



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

During 2018 we held nine different events, most of which were well attended by our members. Indeed, one or two were complete sell-outs. The focus during 2018 was to once again find some different style of events, particularly looking at how to link more closely with East Surrey businesses.

Our first function of the year was the **Burns Night Supper...A Nicht Wi' Burns**, held at Tandridge Golf Club. In many ways this was "back by popular demand" and a splendid evening it turned out to be. The dining room was full, the toasts were expertly delivered and the entertainment, in the form of traditional Scottish songs, were delivered with rousing enthusiasm by Elliot Goldie, a true Scot. Grateful thanks go to Michael Kelly who masterminded the whole evening.

Our **AGM** was once again held at Bletchingley Golf Club where we had an excellent dinner. This year we dispensed with the usual format of having an after-dinner speaker. Martin Fisher, the Leader of Tandridge District Council, was interviewed by the Chairman before opening the floor to questions. As a result, the discussion was both lively and informative. A wide variety of topics were covered... how the Council operates, the Gas Holder site, car parking, regeneration of Oxted and Caterham and, of course, the Local Plan. Indeed, it was probably the latter which sparked most discussion with some saying that not enough houses are being built and others saying the opposite!

Our **Golf Day** took place on the 9th May at Bletchingley Golf Club and we were thankfully blessed with glorious weather. We had a good turnout and the whole event was skilfully organised, and indeed coordinated, by Geoffrey Sanderson.

Mid-June and a perfect time for a **Summer Party and Hog Roast!** Martin & Anne-Marie Harrison graciously allowed this new event to take place in their garden and what an event it was. Over 100 members and their guests enjoyed superb food, great music and thankfully, a warm evening "under the stars". We are enormously grateful to the Harrisons for their hard endeavours that went into this Summer Party...something they may regret as many attendees asked if this could be an annual event as they had so much fun!

Summer solstice and time for yet another new event. For some time the Club has been looking for ways to align more closely with local businesses. On the 21st June we held our first “**Session with Sam**”. We invited four companies to join a small group of experienced businesspeople from our Club to discuss *Business Innovation in a Post Brexit World*. The event took place at The Haycutter in Oxted and was run on a strictly Chatham House rules basis. The feedback we received, both from Sam and the businesses, was terrific. Everyone said they felt invigorated at the open discussion and that the format would be worthwhile for others.

Buoyed by this success, we held a second “Session with Sam” on the 27th September - same format, same venue - which turned out to be equally as successful. The businesses who have attended include Earthi, 4D Data Centres, Evolve Dynamics, Smart Separations, Evolve Dynamics, Surrey Satellite Technology, Specac and CommSoft.

Two members of our Committee stepped down during the summer - Claire Carr-Locke and Sher Meekings. ESBC is incredibly grateful for the service both ladies put into the Club. Their energy and enthusiasm was always evident and they will be greatly missed.

In October, Geoffrey Sanderson was back to run his third **Desert Island Discs** Evening. This year his guest was Sir Martin Broughton, who had a long and hugely successful career at British American Tobacco, as well as in his role as Chairman of British Airways, President of the CBI, Chairman of The British Horseracing Board and famously Chairman of Liverpool Football Club. It was once again a fascinating evening, expertly conducted by Geoffrey.

November saw a very special Armistice Day given that it marked the centenary of the end of the First World War. The ESBC was pleased to be able to help Sam support the publication of a commemorative book “100 Years On...Remembering East Surrey’s Role in The Great War”; this book contained entries from schoolchildren throughout East Surrey, all of which were a wonderful tribute to those who gave their lives during the battles fought from 1914 – 1918.

Our **Autumn Dinner** took place at the Naval Club in Mayfair on Thursday 15th November. When we selected this date for our dinner we had no idea that politically, it would turn out to be one of the most tumultuous seen for a very long time. Resignations, accusations and mis-information flew around the Palace of Westminster, all thanks to Brexit. Our guest speaker, Jeremy Hunt the Foreign Secretary, had every excuse to withdraw from our dinner but thankfully, he didn't. He spoke with passion and conviction and was happy to take questions from the assembled members of ESBC. We were extremely well looked after by the Naval Club and everyone agreed that it had been a great evening.

Shortly after this event, Sam announced that he planned to vote against the Government's **EU Withdrawal Agreement** and, as such, tendered his resignation as Universities & Science Minister. Turbulent times ahead and we were left hoping that Sam's determination to "push for a deal that is right for the whole country that will help us all prosper" is successful.

Our final event of the year was the ever-popular **Christmas Lunch** at Tandridge Golf Club held on 14th December. Being a mere 11 days away from Christmas, the festive spirit was in ample supply. Our chosen charity was Limpsfield Grange, a school for girls aged 11 -16 with communication and interaction difficulties. The Headteacher, Sarah Wild, was our guest and she spoke passionately about the school and the girls who attend it. We raised over £4,000 and thanks go to our members for their enthusiastic bidding in the auction as well their generous donations to the raffle. We closed the afternoon with a delightful operatic recital from Soprano Miranda Heldt, who entertained us with her sensational voice and charismatic charm. Thanks as always goes to Anne-Marie Harrison who once again excelled in her organisation of this lunch.

I would like to thank my hard-working Committee. Most clubs depend on a small number of people and the East Surrey Business Club is no exception. Your Committee has worked tirelessly to not only put together successful events but also to fill tables at those events. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you for supporting the East Surrey Business Club tonight and on previous occasions. Without you there would be no Club.

Malcolm Dunbar – Chairman East Surrey Business Club
March 2019