



WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER 7 ~ September 2022

All at Strutts were saddened to hear of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, who has been so much a part of our lives during her long reign. Our heartfelt thoughts are with the Royal Family.

Dear Readers,

The 'great heat' was a shock bestowed on us by Climate Change – another wake-up call to alter the way we live our lives. Most of the Strutts building maintained a comfortable temperature for those using it – thank goodness! We hope you managed to stay cool and perhaps are now contemplating ways of saving water, saving fuel, managing your garden for a Mediterranean climate, thinking about sustainability generally and other ways in which we can all try to do our bit to save the planet for the following generations.

Having survived the lockdowns, and with bookings picking up nicely, Strutts had a bit of a roller-coaster as Covid struck again and various groups had to cancel classes and meetings as members were either ill or isolating. Volunteers were also struck down, which made finding people to look after Reception a challenge. Many thanks to a few of the Trustees who went beyond the call of duty to sit behind the desk for long stretches.

Still, Strutts has survived – again - and is looking forward to an autumn/winter of greater activity, although Nick McLeod reminds us in 'News from the Chair' that we can never be complacent – especially with the huge hike in fuel costs.

Please note the Autumn Market on Saturday 15th October, organised by BSS and always a big fund-raiser for Strutts. The Autumn Market is proving to be very popular with stall holders this year. As we write, we have 61 stalls and hope to have 65. It's a wonderful opportunity to shop early for Christmas!

February 2023 – just before our next newsletter is due - sees another Live and Local event at Strutts: this time it's exciting Asian Dance - soul stirring, uplifting Kathak dance, with live music and vocals from a global palette driven by the bold rhythms of Tabla – Saturday 25th February 2023. Don't miss it!

There's much more in the rest of the newsletter, so please read with interest and enjoy!

Very best wishes,

Pat McLeod and Sue Salaün (Editors)



News from the Chair September 2022

It seems no time at all since I wrote my piece in the last newsletter, but lots has happened since then. More regular groups returned to Strutts after Easter, then as usual bookings dropped over the summer holidays. As I write, we are welcoming the u3a back for their monthly meeting at Strutts and we anticipate an increase in bookings once the schools start their autumn term.

We have hosted several events in the last six months: the Model Railway Exhibition took place at the end of March and proved very popular, after two years when it had been cancelled because of Covid. In May we were part of the Belper Arts Trail, providing one of the main venues and attracting many visitors. This event was supported financially by the Belper Strutts Society, who also provided refreshments. The Belper Community Choir held a concert in the hall in July, an event that was well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by many. It feels as if we are gradually returning to normal and these events also brought in income for Strutts from refreshment and bar sales.

Many of you will have noticed that we have introduced a new room booking system called "Hallmaster" and we are beginning to get to grips with it. We are currently investigating the production of invoices for room hire through Hallmaster, which will enable them to be generated more quickly. So, in the future we should see more efficient and streamlined systems at Strutts. Watch this space!!

As most of you know, we try to ensure financial stability of the Project by licencing some rooms for sole use to businesses. Sadly, after 5 years occupation HSR Electricals will be leaving the old caretaker's house very soon, and the NHS Children's Clinic will be returning to Babington Hospital. We will therefore be looking to attract new licensees in the near future. We are negotiating with another NHS department to licence Room 25B, once some refurbishment work, including a new accessible toilet, has been completed.

As with so many individuals and businesses at this time, I am very concerned about the effect of increases in energy costs in the coming months, which are predicted to quadruple by next year. There will be some delay before we are significantly affected, as we have a fixed rate deal until November 2023, thanks to some timely negotiations by our treasurer Eric Manning. However, in the longer-term higher fuel costs will have implications for the very survival of the Project, with such a large and draughty building to heat and maintain. We are considering ways in which we can make savings – possibly through better insulation, repair of windows and purchase of more curtains, all of which will cost money in the short term. It is very likely that we will also have to increase the charges for room hire. Challenging times ahead....

As always, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our wonderful volunteers, who give their time, expertise and energy in so many areas of the Project. Without you Strutts could not and would not exist.

Nick McLeod – Chair, Guardians of Strutts



Volunteer News

Following the Food Hygiene course in February, we have established a catering group. Some volunteers met with Cynthia Maddock to get advice about what has worked well in the past and have developed an action plan for the future. A small group met during the summer to make a start on sorting out the kitchen cupboards – thanks to Jane, Carol, Meg, Jackie and Pat H. Also, thanks to all volunteers who helped with refreshments for the Model Railway day and the Arts Trail weekend.

We held a very successful Afternoon Tea in April, attended by many volunteers. The event was an opportunity for new volunteers to meet the others and after tea, games and a pop quiz caused a lot of laughter (but not many correct answers!). Hopefully we can organise more social events in the future.

A few volunteers have expressed an interest in gardening, and I wonder whether it would be possible to start a gardening group? If you are interested, please contact me on bssocvols@gmail.com or leave a message at reception.

The summer has not been easy with many volunteers getting Covid and many of us being on holiday. A big thanks to all those who have done extra shifts on reception over the summer – and to all of you for the part you play in keeping the Centre going.

Pat McLeod

Membership

If you've forgotten to do 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; 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 so much for your continued support of Strutts.

Sue Salaün

Belper Town Council Award

On 4th September Katie Harris, the Mayor of Belper, presented awards to local people who have made a significant contribution to the town. The presentation took place in the River Gardens and one of the recipients was Nick McLeod, Chair of Guardians of Strutts.

The Mayor described Nick's work over many years in establishing Strutts as a successful community centre and in ensuring its survival during the pandemic. She also said that several people had put his name forward for the new Town Council award.

Nick received a certificate and a framed Andy Mayers print of Belper.



Congratulations, Nick and well deserved!



Hidden History

Sometimes history can be uncovered in some extraordinary places.

Some years back we were renovating two large sporting trophies which had been created in the early years of the Strutts School, to celebrate the sporting achievements of the students. They had obviously been stored underneath heavy objects as they were badly dented and in need of a good clean. We decided to restore them with polish and an attempt to push out the dents in the silverwork, which necessitated the removal of the central shields. To our surprise the removed shields revealed two copies of *The Daily Sketch*, dated October 31st 1913 and November 5th 1913 respectively. These dates, apart from being Halloween and Bonfire Night, highlight a very important period in the country's history. In 1913 it was a little over a year since the tragic loss of the Titanic and under a year before the beginning of World War 1.

Given that dark years lay ahead it might be surprising to find that the front covers of both newspapers revealed a carefree and upbeat approach to life. One contained images of immaculately groomed men and women engaged in tango tea dancing, which was the latest London craze, and the other showed Duke Ernest, son of the duke of Cumberland, riding with Kaiser Wilhelm through the streets of Germany. The irony of this can only be seen in retrospect! And there were other articles and advertisements which were designed to appeal to the economical housewife, anyone arranging a wedding or a funeral, and all those people looking for an alternative to tea dancing. A lovely set of leather-bound books containing the complete works of Charles Dickens is a real bargain at under five pounds and James Barrie's new novel is being reviewed.

Generations of proud students must have held up those trophies with no knowledge of that tiny glimpse of the past which were hidden inside them.

And one more thing...

The hands which folded those newspapers. Did they go on to create more beautiful artefacts or was their owner one of the millions of men who died between 1914 and 1918? We will never know.

The two shields are in the school library and copies of the newspapers are stored with our other historical documents.



Joan Hardy



The Campaign to Save Strutts.

Cynthia Maddock is the Strutts' Archivist, a Guardian and Trustee, and has been involved with the Strutts Project from the beginning. She has documents relating to the campaign to keep the century-old building for the people of Belper. It was not an easy task! These are some of her memories of that time.

There were a number of people working to save Strutts for Belper, but it was the Belper Civic Forum (no longer in existence), which presented a petition to Amber Valley Borough Council in March 2008, which read: *We the undersigned care about the future of the Herbert Strutt School building and urge that it be used as a community facility for Belper.* Cynthia had been invited to become a member of the Civic Forum as someone with local knowledge and as a former pupil was concerned to save the building for the community.

The 100 year-old school provided a unique opportunity for Belper – a fine public building that could become a fantastic venue for community activities. Indeed, a number of commercial and community groups had already expressed an interest in using the site and it was felt a community centre would be in line with the terms of the 1909 conveyance by which George Herbert Strutt gave the school to the town.

The Herbert Strutt School, affectionately known as 'Strutts' and by then a primary school following the reorganisation of the system in Belper, had moved just a month previously in February 2008, from the Edwardian building to a new site – but the future of Strutts was still undecided. Cynthia remembers watching school children leave the building for the last time on the morning of February 27th. The idea was for them to process via Gibfield Lane, the Fleet, the Market Place, Parkside and Mill Lane to their brand new school. The bystanders then discovered that the doors had been left unlocked and worried that the building might be vandalised, rescued some 'treasures' from the school's history which might otherwise have been damaged or gone missing. It has taken years to retrieve other precious items after they were taken into safe-keeping. Cynthia says the interior resembled the Marie Celeste and the whole building was in great need of TLC. She remembers her husband helping to count the number of broken windows!

Cynthia was happy to do whatever she could to help the campaign. Everyone had a job and it was very much teamwork. There was a great deal to be done – drawing up detailed proposals including a feasibility study as they planned for the future of the building and tried to persuade Amber Valley Borough Council and Derbyshire CC to turn over the site to them rather than sell to a developer who, it seemed was ready and willing to buy. For a time, she acted as secretary, and later one of her tasks was to write to the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire to invite her to open Strutts as a community and business centre, almost a hundred years to the day from when it had opened as a school. Unfortunately neither she nor the Duke were available as the 9th Duke had been in 1909. Later given the remit: 'Public Relations', 'BSS Officer' and 'Volunteer Coordination', Cynthia was kept very busy contacting individuals and organisations, (including writing to thank people for their donations in support of the new project), preparing a quiz about Belper to raise some funds and eventually signing the paperwork in receipt of the keys to the building.

Cynthia remembers the day in the summer of 2008 when she was shopping in what was then Safeway when another member of the Forum came over to her and excitedly announced, 'We've got it!' The various groups had finally persuaded the local authorities that they could take over and manage the building despite their previous inexperience. It was a daunting prospect, and they knew they had a hill to climb, so there was also a sense of 'What have we done?' Nevertheless, they had saved the building for the community of Belper and the first part of the battle had been won.



There was never really any need to advertise – people started to come and use the building as they continue to do.

It's a testament to all those who fought so hard to keep Strutts for the people of Belper as George Herbert Strutt made clear was his wish in the 1909 conveyance – '*..... if at any future time the County Council or its successors or assigns shall deem it requisite in connection with the making of more suitable provision under altered circumstances for Higher Elementary or Secondary Education for the Town of Belper the said hereditaments and premises shall be held IN TRUST for and be conveyed and assured for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of the Township of Belper ...*'

Cynthia mentioned the names of many people who worked hard to save Strutts for Belper, some of whom are no longer actively involved with the Project. So many names could be mentioned, but there's always the danger of missing others, so we'd just like to say a huge 'thank you' to all of them - who know who they are – for saving an important community asset.

If only more of Belper's historic buildings could be rescued and put to such good use.

Sue Salaün

In Memoriam: Anne Newport

We were very sad to learn of Anne's death in July. She was a very committed volunteer at Strutts for over 6 years, working on reception and serving on the BSS Committee.

Anne was quiet and modest, and many will be unaware of her distinguished career before moving to Belper from London. After gaining a first-class degree from Royal Holloway College, University of London, Anne worked in libraries of the Open University, Senate House, the library of the University of London and in the Inner Temple, Inns of Court. In the latter she brought the library into the digital world and was one of a handful of specialist librarians working across Europe. Later she worked at the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where she trained staff and was well respected by all. She loved London, its museums and galleries, and enjoyed visiting Kew Gardens and walks along the Thames. She moved to Belper on her retirement to be near her mother.

Anne will be much missed at Strutts, where she was a valued colleague and friend.

Strutts Autumn Market



STRUTTS
AUTUMN
MARKET

SATURDAY 15TH OCTOBER
10.00AM – 3.00PM

Lots of Choice!
Over 50 Stalls
Shop Early For Christmas

Entrance £1.00 *children go free*
REFRESHMENTS & FREE CAR-PARKING

The Strutts Centre
Derby Road Belper DE56 1UU

Hosted by Belper Strutts Society

Next newsletter – March 2023! Take care until we meet again.

~ *The Strutts Newsletter Team* ~