

WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER 3 ~ SEPTEMBER 2020



What strange and uncertain times we live in – and how the world has changed for all of us! We hope that in spite of lockdown restrictions over the last few months, you have managed to stay in contact with family and friends and may even have strengthened some ties and relationships or re-kindled friendships. Many of us have certainly had time to take stock, re-organise and tidy and for some at least, it has been good to be able to slow down and take things a little easier.

Through the wonders of modern technology, you may also have been able to continue to ‘meet’ with members of groups in which you would normally participate at Strutts, allowing your activities to continue to some extent or another – though we would probably all agree that nothing is ever the same as meeting in person.

Without people, Strutts has been bereft, as for all of its 111 years it has been a hub of activity from its beginning as a school, to its more recent re-incarnation as a busy community centre – it has been full of life. Over the past weeks, devoid of the hustle and bustle of humanity in its rooms and corridors and gym, it has been eerily quiet.

You may have checked the Strutts website already, but we hope this newsletter will give you more information about what has been happening ‘behind the scenes’ at Strutts and the ways in which the community centre hopes to move forward in the future as we all try to negotiate the ‘new normal’ – whatever that means.

As you know, volunteers are the mainstay of Strutts (and they are so important in keeping down the cost of running the community centre in these difficult times) – working on Reception (with new Covid 19 measures in place to keep everyone safe), gardening, general maintenance, repairs and restoration, helping at events (though not at present), with fundraising, publicity, catering or doing historic research.

There is much to do and not enough people to do it despite the hard work of all the wonderful volunteers. If you could consider giving a few hours of your time each week, to work on Reception (Monday –Friday mornings, afternoons or evenings) - or choose hours that suit you best, to do most of the other tasks, outlined above, then we should be more than pleased to welcome you to the team at Strutts.

Please get in touch if you might consider volunteering or have ideas, suggestions or questions regarding anything you read in this newsletter. We can be contacted at bssocnews@gmail.com – but more especially, we look forward to welcoming you back to Strutts for classes, courses, workshops, meetings, sports activities and all the rest - very soon.

All good wishes,

Pat McLeod and Sue Salaün (Editors)

If you haven't renewed your membership of Belper Strutts Society or you're not yet a member, please consider joining to help Strutts through this challenging time. Annual Membership is £10 and Life Membership £100. You can pay by BACS (sort code: 161311, account no.10188711) or by cheque to Strutts Community Centre, Derby Rd, Belper DE56 1UU. A link to the BSS Membership Form can be found on the website.



News from the Chair

When I wrote my last contribution to the newsletter, we had just had a record-breaking year in terms of bookings and income and the future looked rosy. Within a month we were in lockdown and at present we are not sure when we will be able to re-open and getting back to the old 'normal' seems unlikely for the foreseeable future.

The Trustees are determined that we will provide a valuable resource for the community of Belper once more and we are working hard to plan for this. We have been fortunate in receiving a grant from the Government which is helping us survive and pay the bills whilst we are receiving little income.

Currently we are looking at how we can open on a much reduced scale in the near future, in a way that keeps volunteers and users safe and confident to return. This means carrying out risk assessments, purchasing equipment, cleaning materials, new signage and sanitisers, and generally working out the logistics of keeping groups separate with exclusive entrance/exit door and toilet facilities. We are also revamping and refurbishing the reception area to make it Covid-secure.

At the same time, we are undertaking a consultation with both volunteers and user groups to get views about returning, and under what conditions. This will help us decide what is feasible going forward. Please do let me know any ideas or comments if you wish to contribute further.

All volunteers will undertake training prior to returning to ensure that they are familiar with Covid requirements and the new procedures and systems which will be in place. Once the website is up and running, documents regarding risk assessments and Covid compliance will be available to view.

We have also been using the time to maintain the building and grounds. Rooms 16 and 17 have been redecorated and we have ordered new curtains. Several volunteers have been tidying the gardens and I am very grateful to them for their help.

Following the AGM in February, we have two new directors on the Board of Strutts Centre Ltd.: Chris Toner and Danny Holden. We extend a warm welcome to them and they are already working hard with us to prepare for opening. They both bring a wealth of experience and skills, also a lot of enthusiasm and good humour in these difficult times.

I hope it will not be too long before we re-open our doors and look forward to seeing you all again. Meanwhile keep well and safe.

Nick McLeod - Chair, Guardians of Strutts



A view of newly decorated room 16



Room 17 gets a fresh new look too



An introduction from the new directors appointed to the Board of Strutts Centre Ltd.

Danny Holden

I was born in Belper and attended Herbert Strutt Grammar School from 1967 through to 1973. I spent my final year in the Upper Sixth (as it was known then) at Belper High School before going on to study Mathematics at Sheffield University.

I then trained as a teacher of maths taking up posts in Sheffield and Eckington before moving back to Belper when I became Deputy Headteacher at Mill Hill School in Ripley. I completed my teaching career as Headteacher of John Flamsteed School in Denby for 10 years.

Over the years I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit the Strutts Centre on numerous occasions and have been extremely impressed by what has been achieved there. It has always seemed to be a hive of activity with an extensive range of activities offered by numerous community groups, while the work being undertaken to maintain and improve the facilities has been exceptional.

Now I have retired, I welcome the opportunity to join a very dedicated and enthusiastic group of volunteers in their efforts to continue to offer this much needed facility for community use and to preserve this wonderful building, which holds so many memories for the people of Belper - for the future.

Chris Toner

Originally hailing from Manchester, I have lived in beautiful Derbyshire for the last 25 years and my love for history and walking, made it an easy decision to settle here in Belper.

After a varied career, which included working for the US Army in Germany and sailing the world in a research vessel, I decided to retire, but soon found myself, like so many others, with a lot of time on my hands.

As a member of U3A and the Belper Historical Society, I visited Strutts many times and eventually joined Strutts Centre Limited as a Director in February 2020.

I bring to Strutts a lifetime of work experience in all levels of management and an inexhaustible enthusiasm to help the community and preserve this historic building and will work tirelessly to help Strutts re-open to the community safely and with confidence.

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***CAN YOU HELP?*** – *There is a possibility that, subject to being able to comply with Covid requirements, Strutts Community Centre may be able to open to a small, carefully controlled number of groups from early October! More information will follow regarding this, in terms of volunteer information, training, and the specific changes and adjustments involved. As stated previously, we are always in need of new volunteers and now, more than ever, that extra help is crucial, so if you can help in ANY way - PLEASE GET IN TOUCH!! Just contact reception with your details. It will be much appreciated. Thank you - Pam Ryder - BSS Chair*

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And finally, we leave you with a poem by one of our volunteers Carol Brewer, written exclusively for our Strutts community.

Take care until we meet again. *The Strutts Newsletter Team*



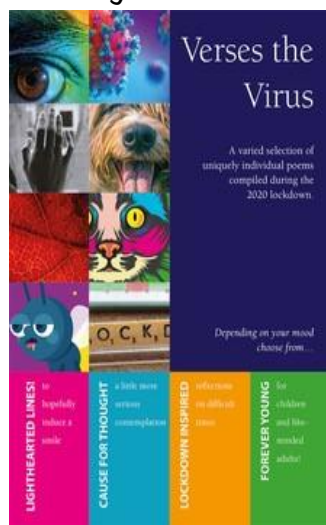
A Strutts Welcome Awaits

*It's been very strange without you – rooms standing silent far too long
It was busy life as usual, then in an instant – you were gone
Absent sounds of talk and laughter, gathered groups to do their thing
Whether arty, sports or crafting, folk who dance and those who sing
Walls with ears that hold their secrets – giggling gossip echoed back
Familiar floors stretch spare saved spaces – expecting exercising mats
Live events or holding meetings, learning skills or meeting friends
This buildings' beating heart of Belper, still standing proud 'til lockdowns end
We know these times have proved a challenge – savage, sad and strange
But it's also given time to pause – take stock and make things change
That's what's been going on at Strutts, working hard behind the scenes
Perfecting plans and preparations to be compliant, cautious, clean
A hopeful start, with just a gentle phase, slow but safe, to reassure
Things will need some readjusting but we'll have your support we're sure
So we are truly looking forward to unlocking that front door
Braced to facing our new normal, which will be different from before
Bring on the bustle and the babble of the sounds there used to be
The warmest welcome's waiting for you as part of Strutts community*

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*(PS... Enjoyed the poem and want to hear more? You might like my new book, compiled during lockdown!)*

*As featured on Radio Derby!! ~ 5 star reviews on amazon.co.uk ★★★★★*



*'VERSES the VIRUS' – available now! £5.99 (&£1.00 PP – delivery FREE to DE56!)*

*A donation from every book sale goes to support 'NHS Charities Together' and 'Mental Health UK'*

*[Carolbrewer2009@gmail.com](mailto:Carolbrewer2009@gmail.com) or visit [www.pencilpoised.com](http://www.pencilpoised.com)*