



President's Report for the year 2022

Welcome

Welcome to the first AGM held in person since 2019. In 2020, because of restrictions and uncertainty resulting from the pandemic, the Committee decided to change the calendar of the Association's working and accounting year to run from 1st. January, and held a virtual online AGM in January 2021. This was followed by a second virtual online AGM in January 2022. We have now been able to return to something approaching normality, and hope this situation will continue.

Thanks

The Association has been able to weather the storms of the past three years thanks to the hard work of several people whose efforts are much appreciated.

Our teachers, Céline and Jill who did their best to maintain contact with students via distance learning during the lockdowns, and whose efforts would have been even more successful had they not been hampered by the slow Internet speeds experienced by several people in the locality.

Our Social Secretary, Barbara, who has been able to resume lunch and film-going activities since restrictions were lifted – and even managed to get some activities booked between the first and second lockdowns in 2020.

Thanks are also due to our Treasurer, Lisa, who has continued to manage the Association's finances and ensure its continuity during a period when our membership decreased dramatically.

Membership

At the end of 2019 the Association was offering a total of 13 French and English language classes in Rochechouart and Brigueuil. After the onset of the pandemic in 2020 all face-to-face classes and social events were suspended. During 2020 and 2021 our membership declined from 82 to 29 households – a decline of 65%. This appears to have been due to several members leaving the area, sadly dying, or simply deciding that they no longer wished to support the Association when no activities were taking place.

With the resumption of face-to-face lessons, we have been able to recruit more members, particularly French speakers keen to learn or improve their English. We have to offer further thanks to Céline and Jill, who were obliged to enforce sanitation procedures after every lesson in order to comply with the mairie's requirements for the use of rooms.

With the enrolment of new language students, and the eventual renewal of some previous members after the end of lockdown restrictions, our membership as at 31 December 2022 stands at 60 households – just over double our low-point in 2021. For various reasons we decided not to resume classes at Brigueuil, but some of the students who had attended lessons there were able to join Rochechouart groups. We now have a total of 8 classes, with 28 people learning French and 8 learning English.

We offer certain classes for learners with little or no previous experience, which operate at a loss. They are subsidised by other, more profitable classes, but we maintain a strict limit on the size of groups which we are able to do as we are a non-profit organisation.

As well as language learning we have offered other courses on aspects of French culture in previous years, to help anglophones understand and appreciate the differences between life in France and life in the UK. Following poor uptake in the year 2021-2022 we decided not to offer a culture course in 2022-2023, but we hope to relaunch this for next year, at the Forum des Associations this September.

Community Relations

The Association has continued to enjoy the support of the Mairie de Rochechouart, with receipt of grants in 2020, 2021 and 2022, as well as the use of rooms for lessons. Prior to the pandemic, we operated a Salon de Thé each year as part of the commune's fundraising activities for the Téléthon. Covid restrictions, and the loss of several of our long-serving members, meant that this has not been possible for the past three years, and so we have made a small donation to the charity each year instead. Part of our work for the coming year needs to examine the possibility of different activities for fundraising in the future.

The Committee

The current members of the Committee have been in post since at least 2019; in some cases for over 10 years. We have all offered ourselves for re-election for the coming year, in order to maintain some continuity in the management of the Association's activities, but we have to recruit new members to the Committee in order to provide fresh insights for the future.

For this reason, we are very pleased that one Association member has volunteered to join the Committee for the coming year. We hope that this meeting will approve all the nominations for the Committee, and I look forward to welcoming our new member at future meetings.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Président', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Président

Learning Together / Apprenons Ensemble

30 January 2023

