



MILL ROAD WINTER FAIR

Chair's Report for AGM 2010

Two people independently said to me this year that they were *moved* by the Fair. This is something to do with a special flavour which is brought to it every year. Clearly, traders and stall holders do make money out of the Fair but the atmosphere is first and foremost not commercial. The atmosphere is of welcome and hospitality.

Organisation

What we have benefitted from over time is that, although the core Committee has not changed much in its structure or size, more individuals have taken on the organization of particular events and venues, for instance Mike Tabrett at ASHCOOP, Eryl Griffiths with the HATS! Competition, Clare Hedges managing our application to the Charities Commission, Heather Bevan-Hunt co-ordinating the buskers (some task that!), Ruth Sidell taking responsibility for applications and food safety for the Food Fair and so on. Once there is someone like this, who we know will manage their aspect of the Fair in a timely and professional way we can concentrate on the central co-ordination, PR and Health and Safety issues for the whole Fair. These are just some of the 700 or so people who we calculate organized something on the day of the Fair. This does not include the stewards and marshalls, who Jonathan will be thanking and without whom the Fair could not proceed. The Fair committee are facilitators and should not be considered the main organizers of the Fair – That's YOU! And you do a great job.

Road Closure

The various reports will all reflect the importance of the road closure to the 2010 Fair. Special thanks should be made to the Safety Officer, Jonathan Goodacre, and his deputy Clare Hedges, for the enormous amount of effort which they put into this. I will never forget crossing the bridge, following the parade, and seeing Romsey filled with crowds and crowds of people. The success of this road closure was only marred by the increased dangers where the road was open, between Tenison Road and Parker's Piece. Jonathan has some news about this and will tell you in his report.

Feedback

This year we are lucky to have had some feedback from younger fair goers. Kay Blayney, the Community Representative at Parkside Federation kindly and remarkably persuaded 329 Parkside and Coleridge pupils to complete our questionnaire. Results showed that 129 came to the Fair. Of those, around 100 lived in the immediate area. 80 had been before (some for ten years!). 25 were taking part in some way. 46 came with their families. 50 heard about it through the school. 47 heard because the brochure was put through the door. All enjoyed it. We have looked to see if they have suggestions which we can meet to improve things. If people would like to see the full results, they are most welcome to contact us and we will send them.

I wouldn't be doing my job as Chair if I didn't highlight some of the problems as well as the praise.

The Weather

For the last two years the weather forecast has stated that there would be dreadful weather for the Fair. We have been so lucky as, in 2009 and 2010, the bad weather held off until the precise moment when the road re-opened. We have tried to work on a contingency plan. However, much of the design of the Fair is to have street performances and buskers so that visitors can easily see what is happening. And there is a shortage of indoor space to which we could move performers in the case of sudden onset of bad weather. Nonetheless, we do require a contingency plan, and welcome any suggestions.

Signage and Flags etc

Some visitors to the Fair express disappointment that they do not know where things are going on, even though we produce a large brochure listing every event in over 120 venues. This is delivered to 13,000 houses around two weeks before the Fair. We do provide signage for events off Mill Road, which members of the Committee put up the night before the Fair. There is also the website presence,, but clearly we still need to do more...

One year we advertised premises participating in the Fair by putting up flags. Both these jobs are time-consuming and can really only be done the night before the Fair. The flags were substantially damaged and/or removed when we put them up earlier, and we had to go out again to put up more. It would be good to get a team of people together who would handle all this on the Friday night, and remove them afterwards. The flags were very popular and worked well and we would like to revive that effort. Victoria Porteous at Cambridge Building Society has kindly said that she will look into this to see if she can provide a team of people to help with this. Please contact us if you could help. And again please think of some brand new solutions which haven't occurred to us.

How to keep people moving

There have been various suggestions about how to keep people moving into the Romsey area. In fact the 2010 Fair was very successful in this. We have photographs showing Mill Road to be completely full in Romsey. This shows how important the parade was and there is a suggestion for this year that we try to organize occasional smaller parades to keep people moving in the Romsey direction and perhaps extend them down as far as Cutlacks.

Romsey Mill

Romsey Mill has been generous in providing a venue annually since the Fair started. However, we have consistently found difficulty in moving people so far along Mill Road. In 2010 we worked with Romsey Mill in association with their 30th Anniversary. We provided a rolling programme of events in the street to draw people along there. We produced additional signage and had special articles in the brochure. Nonetheless we received complaints from the stallholders there. Part of the problem is that there is a large gap between Cutlacks and Romsey Mill where we are unable to place entertainments which might entice people along. Regretfully, we feel that, though we will gladly continue to publicise events in Romsey Mill and provide additional signage and so on, we feel that, in fairness to stallholders, we cannot place them in Romsey Mill in future. We will concentrate on providing events in the vicinity of Cutlacks to get people to go there and then hope that some will move on to Romsey Mill. We will try to find a new venue for stalls, but this will involve us in more costs at a time when our income is likely to decrease. Any thoughts from you are welcome

Events on Mill Road

One hundred and eighteen venues participated in the 2010 Fair, from people dressing up and performing in some way in their shop, showing people how to roll sushi, to running

competitions, to 10% off. We would like to try to reduce the numbers of venues offering 10% off. People who come to the Fair enjoy the experience of the performances, the tastings of foods, the occasional exotic, being able to buy Christmas presents and so on. No-one reports the 10% off offers as being of interest. It might be good to concentrate on this for the future. Is there anyone out here who could come up with a new list of simple activities which traders could try?

Special thanks

We are so grateful to Andrew Bush of Bush Property Sales for his continued and generous support. It is truly the case that the Fair would flounder if we could not rely on this funding – particularly in the new climate where we expect grants from the Council to be heavily reduced or perhaps curtailed.

The other group which put in huge efforts to help last year was Streetcar. 54 volunteers delivered >13,000 brochures in Cambridge two weeks before the Fair. All the brochures were distributed to these volunteers by the incredibly willing Joe Seal-Driver and Rhodri. This made a difficult job hugely easier and we are very grateful.

We also thank the many local traders and organizations on Mill Road who advertise in the brochure. These combined funds, together with a welcome grant from the City Council pay for everything that is required to run this event.

Apart from the Committee, there are some people we know about who make our lives a lot easier and make a great contribution. In addition to the individuals thanked in the various Committee reports, I should like to thank Christine Pearson of The Salvation Army Community Centre for making space available for our numerous meetings; Sam Motherwell for his generosity in allowing us to use his illustrations for our various PR materials and the brochure; Paul Margiotta for putting the brochure together for us and for other design work. I'd like to thank Linda Leigh of Ditchburn House, who makes life so easy for the Opening. We are also overwhelmed by the work Guillaume Tucker did to produce a working address list for us, called CAMS, and we extend grateful thanks to Julian Price of InCharge Ltd who created our new website at such short notice.

I should also like to thank the various Councillors and Council Officers who are so helpful to us, and to the Police. I don't doubt that there are many others we don't know about, to whom we also extend thanks. We also thank the Safety Advisory Group for its support and advice, and particularly its Chair, Jas Lally.

All the committee worked hard over many issues last year, and I think you know who most of them are. However, I should like to extend special thanks to Adeline Douard who in 2010 picked up every job which couldn't be done by someone else. She then achieved high quality results in everything she did. The Fair would not have been the same without her. And finally I should like to thank our Deputy Safety Officer who is stepping down at this meeting. Clare Hedges has been a rock, a warm and hard-working colleague who has addressed many of our more intransigent problems with great seriousness. She will be much missed.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

So thank you again. The Fair seems to grow, whilst maintaining that very special, unique sense of being 'local'. Someone a while ago asked me why it takes so long and so much work to organize a one-day event. The point is that it is not a one day event. The Winter Fair

is a year-long association of ideas, where people who wouldn't ordinarily have any contact work closely and warmly together – not just the Committee, but groups all over the area.

We are actively looking for a fundraiser and someone to take on PR