

### WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER 8 ~ March 2023



Dear Readers,

It's been a hard winter - and in so many ways, for so many people – not least worrying about being able to pay rising fuel bills. We hope very much that you have managed to navigate the worst of it. The same worries haunt us at Strutts, as heating an old and draughty building uses a great deal of gas and electricity and has eaten into hard-won savings which could have been spent on further renovation. Matters were made worse when the south boiler, having to work overtime in the freezing temperatures, suddenly broke down a few days before Christmas.

The biggest problem turned out to be getting an industrial heating engineer to identify the problem, order the new part and to fit it when it arrived mid-January - all of which took longer than expected. We are more than grateful to all the groups who still came to use the community centre, moving rooms as necessary to enjoy the warmth of the north side of the building.

What was most difficult was probably the fact that the gym was so cold and a mere electric heater or two didn't make it much warmer. Some table tennis groups however continued to brave the cold and we were impressed by their determination to play in such challenging circumstances and grateful to them and indeed to all our users for bearing with us. We're also particularly grateful to Nick McLeod who spent a great deal of time resolving all the boiler issues. Despite that, Strutts made a 'warm space' available for people on Thursdays from 9.30am – 8pm with free hot drinks, just to have a natter or to bring knitting, craft items, jigsaws or crosswords. This was part of an initiative by Derbyshire County Council which Belper Town Council coordinated, with other local organisations offering the same sort of facility on other days of the week.

Belper suddenly appeared in the news in early February when an emergency situation arose in the town and The Strutt Centre was called upon to provide support – see report on Page 7 of the newsletter for details.

The Strutts AGM took place on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February, when people were given the opportunity to attend in person or via Zoom. Nick McLeod has decided to step back as Chair of Strutts Centre Ltd, a position he has held since the beginning of the Project, although he will continue as Chair of the Guardians of Strutts. Nick's vision has driven Strutts throughout its formative years and he has worked tirelessly in every area of the Project. Likewise, Cynthia Maddock and Eric and Kathleen Manning who, along with Nick have done a tremendous amount of work over the years since the Strutts Community Project began will now also concentrate on their work as Guardians of Strutts, overseeing the Project as a whole rather than all the day – to-day issues as well. Janet Honey has become Chair of Strutts Centre Ltd having stepped back from the Guardians to concentrate on SCL, so there is important continuation there. Other new appointments to committees are detailed in an article on Page 4 of the newsletter. A huge 'thank-you' to Nick, Cynthia, Janet, Eric and Kathleen for the skills and talents they have brought to the Project and the many hours of work they have put in to make it a success. We're grateful that they are continuing to guide and advise and will now focus their attention on the building itself, heritage projects and re-structuring.

The Autumn Market organised by Belper Strutts Society (BSS) last October was a great success. It was really pleasing to see so much interest from stallholders after two years of being unable to hold the market because of Covid. A lot of people came through the doors and purchased a whole variety of goods - many of them hand-made - from jewellery to candles, paintings to Christmas decorations. Indeed it provided an excellent opportunity to buy early Christmas presents. There's a report of the event on Page 6 of the newsletter.

Volunteers enjoyed a Christmas party at Strutts, organised by the BSS Committee and regular coffee mornings for volunteers will be taking place once a month on Friday mornings. For more, see Page 3.



Roshni (Persian for light or brilliance) was performed in late February by the Sonia Sabri Company of dancers and musicians – Kathak dancing with live music and vocals. It was beautiful to watch. A rare treat organised by BSS in conjunction with Live and Local. You can read a detailed review of this on Page 7.

Finally, BSS is organising a Reunion/Open Day for BSS Life Members and current Annual Members as well as those who attended the Herbert Strutt Grammar School or Middle School. Please put Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September in your diary. There will be tours of the building, memorabilia on display – including photographs - and lunch will be provided. There will be plenty of time to browse, chat and share memories. Tickets will cost £15. As well as giving BSS members and former students the opportunity to meet and to visit Strutts again, (did you know 2023 sees fifty years since Strutts ceased to be a grammar school?), we hope it will also be a fund-raiser. More details can be found on Page 8. Please put the date in your diary. We hope to see you there! Indicate interest by sending an e-mail to: [bssocnews@gmail.com](mailto:bssocnews@gmail.com) - more details will be sent to you.

Here's looking forward to longer, lighter, warmer days!  
All good wishes,

*Pat McLeod and Sue Salaün (Eds.)*

### **News from the Chair**

The good news since I wrote in the last newsletter is that groups are returning to Strutts, and we have welcomed new organisations to the Project. I would like to extend a particular welcome to many Ukrainian guests and hope that in a small way we can help to make the terrible suffering they are going through a little easier.

Very recently, we were saddened to hear of the death of Keith Shaw, who was a founder member of the Project and I personally have fond memories of working with him to put up the honours boards. He was a former pupil of the school and supported the Community Centre in the early years, being one of the first to sign up as a member of Belper Strutts Society. We send our condolences and best wishes to Jean and family.

The Centre is definitely busier, and this brings opportunities and challenges for us. In recent months problems with the building have taken up time – boiler breakdowns, leaks in the roof and gutters, and the need to upgrade the computer system (the engine room of the Project!) have caused upheavals of one sort or another. Thanks to everyone for your forbearance during this time.

Following the AGM there have been some changes and we have different people running the three parts of the organisation. The advantage of this is that we can concentrate on specific roles and responsibilities with a clear function for each board or committee. The challenge is in setting up efficient systems and effective communication – a work in progress!

As the Centre gets busier, we plan to set up different teams of volunteers, for example, for the bar, catering, reception, gardening - to take on the organisation of their specific tasks. This may take some time to establish but I am optimistic that with the skills, enthusiasm and ideas of our new volunteers and the experience of our long serving colleagues we can achieve our aim to ensure a sustainable future for Strutts.

In the current economic climate, we are facing uncertainty about our financial stability into the future; the increase in energy costs, a doubling of our insurance premium to over £13,000 per annum, and the fact that all goods are more expensive means that we need to find ways of increasing our income. This will inevitably mean a rise in room hire rates. We are creating a grant application team to apply for funding the renovation of the building and hope to build a repair and maintenance team to allow us to undertake smaller jobs ourselves. If anyone has any time and skills in these areas, I would love to hear from you!

As always, I am grateful and very proud of the efforts of all our volunteers – we are making a difference to the lives of many people in Belper by providing much needed community space. A huge thank you to you all!

*Nick McLeod, Chair, Guardians of Strutts.*

## Volunteer News

### Volunteers' Christmas party

The volunteers' Christmas party was held on 16<sup>th</sup> December and over 30 volunteers attended. The buffet included home-made mince pies and sausage rolls, savoury rolls, quiche, salad, and a selection of cakes. The mulled wine was very popular too. We played games, including a memory game, which tested many of us. The Christmas quiz caused a lot of hilarity and friendly competition between tables. It was an opportunity to meet up with old friends and to get to know others in the Strutts team for new volunteers. It was organised by the Belper Strutts Society committee to thank all volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the past year to help us recover after the pandemic months.



*Waiting for the mulled wine – and the guests - to arrive.*

### Coffee mornings

We held the first of our planned regular coffee mornings on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February. It was very successful, with 29 people attending. Many said they had enjoyed meeting up with other volunteers and there was a real buzz in the lounge. It was an opportunity to catch up with old friends, to meet new volunteers and to sign up for future events. We had a suggestion box and two volunteers suggested we had a group discussion or an information sharing slot during the morning. – we may try this next time! The coffee mornings will be held monthly on the last Friday of the month, so please do come along. The next few dates are: 31<sup>st</sup> March, 28<sup>th</sup> April and 26<sup>th</sup> May.

### Lanyards

You may have noticed volunteers walking around the centre with blue ribbon round their necks. These are our new lanyards, purchased by the Belper Strutts Society. All volunteers should have one for when they are 'on duty' so if you haven't been given one yet, please ask at reception.

*Pat McLeod*



## Annual General Meetings

The AGMs for the 3 Strutts bodies – Guardians of Strutts, Strutts Centre Ltd., and Belper Strutts Society were held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023. These covered the year from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022. 27 people attended at the Centre and 1 via Zoom.

For BSS, Pam Ryder (Chair) outlined fundraising events that had taken place in that year, notably a talk by Mike Ingham, an ex-pupil of the school, about his life as a BBC sports reporter and two Live and Local events: a play called 'Hefted' and a concert by Bonfire Radicals. BSS also supported the postponed Belper Arts Trail and hosted the Model Railway Exhibition Day, serving refreshments to raise funds for the project. BSS funded the new Strutts website design and construction and training for 3 volunteers in using it. Pam thanked all volunteers and committee members for their work and for making events happen.

Nick McLeod, Chair of the Guardians and SCL, gave an overview of the status of the Project. It has been a 'roller coaster ride' with the impact of the pandemic on income, but Strutts has weathered the storm with prudent financial management and government grants. Room bookings have increased and continue to do so, and we can look forward to the coming year with more confidence. Nick said this was a tremendous achievement and thanked all volunteers for their hard work and commitment.

Nick warned that the project still faces severe financial pressures with the energy crisis and increasing costs and that we will need to look at ways of increasing income – to grow the business and apply for grants to restore the building. New volunteers are bringing new skills and enthusiasm, and with the experience of established volunteers, Nick was optimistic about the long-term sustainability of Strutts.

Trustees of the Guardians of Strutts, Directors of Strutts Centre Limited and Committee Members of Belper Strutts Society were elected. Nick, Cynthia Maddock and Eric and Kathleen Manning stood down from SCL to concentrate on the restoration and repair of building and oversight of the charity. Janet Honey stood down from the Guardians of Strutts to focus on managing SCL operations. Celia Weaver was elected to SCL as Treasurer and Pat Downie to the Guardians. BSS remains the same.

Nick thanked Cynthia, Eric and Kathleen for their work over many years on SCL and welcomed Celia and Pat.

### Board /Committee members for the coming year

#### Guardians of Strutts

Nick McLeod (Chair)  
Eric Manning (Treasurer)  
Cynthia Maddock (Company Sec.)  
Kathleen Manning  
Patrick Downie  
George Henshaw

#### Strutts Centre Ltd.

Janet Honey (Chair)  
Celia Weaver (Treasurer)  
Caroline Hawley (Sec)  
Chris Toner

#### Belper Strutts Society

Pam Ryder (Chair)  
David Moreton (Treasurer)  
Pat McLeod (Sec)  
Sue Salaun (Membership Sec)  
Joan Hardy

Reports will soon be available online, if people would like more detailed information about the AGMs.

*Pat McLeod*





## **Membership**

If you've forgotten to do so, please consider renewing your membership of Belper Strutts Society or indeed taking out membership for the first time. Annual Membership is £10 and Life Membership £100.

A membership application form can be forwarded to you if you e-mail [bssocnews@gmail.com](mailto:bssocnews@gmail.com) – or you can pick one up in person at Reception. Payment can be made preferably by BACS, sort code: 16-13-11, account number: 10188711; account name: Belper Strutts Society, or by cheque to 'Belper Strutts Society' or in cash at Reception (with 'BSS Membership' on the envelope). Please let us have your current contact details if they need updating, so your new membership card can be sent to the correct address.

Thank you so much for your continued support of Strutts.

*Sue Salaün (Membership Sec.)*

## **An Interview with Kathleen and Eric Manning of GOS**

Following the interview with Cynthia Maddock in the last edition, it's now the turn of two more of the Guardians of Strutts (GOS) – husband and wife team, Kathleen and Eric Manning. Eric was a pupil at Strutts from September 1958 - July 1963 and being a sportsman especially enjoyed football and athletics. He started work at Parkray as a Sales Order Clerk, but went on to work in Matlock as a Local Government Officer before moving to Glow-worm, then Parkray as an Accountant and then back to Glow-Worm as a Cost Accountant.

Following a very serious illness in 2008 and a four-week stay in hospital, he took early retirement in 2009, but he wanted to give something back because he felt lucky to be alive. He saw a notice in the newspaper and attended a reunion for former Strutts pupils held at the Masonic Rooms, then owned by Richard Moss (another former pupil) where he met Keith Shaw (whom he knew from Glow-Worm) and Cynthia Maddock. Both were Guardians at the newly-established Strutts Community Centre. When Cynthia realised Eric's background was in accountancy, she asked him to attend a meeting of the Guardians where he was invited to become Treasurer. He was very pleased to be involved but hadn't quite realised how much work he was taking on! Kathleen had retired about the same time as Eric, and she came along to a volunteer evening to see if she could also help. At the time there was just one group using the building and just two volunteers, but she remembers Nick (McLeod) telling them, 'We're going to fill this place' – and they did! Pat Downie, another Guardian, showed her the computer system and as she had some experience as a receptionist, she was soon working on Reception at Strutts. She joined Eric as a Guardian, taking minutes for the meetings and was impressed by the knowledge and expertise of the other Guardians. Both Kathleen and Eric also joined SCL – Strutts Centre Ltd, the committee that oversees the day to day running of the community centre. Kathleen felt she learned a great deal about the management of the building.

Eric adapted an income and expenditure account for Strutts' needs. This became a bigger and bigger job as the community centre grew, eventually having four SCL accounts to manage, a GOS account, Charity Aid Foundation accounts and the account for BSS. The community centre opened in September 2009 and by the end of May 2010 SCL had generated £26,000 for the GOS Charity, while GOS outgoings were £21,500. More recently and despite Covid, SCL generated £79,000 with GOS expenditure around £67,000, which gives an indication of how much the Strutts Project has grown. Eric commented that with a building that needs £1.8m spending on it, it's always difficult to prioritise and decide how best to allocate the money. There are for example, 10,000 panes of glass alone. The greatest expenditure at present is the day-to-day energy costs. Eric recalled how in the beginning, the Guardians would accept items from firms that were closing down or moving - heaters, light fittings, chairs, doors even - anything that they might need to further the Project, so that one or two of the rooms 'were like Steptoe's backyard!'

Later Kathleen and Eric took on the catering for a while using a local café to provide the food – and alongside others, worked behind the bar at events. There have been some challenges, but they both say they have enjoyed all the work and have been very pleased to be involved. They are now doing a little less, but have more recently taken on the booking and organisation of the Ghost Walks. These are requested by paranormal soci-

eties who take over the building from about 8pm-1am, with some supervision of course. These are proving to be very successful. Perhaps more of this on another occasion.

Kathleen and Eric have been thanked elsewhere in this newsletter for all the work that they do, but thank you to them also for talking to me.

*Sue Salaün*

### **Strutts Autumn Market 2022**



We were thrilled after a 2-year break to welcome the people of Belper to our hugely successful Strutts Autumn Market. Over 400 came. Our Hall and rooms decorated with balloons and bunting created a festive ambience and there were over 60 stallholders selling a cornucopia of items including ceramics, fine art, hand designed greeting cards, clothing, beautiful patchwork, hand-made candles and much, much more not forgetting the ever-popular Notty Hornblower and her vintage clothing stall. BSS had its own bric-a-brac and tombola stalls, both were a huge success and will certainly be repeated, so please start saving your unwanted items, we will be needing them for our next Autumn Market!

As usual our dedicated catering team set to work to provide hungry visitors with bacon cobs, sandwiches, beautiful cakes, tea, coffee and soft drinks. Room 13 was filled with tables and chairs for members of the public to meet with friends and family to enjoy their coffee etc and have a good natter, the place was buzzing! Thank you to all the catering team who did a sterling job on the day!

In previous years we have struggled to make our own hand made banners and publicity material to advertise this event, however the BSS decided it was time to speculate to accumulate and therefore we had two beautiful generic banners made along with professionally produced posters and flyers. We received some very positive comments from the public and from Strutts users and from a survey carried out on the day found that these banners that sit at the front of the building were indeed a successful publicity tool, so money well spent.

In all, this event made £1,700 for the Strutts Project which is fantastic. As Chair of BSS I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who helped make this such a successful event.

*Pam Ryder*

### **Strutts to the Rescue - An Unexpected Event**

I was ready to leave reception for home on a Saturday afternoon in February when the phone rang. A woman asked if we were busy that evening. We weren't. She explained that she was from the County Council's Emergency Planning Team and there might be a need to evacuate people from their homes that evening and would Strutts be available for that. I've heard a lot of strange requests in my time on reception at Strutts but this stunned me to silence - was it a scam? While a thousand things flashed through my brain (what was it in Belper than needed this level of reaction – what if people needed to stay all night – we weren't equipped for that - did Strutts' insurance cover this ) she explained that she would ring later when she was more aware of the situation.

It all then happened very quickly. They did indeed need Strutts as there was an 'incident.' I asked a colleague to look on social media, and we saw there was something happening involving the police asking people to leave their homes and a bomb squad van had been seen. It seemed improbable that these things were happening in Belper. Tracy from the Emergency Team came and quickly decided that they would need the hall and use of the servery to make hot drinks. Other DCC trained volunteers arrived and chairs in the hall were arranged in groups around tables.

Gradually families started to arrive and were greeted by the DCC volunteers and given tea and biscuits. Small family groups settled in the hall, some with babies or young children. Three dogs came and I found appropriate bowls for them to drink and eat out of. Most families were understandably anxious and worried about their homes and how long they had to stay away. My job settled into answering the phone and fending off the numerous calls from the press.

Several hours later at about 8.00pm the all-clear was given by the police and people could return home. It was confirmed that somebody had been arrested for possession of explosive materials but it was now confirmed safe for people to return to their own homes.

I'm glad that Strutts was able to help the community of Belper in its hour (or two) of need and notch up yet another unexpected use of the building.

*Janet Honey*

### **LIVE AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE AT STRUTTS COMMUNITY CENTRE**



On Saturday 25th February the Belper Strutts Society hosted a performance of Roshni at the Strutts Community Centre. Roshni, meaning light or brilliance, is a combination of a form of contemporary dance based on the Indian Kathak routines. Vibrant music and vocal soundscaping ensured that the resulting performance was both skilful and uplifting. Sonia Sabri, who is the Choreographer and Artistic Director of Roshni, was the sole dancer, accompanied by four musicians Sarvar Sabri, Katie Stevens, Emily Dore and Sam Slater. The programme was divided into three sections, The Call, The Light and The Waves. Each of these sections told a unique story with relevance to life, nature and a wide range of experience and emotion which was elegantly communicated to the audience. Sonia's dancing was exquisitely detailed, being enhanced by a poetic





narrative, unusual and sometimes soulful music and percussion provided by bells attached to her ankles. It was a compelling and inclusive performance throughout, encompassing audience participation in the form of clapping and contributing hand and arm movements to reflect the intimacy of the shared experience. The large audience remained captivated until the end and we received many positive comments from our departing guests, who were delighted by the whole experience.

This was our third Live and Local performance, following 'Hefted' and 'Bonfire Radicals'; the objective of the scheme is to provide professional theatre to regional audiences. We have been pleased to participate in this scheme and hope to continue to do so.

Contact details:- Roshni – email [info@ssco.org.uk](mailto:info@ssco.org.uk) Facebook Sonia Sabri Company. Twitter SoniaSabriCo. Instagram Soniasabrico Tik Tok soniasabricompany  
Live and Local – [liveandlocal.org.uk](http://liveandlocal.org.uk)

*Joan Hardy*

### **Reunion/Open Day at Strutts, Saturday 2nd September 2023**

Returning to a place which was once familiar but is now firmly rooted in the past can prove to be enlightening in many ways. General memories or specific incidents come to mind, prompted by that room, that stairway, that corridor... Buildings, particular beautiful, iconic structures like the Strutts Community Centre in Belper, are likely to be special to many of us. Former students who attended the Herbert Strutt Grammar School or the subsequent Middle School might be interested in the idea of a reunion, which is currently being planned by The Belper Strutts Society. The idea is to get together in the School Hall, have lunch, a tour of the building and then spend time chatting, sharing memories or browsing the large quantity of memorabilia, including many photographs, which has kindly been donated to us.

If you have not entered the building since you were a student you will certainly notice both similarities and differences; the building is basically the same, still majestic despite the inevitable wear brought about by constant use and lack of funds for renovation. The classrooms are much as they were, the Hall the same as when you attended daily assemblies and the outside areas similar to those you inhabited during breaks and lunchtimes. There are also marked changes; the playground is now a carpark, the quadrangles are glazed and the playing fields across the road no longer belong to Strutts. Redecoration has taken place in some rooms and the Library has been restored to its former glory; there is still much to do but the work is part of a long-term project which has prioritised roof repairs but has ambitious plans for every area. The current use of the Community Centre generates funds which are used to finance the gradual, ongoing improvements to this communal space. The Centre is entirely dependent on volunteers, who attend to the room bookings, catering, room furnishings and bookkeeping as well as many, many small daily tasks.

We are very happy to invite all former Grammar and Middle School students to the reunion along with Strutts Society Life Members and current Annual Members. (2023 sees fifty years since Strutts ceased to be a grammar school). This will be one of our fundraising events planned for 2023. Saturday September 2nd is the date. Tickets will be priced at £15 (including a buffet lunch). If you would like to register interest, please get in touch by sending an e-mail to [bsocnews@gmail.com](mailto:bsocnews@gmail.com) - but most of all we look forward to meeting up later on in the year.

*Joan Hardy*

**Next newsletter – September 2023!**

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