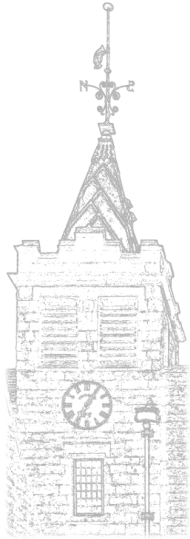


WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER 6 ~ March 2022



We hope you've kept safe and well over the last six months and that if you did catch the virus, you only suffered a mild version and are now completely recovered. Here's to warmer, longer and sunnier days to come!

We're pleased to report that bookings at Strutts from community groups are returning to a more normal level as people feel increasingly confident about meeting with others - though we all know that we need to be cautious. However, as someone said, 'Let's hope Omicron will soon be 'Omigone' - and preferably with no other variant in its wake!'

However, things are far from right with the world when we see and hear of the horrors of the war in Ukraine and the misery of people caught up in it. We can only hope that it will be brought to an end soon while we do whatever we can to help those in need. Our thoughts are especially with people in the Belper area who have family in Ukraine.

Here at Strutts, more licences have been agreed for certain rooms, bringing in a steady, regular income, which will hopefully safeguard the community centre's finances if any more challenging times lie ahead.

Good news too, that as part of the ongoing refurbishment of rooms, both 15 and 17 have been redecorated and the floors polished, so that all looks fresh and shiny – a great improvement.

There have also been three events to date organised by Belper Strutts Society. In October, there was 'An Evening with Mike Ingham', (former Strutts' pupil, who became Chief Football Correspondent for the BBC and a Life Member of BSS) and two Live and Local events, the first a piece of theatre – 'Hefted' and the second a musical evening with Bonfire Radicals – all three will be reviewed in this newsletter. It was good to have entertainment in the Hall again - and people enjoying themselves

The AGM took place in person and via Zoom in February and there is more about that elsewhere in this newsletter. We're sorry that Carol Brewer has left our newsletter team. She has done a sterling job of putting the newsletter together since the beginning – as well as contributing poems. She will be sorely missed. We're very grateful to David Moreton for stepping in to help in Carol's stead.

A number of faithful volunteers have had health problems, so keeping everything running smoothly at Strutts has sometimes been a challenge. However, we're delighted that some new volunteers have come forward and are learning the ropes. We're most grateful to them. We send all good wishes to volunteers who are unwell and wish them a speedy recovery.

Very best wishes,

Pat McLeod and Sue Salaün (Editors)



News from the Chair March 2022

Since I wrote in the last newsletter, we have continued to experience ups and downs due to Covid at Strutts. In October our bookings started to increase and we began to hold events, notably the Mike Ingham talk and a volunteers' coffee morning in October. But by December Omicron had arrived and many events were cancelled, including our Christmas party. Gradually restrictions have been eased and now been lifted altogether and Strutts is beginning to buzz again.

Our AGM took place on 4th February this year, with people attending in person or via Zoom. I intended to come to Strutts and felt it was sensible to do a lateral flow test first. Imagine my shock and dismay when two red lines appeared! So, both Pat and I had to quickly set up our computers to attend on Zoom. It was not easy to chair without being able to see everyone, but we had a successful meeting.

Most of the current Guardians and SCL Board members have been with the Project for well over 12 years and there is a need for some younger and more sprightly Board members to take us forward. I am delighted to welcome Caroline Hawley who was elected as a Director to Strutts Centre Limited – she brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the Project.

Also, George Henshaw has been elected as a Director and Trustee of Guardians of Strutts. His interest in the Herbert Strutt School originated from researching the Belper-based architectural firm of Hunter and Woodhouse, who designed the school back in 1905. His great-uncle latterly designed the School Memorial Library in 1950 and he is very pleased to be assisting in the continual restoration of this prominent Belper building.

I wish to stand down as Chair of SCL because I feel that I need to concentrate more of my time on the Guardians of Strutts and to focus on the restoration of the site. I will remain as an SCL Board member to help the transition, and I have agreed to continue as chair until someone comes forward to take my place. As I said at the AGM, I will be twisting a few arms!

I am very pleased that we have recruited several new volunteers, and I would like to welcome them to the family. Volunteers are the life blood of the Project and with more people joining us we will be able to achieve much more in ensuring the smooth running of the Community Centre and the maintenance of the building. New ideas and skills also allow us to develop and flourish. I would also like to pay tribute to all our volunteers who have given their time and expertise over the last six months during a challenging period.

Over the last few months, we have completed the redecoration of rooms 15 and 17 and had the floors repolished. Room 14 redecoration will be next. We have also arranged for an outside guard to be fitted to protect the stained-glass window in the Memorial Library.

Recently we have been having a big clear up, thanks to the Thursday morning volunteer team who have cleared rooms, helped dispose of damaged and unwanted furniture, sorted out and rationalised storage and generally made more space available for use. This will really make a difference.

So, what next? Strutts provides a much needed and valued resource to the town, and it is important that we ensure its sustainability into the future. As I said last time, we are seeking to ensure financial stability using licences to local organisations for the sole use of some rooms and the old caretaker's house – this is going well, and we are maintaining a balance with rooms for community use. Also, with the predicted rise in fuel costs, we need to reduce energy consumption significantly. We are hoping to start a working group to look at effective insulation and the use of green energy. If you are interested in joining this group, please get in touch with me.

Hopefully as the weather gets warmer more people will return to help with the Project and I look forward to seeing you all again.

Nick McLeod – Chair, Guardians of Strutts



Volunteer News

First of all, I would like to welcome new volunteers to Strutts and hope you will enjoy being part of the team. We are beginning to get busier at the project and a big thank you to all who have been helping over the last few months.

We recently organised a training day for volunteers involved in catering and running the bar; the following gained their certificate in Food Hygiene Level 2:

Elaine Bentley	Pat Hamilton
Julian Bentley	Nick McLeod
Maria Costanti	David Moreton
John Dominy	Natasha Romaine
Meg Dominy	Carol Sayers
Jackie Gallimore	Jane Whitaker

Congratulations to you all!

I hope all volunteers will have received an invitation to a tea party via MailChimp, but in case you haven't, it is on Friday 8th April from 3pm till 6pm at Strutts. Please RSVP to Pam at pam_ryder@btinternet.com and include any dietary requirements.

Pat McLeod

Membership Fees Reminder

The AGM is the time when BSS Membership is normally renewed. If you haven't already done so, please consider renewing your membership or indeed taking out membership for the first time. Annual Membership remains at £10 and Life Membership at £100. You can pay by BACS sort code: 161311, account number: 10188711; or by cheque to 'Belper Strutts Society' or in cash at Reception, (with 'BSS Membership' on the envelope please). Please let us also have your current contact details, if they need updating, so your new membership card can be sent to the correct address.

Thank you very much for your continued support of Strutts.

Sue Salaun

A Flying First

We're grateful to David Cudworth who was a pupil at Strutts in the 1960s for this insight into the life of his stepmother, Jean Oakes who had also been a pupil at Strutts. As David explains Jean went on to score an amazing first in flying – a remarkable achievement!

Jean was born on 30th April 1927 in Derby and attended the Herbert Strutt School in the late 1930s/early 1940s. Her father was the landlord of the Station Hotel in Kilburn (now a day nursery). She used to walk from the hotel to school in Belper every day.

When Jean left school, she initially worked in the National Westminster Bank in Irongate, Derby (now the Standing Order pub).

In the early 1950s, she joined the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF) and was commissioned as a Flying Officer in 1961. As well as completing a degree in Russian sponsored by the RAF, she served in various locations, including three years in RAF Changi in Singapore.

Whilst stationed at Middleton St George in the North East of England, she became the first female pilot to become a member of the prestigious 1,000 Mph Club. On 13th September 1962, at the age of

35, Flight Officer Jean Oakes took over the control of a Lightning T4 jet from Flight Lieutenant John Smith and flew up and down the NE coast at an average altitude of 35,000 feet. Her exact speed was 1,125 mph, which is well in excess of the sound barrier. Her exploits that day warranted an entry in the Guinness Book of Records.

Jean received two ties, a pair of cufflinks (engraved with her initials) and a scarf when she was accepted into the 1,000 Mph Club. These are now in a museum close to the RAF station in the North-East.



Jean completed her RAF career as a school liaison officer and retired to Borrowash where she served as a personnel officer to a number of companies.

In 1985, Jean married Roy Cudworth, a widower. Roy was my father and my late sister, Beverly Cudworth, attended the Herbert Strutt School from 1963 to 1968. I came to the school to do my 'A' Levels from 1966-1968.

Jean passed away on 4th July 2019 at the age of 92.

David Cudworth

BSS-ORGANISED EVENTS IN THE LAST 6 MONTHS

1) Mike Ingham MBE former Chief Football Correspondent for the BBC

In Conversation with David Moreton, BSS Treasurer - 16th October 2021.

'My friend and I both thoroughly enjoyed the event. In fact it's the best night out I've had for a very long time Mike himself was top class throughout.'

'A most enjoyable evening.'

'A wonderful evening.'

The above are quotes from some of those who attended the event and are deserved praise for Mike, a BSS Life Member, who entertained us with his memories of Strutts (and Long Row) in the 1960s as well as his experience of being Chief Football Correspondent for the BBC for twenty five years. There were some fascinating insights.



Mike Ingham

At Strutts he remembered his enjoyment of acting in school plays which he thought helped him gain confidence for his later career of commentating. While studying in Birmingham, he volunteered as a DJ on Birmingham Hospital Radio which was a great experience before he moved to work at Radio Derby.

Mike was in the school cricket team and also played cricket for Belper Meadows, where he once took part in a game with his Derby County hero, Kevin Hector. He was awarded his school cricket colours but never officially presented with them as the headmaster didn't approve of his long curly hair and as he told Mike, couldn't be seen to be approving of him in public – so the colours were awarded via Royal Mail instead.

On Saturday nights, as a teenager, he often frequented the Strutt Arms at Milford, which would be packed to hear the likes of Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker and Ronnie Woods – would you believe!

Working at the BBC, he commentated on 28 Cup Finals and 8 World Cup Competitions, but he was at the Heysel Stadium with Peter Jones and Emyln Hughes as their summariser, for the Liverpool v Juventus semi-final, when just before the game, disaster struck and he was told by the BBC to go down from the commentary box and count the bodies. There were thirty nine. It was horrific to see them, as distraught family members and friends nervously uncovered the faces in what Mike called

'the most shocking identity parade imaginable'. He was left with the sad sight of a young teenager beating a lifeless corpse on the chest as he wailed and tried to wake up his father or brother.

When Mike returned to the commentary box, stunned by what he had seen, Peter Jones had to help him break the silence and start his commentary again, because it had been decided that the match would go ahead.

Mike recounted that when he went to Derby County away games in the 60s, it was exciting to walk with the team from the station to the ground and he remarked how very different things are today with the teams much more remote from their supporters.

He talked about the bullying at Strutts. It wasn't much fun to be pushed under the shower in school uniform, but fortunately, he found a much taller friend, a year older, Brian Dunkley, who became his guardian angel. In fact, when asked in the Q and A session in the second half what things meant the most to him at Strutts, he mentioned sport of course and the cultural aspects of school life, but most of all the friendship and in particular that of Brian, Steven Cooper and Simon Groom.

When Mike left Radio Derby for the BBC in London, his dad put together a tape of his experiences and people he'd met. This included a contribution from Brian Clough. Mike's dad had knocked on Brian's front door one Sunday morning and when little Nigel opened it, asked to see his dad. Brian duly appeared, invited him in and offered him a whisky while he recorded a message for Mike, wishing him well.

There are many more stories and anecdotes in 'Extra Time and Penalties' which is a forthright, honest and really enjoyable read. Mike very generously donated the proceeds of the sale of his books on the night to BSS as well as giving us a wonderful evening's entertainment (first half in conversation with David Moreton our BSS Treasurer, transformed into a chat show host for the evening - and second half a Q and A session with the audience, complete with a bar at half-time). Around £600 was raised for Strutts - despite restricted numbers because of Covid.

Mike was impressed that two former pupils had travelled from London for the event and a number of others had returned to Strutts for the first time since they'd left in order to see and speak to him.



Book signing by Mike at the 16th October event

Many, many thanks to Mike - and to his wife, Lorna for accompanying him. As another happy punter remarked: *It all went splendidly!*

2) Live and Local at Strutts Community Centre – Hefted - 13th November 2021

On November 13th we were pleased to welcome The ‘Multi-Story Theatre Company’ to Strutts as part of our Live and Local venture. The 4 players were clearly used to adapting to any space and quickly set up their stage in the hall using a traverse format which allowed audience on either side of the performance area.



“Hefted” players in action at The Strutt Centre, 13th November 2022

Although the play was targeted to a Devonshire audience and included folk tales derived from that area, a significant number of audience members clearly appreciated the poetic and enigmatic qualities in the dialogue and were able to accommodate the marked local accent at the beginning of the play. The well crafted and thoughtful dialogue was tailored to each story and echoed the historical customs and beliefs which provided a backdrop to the play.

Some of the plot lines of the individual stories were initially quite obscure but became clearer towards the end as the circular nature of events was revealed. The singing was beautiful and well placed to support the dialogue and add an energetic dynamic to the performance. The use of space and engagement with the audience was professional throughout as was the handling of props and scene changes. This aspect of the play was a masterclass of theatre technique.

‘Hefted’ was a new experience in theatre for many of us and certainly generated some lively discussion and differences of opinion. It was our introduction to Live and Local and was chosen by the organisers rather than ourselves.

Joan Hardy

3) Live and Local at Strutts Community Centre – Bonfire Radicals - 4th March 2022

On Friday March 4th a capacity audience at Strutts enjoyed a vibrant performance from the band Bonfire Radicals, a group of 6 talented musicians provided by the Live and Local organisation. It is hard to describe their style of folk music, which contrasts South East European dances with shepherds' pipes and soulful vocal melodies, but it is a unique and intriguing mix.

The audience responded enthusiastically to the varied repertoire and their impressive ensemble technique in which everyone played their part to produce an exciting, musically sound and sensitive performance. Their awareness of each other combined with their delicate to dramatic sound combinations was captivating.

Some of the audience members danced, others tapped their feet and everyone had fun. Live and Local supports a network of voluntary organisations who bring their communities together to enjoy high-quality, entertaining and affordable live entertainment.



The Strutts Society members would like to thank everyone who supported this venture, both volunteers and audience, and we look forward to seeing you again at future events.

Joan Hardy

Next newsletter – September 2022! Take care until we meet again.

~ The Strutts Newsletter Team ~