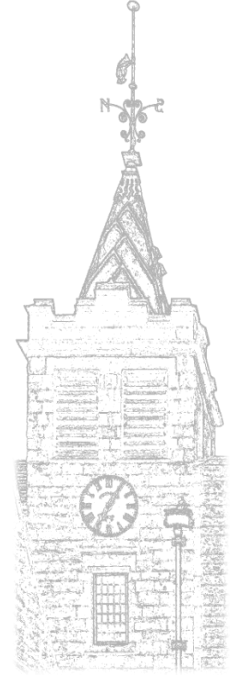


WELCOME TO NEWSLETTER 4 ~ March 2021

Well, let's be honest, when we wrote our last newsletter in September, we didn't really envisage that we would have been in a third lockdown at the beginning of the new year. That was not how it was supposed to be! We had great hopes then that 2021 would begin on a brighter, happier note.

The good news is that many of us may have received one of the vaccines by now and so feel more protected whatever the strain of virus. However, we are nevertheless reminded to take care because we're not out of the woods yet! **The big news, as we write, is that Strutts may be open fully once again by the beginning of May**, subject to infection rates having been lowered sufficiently. We all have our fingers crossed!

It may be that in the not too distant future, we shall all feel confident enough to venture into the company of others not in our households or bubbles and perhaps Strutts will be in full swing again, alive with chatter and movement and with all the many activities the community centre has been pleased to host for over eleven years now. It is more than ready to welcome everyone back to enjoy the facilities it has to offer – rooms of different sizes, a gym and hall for meetings, workshops, sports activities, classes from languages to history research to painting and drawing, slimming classes and chair-based exercises, the list continues ... Whatever your interest, there is a space to suit your needs at Strutts.



The Guardians/Trustees haven't been idle over these past months either! Work has been done to improve the reception area and make it more welcoming as well as Covid safe for all users and volunteers. New, carefully- designed information boards will soon be in place as you enter the building, while the website is being gradually improved. It will be easier to navigate, will contain lots of helpful information and be more user-friendly. The BSS (Belper Strutts Society) Committee, agreed to fund both the wall-panels and the new website from the hard-earned money raised at a variety of events over the past few years. The BSS Committee has also had input into the design and wording of the wall panels.

You may recall Carol Brewer's poem in our last newsletter. Carol is a valued member of our newsletter team and she has become quite a familiar voice in Belper with appearances on Radio Derby and with her book of poetry 'Verses the Virus', which has been very well received (proceeds going to the NHS Charities Together and Mental Health UK). She has kindly agreed to pen another poem for this latest newsletter and you'll find it as you read on, as well as a little more about her, as we welcome two new members to the BSS Committee.

As always, if you have not already done so, please consider **renewing your membership of BSS** or becoming a member for the first time. An application form can be found on the website (Strutts.org.uk/Strutts Sites/Belper Strutts Society) and send to bssocnews@gmail.com or contact Sue Salaun, the Membership Secretary at the above e-mail address and a form will be sent to you.

If you're simply renewing membership then please post either £10 (Annual Membership) or £100 (Life Membership) to; **The Membership Secretary, Strutts Community Centre, Derby Road, Belper DE56 1UU or pay by BACS to Belper Strutts Society (sort code:161311, acc no: 10188711)**, including your name as a reference.

Thank you.

We would love to hear from you – comments, ideas, suggestions – by e-mail at bssocnews@gmail.com or by letter to Newsletter, Strutts Community Centre, Derby Road, Belper DE56 1UU.

Take care and best wishes,

Pat McLeod and Sue Salaun (Editors)



News from the Chair

In September 2020 we were planning for the gradual re-opening of the Centre as numbers of cases of Covid 19 seemed to be decreasing. Indeed, we did welcome a few groups back in October – Expressive Dance, U3A table tennis groups and Slimming World – with safety measures in place and a thorough cleaning of rooms. But within weeks we were in tier 3, then 4 and then faced a full lockdown. We had to close once more on 5th November and we remain closed, with little prospect of opening before “spring 2012”.

The Trustees are popping in on a regular basis to check on the building and it is sad for us to see it empty, cold and silent. We know that so many of our users and volunteers are missing the social interaction with others. Let us hope that it won't be too many more months before we can all enjoy seeing each other again and participating in a variety of activities at Strutts.

During the lockdown we have continued with repair and restoration work where possible. The office and reception area has been decorated and Perspex screens installed. As you can see from the photos, it is now much brighter, as well as providing a safer environment for all. We have a one way system around the building and sanitisers fitted in all areas. We have also completed actions from the fire risk assessment undertaken just before lockdown – indoor fire doors have been refurbished and all exit doors have been fitted with crash bars.

Belper Strutts Society has agreed to fund new information panels on the walls of the main entrance and the design and development of a new website. My thanks go to the committee for this and also to Siobhan Fennell of Accessible Belper and Teresa Waldren of Deaf-initely Women for advice on ensuring we meet the needs of all users. Local artist and designer, Andy Mayers is working with us on the project, and having seen the initial designs, I am confident that the results will be eye-catching and a positive aid to communication.

We have faced some unwelcome challenges over the last few months. Firstly, cyber-attacks on our computer systems resulted in a number of emails with unsafe attachments being sent out to people on our mailing list and this has caused a lot of anxiety, work and expense. Secondly, during the closure there have been several incidents of petty vandalism, mainly broken windows, and one bizarre case where I discovered three bags of dog excrement on the floor of the gym. I can only guess that somebody had decided it would be fun to aim these through the broken window, but I will say it was not fun to clear it up.

Unfortunately, one founder member of the Project, Frank Smith resigned as a Trustee of the Guardians of Strutts in August. He has been a stalwart of the Project for over 11 years and was instrumental in setting up and running of our IT systems. Also, Danny Holden resigned as a director of the Strutts Centre Limited in September due to family commitments but has continued to help out with maintenance work when he can. They both did a great deal of the work in establishing Covid19 safety systems over the summer. I would like to thank them both for their valuable contributions to Strutts and wish them well for the future.

The bad news is that during the period of closure the only trading income has been from licence holders and a couple of sole traders. Unfortunately, Derbyshire Adult Education terminated its licence for Rooms 25a and 25b at the start of the first lockdown in March 2020. The good news is that we have been very fortunate in receiving government support grants, via Amber Valley Borough Council, and these have undoubtedly helped us to survive the pandemic financially. Even with the site closed there are always ongoing costs, such as insurance, utilities and mandatory inspections and certification. So what does the future hold? This will depend on how soon we can re-open, how many groups and how many volunteers feel able to return. We are looking to find new licence holders, as this gives us some financial stability and to explore potential grant opportunities available for repairs and restoration of a Grade 2 listed building.

But we are optimistic for the future nevertheless! We have a chance to re-assess where we are, where we are going and how to do it! The Project needs new blood, new ideas and new expertise in the coming year. Are you able to help? Or do you know anyone else who can? Volunteers are the life blood of Strutts, as I have said many times before, and in these difficult times we need the community of Belper to support us in ensuring the future of a much needed and valued resource in the Town. If you would like to be part of the future development of our Strutts Community Centre, do get in touch. You can make a difference for the benefit of others.

Nick McLeod - Chair, Guardians of Strutts



In Memoriam - Alan Roberts

It was with great sadness that I heard of the death of Alan Roberts last month. Alan had been a regular volunteer at Strutts for many years and was a good friend. I have fond memories of groups of volunteers chatting over coffee and biscuits with him in the Headmasters Office after working on various jobs at Strutts. We put the world to rights on many occasions! He always wanted to do his bit for the community and he certainly did make a difference for the better at Strutts. In later years he looked after the coffee machines and it was hard to stop him moving furniture even when he relied on his walking stick. Alan was also treasurer for the Belper District 50+ Forum and I would see him turning up for their meetings at Strutts, always with warm words and a friendly smile.

On behalf of Strutts, I offer our sincere condolences to his family.

Nick McLeod – Chair, Guardians of Strutts

Fond Farewells

We were sorry that Sue Smith, former Chair of BSS had decided to step down from the committee. She had worked hard to promote BSS and to put it on a sound footing. She has not given up on us entirely, because she has offered to help with catering at events and we're very grateful for that, especially as she is involved with a number of other community activities and initiatives.

Carolyn Murcutt has also been a valued member of the BSS Committee - catering at events (bacon butties being a speciality), but very importantly as Treasurer to the BSS Committee. She was also a volunteer receptionist and helped with the general accounts at Strutts. She now has a full-time job although she will still help out when she can.

Our grateful thanks go to both Sue and Carolyn for everything they have done for Strutts over the years. We shall miss them!

Strutts 100 Club

Like so many organisations, Strutts has lost a lot of revenue over the past year and so we've come up with a new way to replenish the coffers to allow other improvements to be made over time, benefitting all those who use the community centre. The idea is to have a **100 Club** with each number costing £2 per month (£24 per annum). At the end of each month the numbers will be drawn and three winners announced. On the basis of 100 members the proposed prizes will be £30, £20 and £10, with an additional prize of £50 every six months.

BSS had various events organised, including an autumn fair, all of which had to be cancelled, so this is a way to try to ensure a modest but regular annual income. The 100 Club is open to all BSS Members, Volunteers and users of the premises. If you feel you are able to support Strutts at this difficult time by being part of the 100 Club that would be wonderful. It is possible to buy two numbers! **In the first instance we need to gauge whether we would have sufficient support. If you would be willing to participate in the 100 Club, please send an e-mail to Sue at bssocnews@gmail.com to register your interest.**

FORTHCOMING EVENT !!!!



Former Chief Football Correspondent for the BBC, Mike Ingham M.B.E.

Mike was also a pupil at Strutts in the 1960s. He worked for a time at Radio Derby as a sports reporter before going on to become Chief Football Correspondent for the BBC. You may well remember his voice summarising matches on the sports reports.

Recently retired, he's written an autobiography, in which Belper and Strutts feature quite significantly, though it is of course, very much about football and is appropriately titled: *After Extra Time and Penalties*.

Mike commented on 8 World Cups, 28 FA Cup Finals, worked with 10 full-time England managers, introduced Sports Report, but he also had his own music show on BBC Radio 1 and even covered Princess Diana's funeral. He has many tales to tell!

We're thrilled that Mike has kindly offered to come back to Belper and to Strutts to talk about his life and experiences and to bring copies of his books. A provisional date has been set for Saturday, October 16th 2021.

Please make a note in your diary! More details to follow.



New BSS Committee Members!

BSS is pleased to welcome Carol Brewer and David Moreton to the Committee. Carol will take responsibility for publicity and David has agreed to take on the role of Treasurer, which became vacant following the resignation of Carolyn Murcutt. Both David and Carol started as Strutts volunteers, helping out on reception. Carol is also part of the newsletter team.

David is a resident of Milford and has lived there for over 22 years. He retired from a job he loved as Head of the Chemistry Dept at Lubrizol in Hazlewood in November 2019. He is very involved in the Milford and Makeney community and has been Chair of Blooming Milford for over 10 years. He is also Secretary to the Green Space for Milford School.

Carol has lived in Belper for 25 years and has a keen interest in history, theatre and creative writing. Carol published a book of poetry during lockdown, (Verses the Virus), with features in national press, local publications and regular appearances on Radio Derby. A varied career included public service roles as magistrates court usher and business officer for Derbyshire constabulary HQ prior to early retirement, and is now an active member of U3A, Belper Fringe and a regular volunteer at Strutts.

We are very lucky to have them join us and we all look forward to working with them in the future.

Pam Ryder (Chair - BSS)

As we start to see positive progress through difficult times, here's a topical poem to share with you.

JAB!

The call, the text, the letter
Whichever mode you have
It's still the same elation
Hearing you're set to get your jab
Your eyes light up, your heart beats fast
Your stomach gives a lurch
It's Christmas, birthdays all at once
Thank God for that research
Never has a vaccination
Been such emotional relief
As the nation's quietly praying
For less sadness, heartache, grief
So, to all those of you still waiting
For your 'call to arms' deploy
Don't be surprised at your reaction
Instant injection invite joy

'JAB' by Carol Brewer – www.pencilpoised.com

Carol contributes a poem every month as part of a letter writing charity called From Me To You. New writers are always welcome and we are delighted to feature an introduction to the charity, should you wish to get involved. Writing a personal letter can be a lovely thing to do, if you have some time to spare.

From Me to You

We all love receiving a handwritten letter through the post, the feeling you get.

That rush of excitement, the anticipation of 'what's inside?!'

A group who really understand the emotive power of letters and the positive effects receiving them can bring, is the charity [From Me to You](http://www.frommetoyouletters.co.uk).

Set up by Alison Hitchcock and Brian Greenley, *From Me to You* was developed as a result of Brian being diagnosed with bowel cancer. In a bid to help him through what is an incredibly isolating and terrifying experience, Alison began writing letters to Brian, providing the support and distraction he needed.

Four years later Brian had fully recovered and together with Alison set out on a mission to encourage and inspire people to write letters to friends, family and strangers suffering from cancer.

Their **Donate A Letter** campaign invites you to write an anonymous letter which the charity distributes to those living with cancer across the UK. During 2020 they delivered over 7,000 much needed letters to those isolated by their cancer diagnosis.

For more information, please visit their website www.frommetoyouletters.co.uk.

Followers of social media can visit as follows;

Twitter: @frommetoyou01 **Facebook:** FromMeToYouLetters **Instagram:** FromMeToYouLetters





Volunteers!

First of all, warm greetings to our many volunteers, many of whom we have not seen for almost a year!

When Covid struck Belper Strutts Society had just made plans to organise a social event for all volunteers in summer 2020 and to hold another Christmas social in December (following the success of the party in 2019). However, it wasn't to be!

We do miss you all and hope you are all keeping well in these challenging times. I trust it won't be too long before we can get together though, as I write, things are still uncertain. At our last meeting we decided to be positive and are hoping to arrange a social 'do' towards the end of this year.

During the first lockdown volunteers were consulted about their concerns and wishes about returning to Strutts when the centre re-opened. Many responded with comments and ideas, which were extremely helpful for the trustees in planning work needed to ensure all volunteers and users would feel safe and secure.

Thank you to all who contributed to this.

Since the consultation there have been many developments – different tiers and many twists and turns in restrictions and rules, new strains of the virus and the start of a roll-out of vaccinations. We are also mindful that people have had a long break from volunteering and may have lost confidence or feel anxious about returning.

We do not know yet when we will be open for business, but we need to plan how best to support volunteers so they feel comfortable about coming back. Please let us know what would help – all suggestions welcome.

And for anyone who is interested in joining us as a volunteer in the future, do get in touch. If we are unable to meet up at present, e-mail me at bssocvols@gmail.com with your contact details.

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Pat McLeod – Volunteer Recruitment and Support



Thank
you!
Volunteers



AGMs 2021

We had another first this year - on Friday 19th February the AGMs of Belper Strutts Society, Strutts Centre Limited and Guardians Of Strutts were held remotely via Zoom, due to the coronavirus lockdown.

The Agendas had 2 main items, firstly approval of the accounts and secondly election of officers. I would like to express my thanks to all those who took part in spite of the difficulties. Lessons are to be learnt from the experience of the Zoom technology for such meetings. I guess that it will improve with practice but hopefully we will be able to revert to meetings in person soon.

The annual accounts of the year ending 31st May 2020 were approved and have been submitted to HMRC, Companies House and the Charity Commission. They show that we were on track to an all-time record turnover up until the first coronavirus lock down when we had to close the Centre on 23rd March 2020.

This meant that we lost 10 weeks of trading, estimated to cost us around £27K, but we still managed to turnover £111,629 for our trading company, Strutts Centre Limited.

This was a tremendous achievement under the circumstances and thanks to all our hard working and dedicated volunteers.

The current financial year has already seen turnover plummet due to the lockdown. We have only been open for one month out of nine so far with very few bookings, and we will be lucky to open before the start of May 2021

We have sufficient reserves to survive financially due to the Government Business support grant of £25K and the prudent approach to our finances.

We are hopeful of further Government grants for this financial year and our policy to build up our financial reserves means that we will survive until we can open in the summer.

The second main agenda item was the election unanimously of officers for our three organisations that make up the Strutts Community Project as follows:

Belper Strutts Society Management Committee

Pam Ryder (Chair), David Moreton (Treasurer), Sue Salaun (Membership Secretary), Pat McLeod (Secretary), Carol Brewer (Publicity), Joan Hardy, Anne Newport.

Strutts Centre Limited Board of Directors

Nick McLeod (Chair), Eric Manning (Treasurer), Janet Honey, Cynthia Maddock, Kathleen Manning, Chris Toner

Guardians Of Strutts Board of Directors (Trustees)

Nick McLeod (chair), Eric Manning (Treasurer), Janet Honey, Cynthia Maddock (Company Secretary), Kathleen Manning

The coronavirus lockdown has been a difficult time for us all personally. The future of the Strutts Community Project looks challenging, but it provides a unique opportunity to consider the future direction of the Project. We also need to support the community of Belper and help it recover from the effects of the year-long coronavirus restrictions.

To this end I will set up a special EGM where we can discuss these matters all together at Strutts after the lockdown. Thanks to all our volunteers and supporters through these difficult times.

Nick McLeod
Chair, Guardians of Strutts

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Next newsletter – September 2021! Take care until we meet again.

~ The Strutts Newsletter Team ~