

Chair's report 2020

I'd like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor in this chair, John Crooks. He did the job for six whole years applying his appropriately academic brand of pragmatism and calm authority to the interests of Port Solent residents. I hope I can follow that hard act.

One of the benefits of the RAPS calendar is that nothing much happens, usually, between the AGM and the start of the quiz nights in October. This year had to be different. While the handover of chair's business required little more than light pruning and the identification of storage space, the transfer of my Webmaster keys to Helen Cronshaw took more than two months during the summer and left us, through no fault of our own, with an inferior product. Helen will be reporting on this later in the meeting and will outline its planned replacement. Then, in September, Tony Hewitt's dog Lola swallowed a baited fish hook by the lock, but before I could say "RAPS Chair" to Premier Marinas, Councillor Jo Hooper and Tony had together mobilised an initiative to restore Council No Fishing signs at Lock Approach and Lock View to deter irresponsible fishing. Their prompt intervention has worked although deterrence has also been helped by months of appalling weather.

Monthly quiz nights resumed in October and once again we held seven, all of them attracting six or seven teams. All praise to our Membership Secretary, Malcolm Cronshaw, who doubles as quiz master. News of his lively manner and wide-ranging topics has been spreading beyond Port Solent.

In November we arranged a third wine and cheese evening co-arranged with Vanilla Catering here at the Port House and hosted by Majestic Wines. As a curtain raiser to the Festive Season, these events have remained popular but Vanilla has suggested a re-think for this year. Gin has been mentioned, but what about the cheese?

Wrapping up swiftly on the social programme, we booked a table for 12 RAPS members at one of the Port House's open Christmas party nights. If we do it again, we'll ask for the table furthest away from the disco speakers; most of our conversation had to be conducted in sign language. But I am delighted to be able to report this year, that after a gap of twelve years, RAPS will be taking to the Solent waves again in August to watch the Cowes Week fireworks. Everything's booked, everything's crossed for fine weather and better health. A big thankyou to our Treasurer, Angela Britton, who doubles as social secretary, for helping to organise these events. And I am now pleased to announce that Fiona Janczur, with her professional background in events management, has agreed to join the RAPS Committee, bringing us back up to six.

A last-minute engagement came in early November when three of us on the Committee assisted D-Day veterans, supervised by Portsmouth Tree Wardens, with the planting of 75 saplings in a corner of the Port Solent green to memorialise the 75th Anniversary of the landings in France. The event was addressed by the Mayor and attended by our MP, Penny Mordaunt.

Time to re-state our thanks to Penny for championing the motorway noise barrier, work on which is well under way. Olivia Firth will give you an update presently.

Our biggest success since the last AGM has been to re-establish productive meetings with Portsmouth City Council Planning about the Country Park, to which agenda we've added Tipner West. Tony Hewitt will report on this in more detail later.

It's good to have a trusted working relationship with Council Planning. Likewise, regular support from our local councillors, Jo Hooper, Gemma New and John Ferrett. Sadly, this will be the last RAPS AGM attended by John as he will be standing down as Councillor from next month.

I'll end by thanking my Committee for their support and hard work this year. We have some way to go, I sense, before I'm not asked at parties if there is a residents association in Port Solent or how you find out about it if there is, but then I spent most of my thirty years working for The British Library explaining to people at parties that we were not the BBC or the British Museum. We can only explain.

Postscript

At the time of writing my report there were only two recorded cases of Covid 19 in the UK, a long way from our present situation where public activities have had to be suspended or cancelled.

I hope that RAPS and its dedicated committee can remain useful and helpful for the duration. I have signed RAPS up to Hive Portsmouth (hiveportsmouth.org.uk) a partnership between the voluntary and community sector, NHS Portsmouth Clinical Commissioning Group and Portsmouth City Council. I have given rapswbmaster@gmail.com as the contact and added the proviso: "There is already a robust system of support among neighbours at Port Solent, particularly in the two apartment blocks, Oyster Quay and The Anchorage. It is assumed that the housing blocks will have similar arrangements emerging. RAPS, as a long-standing group of 70 or more households with a committee of 6 (4 of whom are OAPs), can channel information and guidance as required and respond to lower levels of demand for support action".

The Committee will continue to meet occasionally, if not face-to-face then via Zoom (meetings in the Cloud) and will endeavour to respond to concerns and requests for assistance.

Chris Clark (Chair, RAPS) 20th March 2020