

Chairman's Report

I was co-opted onto the committee, and into the role of Chairman on 29th June 2021. I would like to thank my predecessor David Clarkson for his commitment to the DA and work in creating a strong committee of many talents. Despite being a long-term DA member, I'd never been Chair of the DA before. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Trevor Pilbeam our Vice President who spent several hours listening, advising, and supporting me during the early days.

I have always said that with my family and work commitments that my 'Chairmanship' would be in a 'Caretaker' capacity until the AGM April 2022. For the new Chairman being elected at this AGM, I'd highly recommend tapping into Uncle Trev's fountain of knowledge.

Since our last AGM there have been some other changes within the DA committee. Michelle Clarkson did a fantastic job of being our treasurer for two years before stepping down. Phil Walsh was co-opted onto the committee at the same time as myself and stepped into the treasurer role. Phil has been working hard getting all of the names changed over at our bank account. It sounds like a simple straightforward job but has been anything but! Sarah Embleton and Tony Ranger also both stepped down from the committee during the year. Huge thanks to them, and to Michelle, for all the service they have given the DA.

Over the past year we've enjoyed the relaxation of Covid restrictions and the opportunity to get out camping again. We've enjoyed many new venues thanks to the tireless efforts and negotiating skills of our site's secretary David Steward. On our bigger meets we've been able to offer some great entertainment which has been well received by members – from game show evenings, to a charity dog show, to race nights and even disco's. Kerry, Sam, Sarah and Kat have worked hard in the background pulling these events off... and make it look effortless when I know for a fact that many hours of preparation have taken place.

The popularity of our meets, and limitation of site sizes has led to online booking being introduced. This was met with mixed reaction initially but overall has been a huge success. From my own experience of stewarding at New Year, having members pre-paid reduced the burden of keeping large quantities of cash safe during the meet. It is still possible to join us without online booking – you just need to phone the steward to check that there is space. Big thanks to Sam for her work in setting up the online system.

In terms of our equipment most of it has been stored in Jane and Andrew's leaky garage for the last year. I'd like to thank them for allowing us to use their space whilst we secured a long-term storage solution. Following the sterling efforts of Equipment Officer Andy and loyal member Pip, we now have the use of a dry, secure racked out storage trailer on Pip's land, at a very reasonable rate. The current committee recently spent a day moving all equipment, organising it and removing all damaged/surplus items. The DA has invested some of our funds this year in new disco equipment. Thank you, DJ Phil, for your work in sourcing the equipment and providing the tunes.

At this point in my report, I'd like to remind all members that your committee and stewards are all volunteers who give up their time for the benefit of this DA. Whilst constructive feedback and offers of assistance are always welcome, disrespectful behaviour towards our volunteers will not be tolerated. We all say and do things we sometimes regret, especially after enjoying some drinks. Please remember we're the friendly club.

I'm hugely grateful to Jane for keeping me on the straight and narrow (even when I've had a few drinks myself). She is an organisational prowess who has mastered the club's ways of working and is well placed to train and support new committee members joining the team. Jane's husband Andrew has worked hard to represent the DA at region level. He's attended many meetings and always ensures that the views of East Kent DA are heard.

The Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance saves many lives each year and it's been an honour to have them as our DA charity again this past year. Nick and Tracy Northover have mastered the art of extracting incredible raffle prize donations from local businesses to help with our fundraising efforts. My prize from the New Year meet, a purple toaster, now has pride of place in my purple themed caravan!

As my report comes to a close it's important to mention some very important people – The Stewards. Some will have heard me say this many times - without Stewards, meets do not run! We wouldn't be able to have such an amazing calendar of meets without stewards. If you want to give stewarding a go, then please do speak to us – we'd love to have you on board and no prior experience is necessary.

To those committee members who are stepping down at this AGM, or who stepped down during the year - thank you for your service. To those stepping up, welcome and enjoy the ride!

Here ends my one and only Chairman's report 😊