offer of help at the event, that is raising the funds, the group are requesting.

Caroline Hadley – confirmed we had the Rowans helping towards the May Day and also the Scouts who both received donations.

Chis Stinton – confirmed that at the Quiz Night we had the SCAS representatives who both joined a team for the quiz.

Pete confirmed that we have a pool of volunteers for events but we are researching more, as not everyone is available all of the time.

Kelvin Schafli – suggested asking people to vote for what events they want so that we get more volunteers and attendance at the events.

Chris Stinton Chair of the RCA rounded up the evening by inviting everyone to share in the refreshments laid out in the hall and please chat to everyone and ask questions. Also to help put the tables and chairs away at the end of the evening.