

The Power of Community Spirit Strikes Again In Staveley!

The Staveley Feast

To launch the Staveley Stories Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, we set about recreating the spirit of the lost Staveley Feast.

This was to be a free community event celebrating the signing of The Peace Treaty of Versailles and signalling the end of WW1.

During our research sessions in Staveley Library we came across Arthur Fox, a local poet who wrote a poem that painted a picture of the Staveley Feast in the 1930's.

The Staveley Feast

By Arthur Fox

Close your eyes and come with me
Back to nineteen thirty three
Back to the wonderful month of June
Where the people of Staveley were over the moon

Spring cleaning done; there's not much time
The muck holes must have their coat of lime
Work will not stop, for man nor beast
For this is the month of the Staveley Feast

Remember, these days, no-one has a car
Yet relatives come from near and far
As long as they get here, they don't care
For someone will find a room to spare

From the "rec" there comes a mighty roar
Kids cheering the engines they adore
My favourite was always "Big John Bull"
Look at the round-a-bouts he could pull

This is truly a fantastic sight
Everything ready for Friday night
Coconut Shies, and Hoopla stall
Amusement here for one and all

The 'Dodgems', 'Peacocks', 'Flying Chairs'
From mighty organs, music blares
Coloured lights, which now abound
Can be seen from miles around

At 'Billy Woods Booth' you can make a few pounds
Three quid, if you stay on your feet six rounds
See 'The Headless Lady', if you please
Or a circus of performing fleas

All our hard-earned coppers gone
The families leaving one by one
Just time to call and grease our lips
With a penny worth of James's chips

Using this poem along with oral history from local residents we set about organising the event. Community Group The Green Barrows along with 6 local schools set about researching local women's roles during WW1 and creating exhibitions and Carnival Games.

Carnival Games

We had; Hoopla, Pig Corral, Lucky Lollipops, Bean Bag Toss, Tin Can Alley, Plat and Hook A Duck, all made by The Green Barrows. Speedwell Infants made an incredible Flying Challenge Game and Staveley Juniors made Feed The Pig. These schools along with; Hollingwood Primary School, Barrow Hill Primary School, Norbriggs School and St Joseph's made a Human Fruit Machine along with colourful signs.

On the day these games were brought to life by fantastic community volunteers; Lou Slater, Adam Smith, Lou Jenkins, Janet Stephenson, Chris Parker, Rachel Elson, Graeme Tasker, Dick Peace, Christine Peace, Maxine Frost and Connor Cooke. We also had 8 fantastic volunteers from Just Serve.

Traditional prizes like; spinning tops, marbles and gliders were given out by Tom Booth at the Lucky Dip. The Carnival Games were a big hit and the crowds kept us busy until the very end! We even ran out of prizes twice during the day and had to fetch more to keep up with the demand!

"I loved the flying challenge! I made about 20 different planes and got my first one in!"

"So simple but so much fun!"

"Feed the pig was funny"

"What a fantastic event! You can see how much effort has been put in. The old school carnival games have been a great hit with kids and adults!"

"I've had a go at everything... about 10 times!"

"She (child of speaker) had a load of tickets to take to the Lucky Dip and came back with an armful of prizes! She was so excited"

"The whole family have loved it. It's been brilliant to come out and not have to say no to the kids all the time because I can't afford for them to have a go on everything. It's been an extremely enjoyable day!"

Netherthorpe School student, Zoe Booth volunteered to do Face Painting on the day carried out as a part of her Silver Arts Award and supported by Jackie Booth.

Finally, thanks to Martin Gibson who made over 100 Army Tags for visitors throughout the day.

Rides

We only had a small budget for rides but managed to bring; a Helter Skelter & Boxing Ring from Available Castles, Victorian Swingboats, from Tilley's Garden Hire and Chesterfield Football Club attended with a Penalty Shoot Out. These were all busy all day and added a brilliant atmosphere to the day.

"I went in the Boxing Ring with my sister. The ref said it was a draw... but I definitely won!"

"The Swingboats were my favourite!"

"I won a CFC shirt! I'm having it done for my daughter. She is going to love it!"

Children's Entertainment

The Amazing Street Entertainer, Mark Taylor dazzled us with his Flea Circus. And James Rudge entertained the crowds with Balloon Magic, Animal Magic and the unforgettable Punch and Judy Show throughout the day.

Circus skills were provided by Circus Hub Notts. This was really popular throughout the whole day.

"I've never seen a Flea Circus before. I'd read about them but it was awesome to see one for real"

"The kids absolutely loved the Punch & Judy Show!"

Performances

We had some fantastic performances throughout the day all held together by our wonderful Master of Ceremonies, David Smith. David stepped into the breach with very little notice and did an outstanding job creating a friendly and fun atmosphere and keeping everything running smoothly, for which we are incredibly grateful.

Carole Copeland performed poetry written by women during WW1 and showing the change in attitudes before and during the war. Carole also worked with pupils from St Joseph's School to create a piece of drama based on Arthur Fox's poem.

Ireland Colliery and Chesterfield Brass Band were joined by a collective choir from the 6 participating schools, thanks to Paul Scragg from Norbriggs school, who brought the choirs together and conducted and coordinated the practices and the performances on the day.

Olivia and Christian from Regency Dance School provided lessons in Cha Cha Cha and Jive. At the last minute the room we were using for this became unavailable, so they rocked it out in the car park.

"They were brilliant and the children who took part loved it!"

The event was brought to an end by the amazing Whiskey Bob Shaker, who sang us out to songs about the local area.

"Wow! Just wow!"

"Hearing the band and the kids together was magical"

"Thank you for giving our children the opportunity to perform with the brass band"

"Fantastic event. Well done!"

"You have been able to feel the community spirit here in Staveley today"

We also brought back the famous 'Olga The Headless Woman', not seen in Staveley since the 1930's. Her return was met with gasps from the crowds. A massive thank you must go to Paul Cowley who played the 'Barker' wonderfully.

"How did you do that?"

Exhibitions

We had some fantastic and informative exhibitions at the event; Killamarsh Mental Health Team researched and displayed the 'Birth of Occupational Therapy' and The Green Barrows created a fascinating exhibition about 'Mental Health and WW1'. Thank you to Di, Leigh, Dawn and Jayne for all the help leading up to and on the day of the event.

Community Growth worked with community volunteers and schools to create an exhibition about Woman during WW1. We all learned so much during the process. Students from St Joseph's wrote letters as women writing to loved ones during the war. They were so real and powerful and really evoked the emotions of the time.

Newbold Church provided a wealth of information, pictures and stories covering Heroes of WW1, Animals and WW1 and WW1 Promotions. A huge thank you to John and David for all their hard work.

Maria from The Chesterfield Museum brought a fantastic handling collection that stimulated all of the senses, including smells from the trenches. While, The Salvation Army brought a display all about the Donut Girls.

John and Marion Gerrard raised money for The British Legion and John Wallace who is the Staveley Branch of The British Legion gave an inspiring talk about the Great Pilgrimage 90 event which took place last year and included a 3 day battlefield tour.

Pete Derbyshire brought a display that gave us an insight into the fascinating world of Bees.

Finally, Richard Godley from East Peak CIC provided us with a handling collection of WW1 memorabilia for the day.

"The day was so diverse. There was so much to see and do. I loved it!"

The event went without a hitch thanks to a voluntary security team made up of Jim Anderson, Paul Dial and Matt Smith.

First Aid was provided by Paul Hartshorne and his team from Derbyshire Light Medical. While all Health and Safety was attended to by Andy Jakins.

Thanks to each of you for keeping us safe.

"Today it has felt like a close knit community"

"The community spirit here today has been palpable"

"A lovely, friendly, family atmosphere".

Steam

"You can't have the Staveley Feast without steam!"

One of the highlights of the Staveley Feast for the local children was the steam engines that powered the rides. We really wanted to get an engine there with the sounds and smells that would have surrounded the old event.

With a week to go we were given a contact for an engine owner, Lorraine Parson-Woodbine. Following a brief phone call Lorraine and her family set to work cleaning up Ethel the engine to be the star of the show. Unfortunately on the day of the event after setting off in the early morning (Ethel does approx. 4mph) Ethel broke down at junction 29a and couldn't make the event.

We want to say a massive thank you to Lorraine and family for all their efforts to get Ethel to the event and hope she makes a full and speedy recovery. Hopefully she will make it next year!

Thanks to The Mighty Creatives who funded local photographer Cathryn Hardwick and up and coming film maker Kai Undrell to document the day for us.

What's next?

Thanks to everyone who made the day what it was especially the people who turned out with their families and friends to enjoy the day. Together we created a little piece of magic and have started something really special.

An estimated 500 people came and enjoyed the event, showing that the desire for such events in Staveley is very much there. Volunteers surveyed over 100 visitors. All of those surveyed said that they had felt community spirit on the day and that they believed this had an impact upon their wellbeing. They all stated that they would like to see the event again next year. 60% have put themselves forward to volunteer for activities and events in their communities in the future. Alongside event ideas included; Walking Groups, Bike Rides & Wildlife Walks.

This event was hugely enjoyable for all involved and all who came and we would love to build on this for next year. But we cannot do it alone. If you would like to be a part of an organising committee or would like to get involved in The Staveley Feast 2020 in some other way please get in touch. We want to hear from you!