

From the British Residents' Association Chairman

After what seems a very long period of quarantine for most of us, with restrictions of what we can and cannot do because of the COVID 19 pandemic, at last we are seeing things gradually returning to normal. Although the new normal will be somewhat different for some time to come.

Although the restrictions have been at times conflicting and confusing, I believe the Maltese Authorities have done a good job in containing and restricting the spread of this virus. Malta seems to have fared much better than some other countries. This is helping us in Malta to return to some form of normality.

Only one member to my knowledge contracted the virus, and that was whilst abroad and has fortunately fully recovered.

As a result of this pandemic, group activities, coffee mornings and events have had to be cancelled. However, credit goes to those committee members and members who created on-line forms of entertainment to mitigate the boredom that some found being in home quarantine. I wish to express a big thank you to Julie Rusher who created a weekly quiz which was available to all members, and an almost daily notification of programmes of interest on various channels. Also, I wish to thank Mavis Barrett who kept us all informed of the latest rules and regulations. Not an easy task in view of the sudden and sometimes vague changes. I apologise for leaving out the names of all the other helpers, I know there are many.

Unfortunately, the Association's AGM and the Queen's Birthday Party both had to be cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially very disappointing as this is the Association's Fiftieth Year Anniversary.

In the absence of the Queen's Birthday Party, at the initiative of the Gozo Committee they invited all members having email to participate in a collage of members' selfie photos to be sent to Her Majesty our Queen Elizabeth the Second via a covering letter from myself on behalf of all members. Despite having 615 members the majority having email and despite an extension to the cut-off date, only twenty-seven participated, this was very disappointing given all the work that was put into this initiative.

TVM contacted me to do a short interview for their Tv evening news program. They were interested in learning what numbers of the British Residents returned to the U.K at the outbreak of the coronavirus rather than stay in Malta. It seemed that the government felt a lot would return to the U.K. rather than stay here. Ironically, it was the other way round, several residents abroad returned or wanted to return to Malta. During the short interview I managed to outline our Association.

The British High Commissioner is compiling a short video for social media with respect to the British Malta relationship. I was invited to participate on behalf of our Association.

Hopefully, group activities will be able to recommence in the Autumn, and we can hold our AGM. Since it is our Fiftieth Anniversary, we will endeavour to celebrate this in some special way which we expect our members to actively support with their presence. A lot of work by the few goes into arranging such events. These events are open to all members. It is very disappointing when only a few members participate or attend these few events which serve to promote our Association.

Enjoy your Summer, take care and stay safe.

Very Best Wishes.

Harvey P Stephenson