



Annual General Meeting
Tuesday 20 October 2020
7.30 pm via online meeting platform

MINUTES

Present: Frances Churchward (FC); Joanne Clements (JC); Marty Climenhaga (MC); Carolyn Fayle (CF); Nigel Fayle (NF); Hilde Gronsberg (HG); Bruce Larner (BL); John Miller (JM); Marina Murphy (MM); Margaret Osmond (MO); Mike Sanderman (MS); Mandy Stoddart (MS); Maria Earley (ME); Mike Page (MP); Michaela Lawler-Levene (MLL); Paula Shapland (PS); David Clothier (DC); Vicki Stacey (VS); Julie Catling (JC).

Apologies: Odette Nolan (ON)

Quorum: Exceeded the minimum requirement with 19 members present

Attachments:

1. Chair's Report
2. 2019/2020 End-of-Year Accounts
3. Community Coordinator's Report
4. Shirley Local History Group Report
5. Parklife Café Report

1. Welcome & Apologies

MC welcomes everyone to the Zoom AGM. Microphones will be muted for parts but everyone will have the chance to ask questions after the reports. FOSJP have completed their second year as a charity with the support of all our volunteers and staff. FOSJP, Parklife and SHLG have been finding innovative ways help the community during the pandemic we welcome everyone to get involved and give as much or as little help as you can give. MC is running this meeting as Secretary and HG is running the tech. MC explained the icons and chat window and reactions and thumbs up or down for voting.

2. AGM 2019 Minutes

Minutes were accepted by everyone as a true copy, save for MLL who abstained as she had not been at the 2019 meeting.

3. Chair's Report

NF read his report which can be found below. Following this there were no comments or questions.

4. Farewells

MM gives the following farewell to NF

Nigel Fayle our Chair for the last four years is otherwise known as El Niguel, Big Nige, Sir N, Nigella, Nidge. Many different names for a man who finds it difficult to remember people's names.

Nigel has volunteered in several different capacities over the years and has made his mark in many ways. He has and continues to put in many hours every week. He began volunteering for Friends of St James Park (FOSJP) in 2011 helping at an event then as a gardener for two sessions a month.

The gardening volunteers work alongside Southampton City Council to ensure the Park is a safe and welcoming place for all. The Park has been awarded the Green Flag 10 times since 2012. Nigel has been instrumental in achieving this world-renowned reward by liaising with the Council to ensure the Park is ready to be judged and explaining how it has been developed as a hub for the community, for people from all walks of life and ability.

Nigel can turn his hand to most things and just gets stuck in - weeding, planting, fixing, acquiring cast off plants and trees. All carried out in a slow, measured way. In 2016 he agreed to become the Chair of FOSJP. A role he has carried out with determination and pride. FOSJP work alongside the Parklife Café which is a Community Interest Company. Both projects are unable to exist without the other.

The relationship between the two organisations became very strained and complex so Nigel decided to take on the role of Volunteer Director of the Café in July 2018 as well. This was in an attempt to make positive changes for the overall project which has certainly proved true. I am the Community Volunteer Co-ordinator. Nigel and I were put in some very difficult situations over a couple of years due to the above difficulties which proved a very challenging time. But hope he agrees that a lot has been learnt in the face of adversity. Nigel and I spent many hours discussing the difficulties. He remained calm and collected and had to come to terms with my Italian roots i.e. I am prone to gesticulating and becoming quite animated! He is a great listener, supportive, diplomatic and puts much effort into solving any problems that arise. The Director role for Parklife continues to be very challenging. However, many positive changes have taken place for the employees of the Café who would struggle to find work elsewhere and for the 50 odd people who currently volunteer for FOSJP.

We have held many events in St James Park which would not be the same without Nigel. He likes to see people enjoying themselves and puts much effort into all our events. He has become an expert on the BBQ, putting up bunting and mucking in with whatever is needed. He spent a good hour cleaning out a portable toilet that someone had kindly turned upside down before one of our events. If you ever need a dancing Father Christmas, he is your man.

The pandemic necessitated changes in both FOSJP and Parklife Café. Since March we have worked together to become a food distribution centre for people in need. An incredible achievement for which we are receiving some heart-warming feedback. Nigel immediately adapted to the needs of our local community by transitioning into a delivery driver – another skill to add to the list.

I don't think Nigel ever imagined the amount of work and challenges he would face when he said yes to my suggestion of his becoming Chair of FOSJP but we want to thank him for taking on the challenge. There have been stressful moments, anger, upset but most importantly laughter and many happy times.

Nigel came up with the term "community enrichment" which encapsulates what we have achieved and continue to do.

Thanks for enriching our Community Nigel and so glad that we are going to continue working with you closely in your role as Director of the Parklife Café.

FC gives farewell speech for MC:

Marty first joined the FOSJP team in 2016 when she volunteered to work with our maintenance group. At that time her son was still a toddler and Marty could often be seen carrying out a maintenance job with her small son attached to her in a sling.

Not long after this, she joined the committee and volunteered to be our secretary for which we were most grateful as we had been without a secretary for a while. Since then she has performed the role of secretary with considerable efficiency by sending out the meeting agendas, writing up the minutes almost immediately and distributing them to the trustees, plus, of course, all the other tasks required in her role as secretary. She has also been a valuable contributor to all discussions at meetings, something that is not always easy to do when you are responsible for taking down the minutes.

In addition to being a great secretary, Marty has also given her time at our fundraising events and shone as MC at our Summer Festivals. Not only that but she further displayed her talents by performing at the festival.

We count ourselves very lucky to have had Marty as such a valuable member of the trustee board and we are all sad that, due to work commitments, she is unable to continue in her present role. However, the good news is that we are not losing her altogether as she will be joining the board as an adviser at any meetings which her work schedule permits and so will be offering her advice on various areas in which she has expertise. Thank you Marty.

5. Treasurer's Report

ON would normally present this report but JC delivers this report in her place as assistant treasurer. JC thanked JM for independently examining the FSOJP accounts and helping ON finalise the accounts for the last financial year. The accounts are for last financial year and these show that we are doing well for a small charity and are receiving ongoing core funding for the next 5 years with 4.5 years of funding left. Finances are in a good state, is the overall message. Funds we held at end of April are made up of mostly restricted funds, £27,000 funds are restricted, of which £19,000 is the Reaching Community fund (National Lotto grant). This can be used for most things COVID related. There is £6,000 in general history funds and about £2,000 of unrestricted funds

Turning to income and expenses, £45,000 of income and £34,000 of expenditure. Most of the income came in the form of grants, £40,000 worth and about £2,700 of income from events and £1,600 to £1,700 from donations.

To highlight note 4 of the report, the Council gave us £2,500 for the summer festival and this is included in the general fund. Otherwise majority of payment of fees was £23,000 in employee wages and other individuals working for FOSJP, £3,000 in volunteer expenses

and £2.5,000 in room hire on top of expenditure. There is a surplus of around £11,500 in the last financial year which has increased FOSJP fund to over £30,000.

6. Election of Trustees

Election of new trustee – Maria Earley

ME was voted in as a trustee with a unanimous vote of 17 and will take over as secretary from MC.

7. Re-election of trustees – Julie Catling, Mike Page

JC and MP re-elected as trustees with a unanimous vote of 17.

8. Call for prospective new members

MM says that there is a lady who was going to attend, a nurse, interested in becoming a trustee but could not attend the AGM.

9. Community Coordinator's Report

MM read her report which you can see below. There were no questions or comments.

10. History Report

VS presented a slideshow alongside her report which you can see below. VS and MLL also showed an impressive video of the VE day celebrations which was very well received.

MM commented that the history video showed how much the history group are managing to reach the community and it is inspiring to work with everyone. People coming together - this was pulled together in 2 weeks due to the connections through all of us, volunteers, staff and the community.

11. Park Life Report

NF read his report as below, no questions or comments.

12. Any Other Business

NF relays the following: Good News!

We have again achieved this year, a Green Flag award, an international award given in recognition of Park excellence, this is the 10th concurrent award since the park upgrade, and we have now fulfilled a major commitment that was required under the conditions of the Heritage Lottery Funding way back in 2009.

The park is judged on appearance and upkeep, facilities, ambience and most important the role it performs as a community focal point and hub, for all we do to help enrich life locally, whether that is, as now, our food share operation, or our popular calendar of events.

Thanks to our partners, Parklife Café and Southampton City Council, and a special thanks to our Garden Team, led by Mike Sanderman, who work tirelessly through the year in keeping the planted areas looking so good.

Recognition of a special and maybe unique place.

Nigel paid a wonderful tribute to Dave Clothier: I would like to mention at this point, a long-time member of our Garden Team, Dave Clothier.

Dave, supported by his wife, Jean, has made an immense, personal contribution to the wellbeing of the Park, as well as a regular attending the gardening sessions, he has helped to create our very popular, "Eggstravorganza" (copyright, Martin Gardner!) event at Easter, based around his miniature Steam Engine and Musical Organ, together with his friends and their fairground music organs, it has now grown to be a major day in our annual events calendar.

Dave has also made a massive contribution to the health of our City, and other towns nearby, in organising the extremely popular Park Runs, held in Southampton on the Common, it is a sad irony that Dave now has health issues of his own to battle, already having a heart monitor device implanted in his chest, which basically keeps him alive, he is now 'remotely controlled' from Southampton General Hospital, he has now received a diagnosis of cancer, life can be cruel, we all wish him every good wish we can, for a successful outcome, we know he is a battler.

So I would like salute Dave, as a true friend of our Park, and of our City.

MM thanks to BL for everything he does and always getting involved and big thanks for photos of VE day

MLL mentions that next year is the 10th anniversary of the park reopening.

NF says that he wishes his colleague a successful stewardship and Maria in her new role, proud to be involved with a great group of people and wish FOSJP all the very best for the future

13. Closing Remarks

FC Echoed the thanks to Nigel for the years he has put in, it's a tough act to follow. A big Thank you to Marty and thank you to all of our volunteers and paid staff, it has been a great year despite being very difficult. I hope it can be a great year next year.

Minutes by: Maria Earley
October 2020

ATTACHMENTS

Chair's Report

The AGM for last year seems a very long time ago, the majority of the ensuing period has been dominated by the Corona Pandemic, there has been no escape from the constant darkness it's shadow has cast over all our lives and the danger has not passed, nor can we yet see an end to it's devastating effects.

The strength of any organisation has been tested this year like no other, it has been a make it or break it period for many, FOSJP has come through this very difficult time stronger and more focussed on its aims.

At the beginning of this year, through the hard work of Marina Murphy, our Community Volunteer Co-ordinator, and her colleagues, we were granted a very generous grant from the Charities Lottery Fund, based on the work in the community done to date and the plans made for the future, to finance 2 years of work, to help with and improve the lives of as many people in our community as we could reach, the project was just getting into its stride when everything was closed down by the virus.

We had to adapt and utilise what we had in place, FOSJP had the funding and the approval of the lottery organisation to use the funds in any way we could to support the local community in the new situation, Parklife Community Interest Company, who run the Park café, had an established link with local supermarkets to take their excess food that would otherwise go to landfill, the food supply was expanded by the determination and work of Paula Shapland, Café manager, both parts of our operation pulled together and now two collections morning and evening are made, the crates arrive in the community room of the café and next morning are sorted and delivered out by members and volunteers to individuals or groups that we have identified as needing support, current groups include Women's Refuges and Care homes, we are looking to expand on this.

The consequences of the shutdown have meant that our annual calendar of events was cancelled, their growing success and popularity locally meant they have been sorely missed this year, as indeed has the revenue they raise towards the community activities of FOSJP, again the Lottery grant we received has helped in so many ways.

As many of you are aware, I am also the Chairman of the Board at Parklife Café, I took on both roles in an effort to improve the working together of both organisations, this year's challenges brought on by the epidemic have proved that this has been successfully done, as a consequence, I have decided to step down from the role as chairman of FOSJP after 4 ½ years of an interesting ride, people make it a community and the community helps to make people, I have personally gained a great deal as a person through working together with some special individuals, and can proudly say that with their help, we have moved FOSJP forward and upwards and the Shirley Community is a better place for it.

2019/2020 End-of-Year Accounts

Friends of St. James' Park - Charity No.
1177957
Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 30 April 2020
(Provisional)

£

Monetary Assets

Cash at bank and in hand

Current Account	29,198.01
Petty cash	63.00
Paypal	150.14

National Lottery Prepaid Card	(Note 1)	1,000.00
		<hr/>
Total Monetary Assets		<u>30,411.15</u>
Represented by Funds		
Unrestricted Funds		
General Fund		3,347.12
Restricted Funds		27,064.03
History Funds	5,944.47	
Reaching Communities	19,111.60	
Other Funds	2,007.96	
		<hr/>
Total Funds		<u>30,411.15</u>

Note 1 The National Lottery has given a grant of £1000, in the form of a prepaid card, for the VE 75 Day celebrations

Friends of St. James' Park - Charity No. 1177957
Receipts and Payments Account for the year to 30 April 2020 (Provisional)

	General Fund £	Restricted Fund £	Total £
Receipts			
Donations	556.05	1102.01	1658.06
Grants	2500.00	37759.50	40259.50
History		462.26	462.26
Events	2539.03	251.22	2790.25
Miscellaneous	338.68	0.00	338.68
		<hr/>	
		5933.76	39574.99
		<hr/>	<u>45508.75</u>
Payments			

Room Hire		1443.20	1149.05	2592.25
Expenses		2027.72	1243.77	3271.49
Fees		5470.17	17518.53	22988.70
Events		2626.70	110.63	2737.33
Equipment		100.00	842.49	942.49
Office		277.09	0.00	277.09
Insurance		661.76	28.00	689.76
History			367.61	367.61
Miscellaneous		200.08	0.00	200.08
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		12806.72	21260.08	34066.80
Surplus	(6,872.96)		18314.91	11441.95
Balance brought forward at 1 May 2019		9855.15	9114.05	18969.20
Transfer of Unused Restricted Funds to General Fund				
Ford Trust				
Autism		192.20	(192.20)	
Wave 105 Cash for Kids		172.73	(172.73)	
Balance carried forward at 30 April 2020		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		3347.12	27064.03	30411.15

Notes to the accounts

1. These accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis, with all revenue and expenses shown on a cash basis.
2. The charity has two funds: an unrestricted General Fund and a restricted fund arising from the receipt of grants for specific purposes.

Community Coordinator's Report [MM] August 2019 to March 2020

It is almost difficult to remember back to what we were doing pre-COVID.

- A lot of work took place to research how we could fund all that we were doing in order to keep our Project afloat and sustainable.
- In January we were incredibly fortunate to be granted a substantial amount of money from the Reaching Communities National Lottery Fund. It is a five-year grant.
- We were running two drop-ins - a group for people suffering from dementia and our Serendipity Group for adults on the Autistic Spectrum.
- Alongside the above regular events and activities were put on for the local community e.g. Halloween trail and our first on-line Dog Show.
- We worked alongside the Parklife Café to support people on work placements and give them volunteering opportunities.
- Our fantastic group of gardening volunteers decided to go from a fortnightly group to weekly which attracted 4 new volunteers. What they do compliments Southampton City Council and ensures the Park is a pleasant and attractive space for everyone.

Mid-March 2020 to September 2020

Since mid-March 2020 FOSJP has been taken along a very different path than we had planned. In hindsight most of it has been positive:

- FOSJP and the Parklife Café pretty much immediately transitioned and adapted to the needs of our local community due to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- In those 6 months FOSJP and Parklife distributed approximately 10.2k portions of food (0.1 tonnes). An incredible achievement.
- Surplus food is collected from various supermarkets in the locality, sorted into crates/bags and distributed to individual families referred via Schools and Shirley Estate; 2 Women's Refuges; a local Care Home; a lady who works for Scratch who cooks in bulk for those in need.
- By passing on this food we are preventing waste; reducing landfill; composting any inedible fruit and vegetables.
- This happens on a daily basis and is only possible due to the willingness of our paid Staff, Sessional Workers and incredible volunteers.
- We were able to transition into our current project due to the Lottery being flexible and trusting that our funds are being used to help those in need during this difficult time and until such time as we can resume what we originally applied for.
- July 2020 we were granted a top-up fund via The Lottery from the Government's Emergency Fund. This funding enables us to add tinned and dried food, toiletries and cleaning products to the surplus food given to us from Supermarkets.
- We have established new partnerships across the City by becoming part of a Community Hub set up to support and help those in need in Southampton.
- A big thank you to Paula who manages the Parklife Café for all her help in keeping us on track regarding the ever changing guidelines and rules regarding COVID-19 and food hygiene. We could not do this without her.

Serendipity Group

- When this drop-in group stopped in March we felt it important to continue offering something as it has been running for several years and due to our concern for the vulnerability of our attendees.
- A closed Facebook group was set up and zoom meetings have taken place on a regular basis.
- Since July the group has been meeting in The Park when the weather permits.
- We are currently consulting our attendees about meeting in the Community Room once again – obviously following strict guidelines.

Volunteers

- Thanks to the Management Committee which has been supportive and engaged throughout this difficult period. Thank goodness for virtual meetings.
- Several new volunteers came on board to help with food deliveries and some of our "old" volunteers transitioned into this new role which has been invaluable.

Gardening

- Sadly, at the beginning of May we lost our liaison officer from SCC, Nigel Fulbrook, to COVID 19. We are going to replace a tree that we lost during the dry summer 2 years ago with a new one in memory of Nigel who was helpful and supportive of the gardening volunteers.

- From July some of our gardening volunteers were able to return and start the hard work of battling with the weeds, planting and maintaining the beds.
- I quote something written by Mike Sanderman, a Trustee and gardening team representative:

“This is a lovely friendly little team, we often receive encouragement and words of thanks from park users passing through, and it's a pleasure to be able to put something back into a park appreciated by all who use it, and so would encourage anyone who would like to help, whatever your skills and ability, novice or expert, young or old, even if only for a short time and to suit your own circumstances, to come along, you will find a warm welcome and will be most appreciated.”

Tennis Courts

- The tennis courts have become a very popular way of people keeping fit. There has definitely been an increase in the number of enquiries we receive and people using them.
- We are very grateful to SCC for replacing the nets and posts as they were looking a little worse for wear.

Social Media & Events

- During the last year FOSJP and the Parklife Café have supported 48 events.
- The one that stands out was the Christmas Event which involved lantern making, a walk to Shirley Precinct and turning on the Christmas lights. This was sponsored by Utilita who continue support what we do.
- Hilde, our Social Media and Events Co-ordinator, has worked throughout the pandemic to find creative and innovative ways of keeping our community involved with St James Park. Encouraging people to be outdoors in a safe and healthy manner.
- This has included socially distanced litter picks, a Mr Men trail and ideas of activities to do at home during lockdown.
- We have 2,638 followers on Facebook and reached 70.8K over the last year. This enables us to disseminate important information from our COVID champion, SCC, the Police and generally keep people engaged.
- Posters around the Park and Cafe are also used to pass on information.
- Due to the ongoing situation any large events at the Park have been postponed until circumstances allow which we are very much looking forward to.

Just want to finish by saying that “our little project” i.e. FOSJP and Parklife Café is achieving great things. I quote from a family of asylum seekers feedback form “my only comment is say THANK YOU for your help and support. We as asylum seekers appreciate this actions. My husband always hopes for bread, also my son says “I love the cakes they give to us.” For me, I enjoy every fresh vegetable also my baby likes carrots and fruits.”

I think that says it all.

Shirley Local History Group

AGM report 2020: Part One

It has definitely a year of two halves – so the first half of our report covers our activities from September 2019 up until the announcement of lockdown in March 2020.

Overview of Activities:

September 2019

- Supported Heritage Open Days alongside Southampton & District Transport Heritage Trust;

October

- Shirley Local History Group became a member of the Southampton Heritage Federation;
- First of our 11th series of free Autumn Talks with a record-breaking audience at Shirley Parish Hall (92) for Alan Matlock's 'Building Spitfires without a Factory'. Thanks to a question from the audience, this talk leads to members of the SLHG starting discussions with Alan Matlock about a commemorative plaque for the Hall. This in turn leads to the setting up of the Spitfire Makers project to commemorate the Hall and other locations;

November

- Second of our Autumn Talks with Alan Morton talking about his research in particular 'The People who got the Ball Rolling in Shirley'. A follow-up session with Alan at Southampton City Archives was planned for April 2020
- Applied with FoSJP team for Celebrations Grant for proposed VE Day 75 'Street Party in the Park'

December

- Third of our Autumn Talks with Tony Biffin from the Millbrook History Society sharing his personal reminiscences of Shirley in the 1950s and 60s. This attracted an audience of around 70 people.
- Applied for funding from #Celebrate25 Fund from National Lottery for VE Day 75 Street Party

January 2020

- Relaunch of the Shirley Local History Research Group at St. James' Park
- Ongoing research into Shirley Common (also known as Withedswood Common)

February

- Requests for support from Bitterne Local History Society with oral history interview and from a local Archaeologist for information on 18-24 Park Street in Shirley
- Following successful grant applications, planning started for VE Day 75 Street Party in St. James Park
- Research Group meet at Shirley Library for second session
- Oral History interview with Don Smith about his memories of working on the Trams
- Support given to Spitfire Makers project at its launch at Shirley Parish Hall on 23rd February

March

- Shirley Local History Group launch History Club at Upper Shirley High School and run sessions on 3rd and 10th March with plans for students to support VE Day 75 Exhibition in May through oral history interviews;
- Research Group hold third meeting and identify a number of research areas for individuals and small groups;

Securing Funding:

In addition to the kind voluntary donations from the Autumn Talks 2019 (which totalled £279.74), during this period we were also delighted to hear that we'd secured the following funding for SLHG Activities:

- Thanks to Marina & the FoSJP team we secured funding through the Reaching Communities fund to enable our Autumn Talks and Memory Lane sessions to continue until 2025;
- We secured a SCC 'Celebrations Grant' of £500 towards the VE Day Street Party

- Our application to #Celebrate25 National Lottery was successful and provided a further £1,000 towards the VE Day 75 commemoration activities.

We have also sold our final 8 copies of the St. James Park book. In total, over the past five years, sales of the book have raised £3,203.55 which we plan to use as match funding for future projects or publications.

AGM 2020 Report: Part Two

Like so many other community & heritage groups, the news of the national 'lockdown' in March had an immediate impact on Shirley Local History Group activities. It meant cancelling all face-to-face activities including:

- USH History Club sessions.
- Research Group meetings (April & June).
- VE Day 75 Street Party and Exhibition (May).
- Group Visit to God's House Tower (May).

One positive piece of news during this time was finding out that we were the Hampshire Champions of the 'Dance for VE Day' national competition run by English Heritage. Although VE Day events scheduled for May were having to be cancelled it was hoped that the Lindy-Hop Dancers (our 'prize') would be able to come to an event later in 2020.

Staying in Touch

As a group, we were determined to stay in regular touch with our members & friends – particularly as so many were having to self-isolate or shield, many by themselves. We therefore decided to:

- Set up a Shirley Local History Group Facebook page
- Produce a regular newsletter – Memory Lane - sharing memories & research (currently monthly)
- Explore ways in which we could safely commemorate the 75th Anniversary of VE Day

Alternative VE Day 75 Plans

On Friday 8th May 2020, volunteers were able to deliver VE Day 75 Afternoon Teas and Gift Bags to over 60 nominated members of our local community. As well as music from Swingworld and the Victory publication from the Daily Echo, the gift packs included pictures and good will messages from the children of Shirley Infant & Junior Schools and messages from students at Upper Shirley High. This was definitely the highlight for the Shirley Local History Group in the past six months and we were also able to deliver a further 20 gift bags to other 'VE Day VIPs' in the following weeks. The alternative VE Day 75 commemoration was possible thanks to funding from #Celebrate25 National Lottery and the incredible team effort of volunteers from FoSJP, SLHG, local schools and other community groups.

Heritage Activities: Heritage Open Days & support for Supermarine 80th Commemoration
As members of the Southampton Heritage Federation, we were able to take part in the Heritage Fayre which was held at the Mayflower Theatre as part of their socially-distanced Heritage Open Day on 12th September. This provided a great opportunity to share some of the activities of the Shirley Local History Group as well as networking with other local heritage groups who attended. We hope these links will be useful for future activities.

Members of the research group also supported The Supermariners and Spitfire Makers team with their commemoration of the bombing of the Supermarine factories in Woolston on 24th and 26th September.

Alternative Autumn Talks Plans

Following the Government announcement limiting gatherings to six people from 14th September, we had to take the decision to postpone the 12th series of Autumn Talks scheduled for October, November and December 2020. We are working with the various speakers to look at alternative dates for the talks to be held next year. In place of the talks, we are planning a 'Shirley Spitfire Trail' which will be a self-guided walk using a map currently being designed by Sarah Powell the artist who designed the window artwork at the Parklife Café.

Mayflower 400 Funding

In August, we put in a joint bid with the Spitfire Makers Charitable Trust for Mayflower 400 funding for the 'Shirley Hidden Histories & Journeys' project. Unfortunately, we heard in mid-September that we had not secured this funding and have been looking at how we might progress some elements of the project in different ways.

Shirley Local History Group are therefore planning – subject to approval from the FoSJP Trustees - to raise sponsorship to cover the costs of placing a Spitfire Makers plaque at Shirley Parish Hall to commemorate the many women and men who worked in the hall during the Second World War producing parts for Spitfire jettison fuel tanks. Research into the background of the hall (a former Rechabite Hall) is now underway.

Contacts

Over the past year, our Shirley Local History Group distribution list has grown from 100 people to around 180 people who have been regularly receiving our updates and newsletters either via email or through the post. The Shirley Local History Group Facebook group currently has 180 members (as at 12th October 2020).

Comments received from History Group members have indicated that many appreciate this more regular 'touching base' through this challenging time. In addition to membership of the Southampton Heritage Federation we continue to be members of the Hampshire Archives Trust and the Oral History Society.

It has been a challenging year for everyone, and we would like to thank the team at Friends of St. James Park for their continuing support which has enabled us to find different ways to stay connected with our group members.

Park Life Report

This has been a year of mixed blessings for us all involved with Parklife, our Café in the Park, the year was going quite well and then we had to close our operation overnight and were worried what lay ahead for our community business.

Just like the glorious weather we enjoyed early in the year, some sunshine came our way, the Government Furlough payment scheme meant we could retain all our staff, through the efforts of my fellow director, Joshua Ferguson, we obtained some local grant money that amongst other things enabled us to make the final payment for the Café Shutters, at this point I would like to thank all the people in the community that contributed to our Shutters crowdfunding page and Southampton City Council with councillor Satvir Kaur, for making the purchase possible, having them in place during the shutdown has already proved their worth, the remaining grant funds gave us some temporary financial security.

Paula Shapland, the café manager, has shone throughout, she already had an arrangement with the Fareshare organisation to collect food from 2 supermarkets, and has now secured another supply via the Neighbourly organisation, this means we now have 3 supermarkets supplying their surplus food, so every evening at 9pm Paula collects from a supplier and brings

it to the café, in the morning at 7.30 she collects from another supplier, real commitment, FOSJP members and volunteers sort and deliver next day, added to these supplies are frozen meals produced by the IVY Restaurant chain from food that would have otherwise been dumped during the Lockdown, together with quantities of tinned and dried foods, cleaning and sanitary products all purchased through the FOSJP Lottery grant funding, a fantastic community effort, all very much appreciated by the recipients, recent feedback forms have shown us how important the work is.

We have been supported throughout with funding from FOSJP and the lottery grant, this has contributed to wages, fuel costs, a new freezer, and other items that has made the whole project possible, a true joint effort.

In the early summer when closed, we took the opportunity to redecorate and renovate the café, my thanks to co-director Nigel Catling and volunteer Mandy Hollis for their much appreciated help, two plastic screens were installed on the counter for staff and customer protection, Paula also configured and marked out the café space to comply with the Covid legislation, there has also been extra costs to comply, hand gel, cleaning sprays, extra general cleaning items and extra disposable items such as spoons, sauce sachets and extra paper cups.

Business has been brisk, thanks to the wonderful summer weather and children being home from school since April, during this period the Park really came into its own as a community resource, a place to meet safely outdoors, a place to simply relax and enjoy some fresh air in lovely surroundings, somewhere to take your kids for a cheap afternoon out and importantly, somewhere to talk and support one another through the worries that everybody was experiencing.

We have been very fortunate this year in the amount of funding that has been raised, the latest success was crowdfunding supported by Aviva Insurance and their staff as well as generous local donors, the amount raised has been matched funded and also added to by a donation from the West Quay organisation, even earlier this year we received a donation from Tesco to purchase much needed café equipment, all our donors have recognised the efforts we have made, working with FOSJP, to support the local community during these unprecedented times, this has all been made possible by the commitment and hard work of Paula, Community Café Manager of the Year in my eyes! And also a big thankyou to our wonderful staff who have done such a great job under very difficult circumstances.

We are now entering the difficult trading period for the Café, cold and wet days with nobody in the Park, the funding raised will very much help keep us afloat till next year, good news is that we have begun to welcome back the groups that hired the Community room in normal times and the valued income, it will be extra dark this year in the months ahead in so many ways, but we can but look forward to a New Year of Light and Hope.