



# MILL ROAD WINTER FAIR

## Report from the Chair for the 2016 AGM

The wind in early December gave us a few anxious moments, although it had moderated enough by the Friday before the Fair to allow the marquee to be erected on Donkey Common. Even so, many of the stallholders had problems putting up their gazebos on Saturday, although the vast majority managed surprisingly well. In spite of the wind the fair was successful, with attendances at least equal to that of the previous two or three years. The scope of the Fair was much as it had been in 2014, with stalls at Donkey Common, Ditchburn, and Great Eastern Street car park, although we did place more stalls on Mill Road itself at the Broadway in Romsey, at the end of St Barnabas Road and at the entrance to the depot in Petersfield. Bharat Bhavan was used for a programme of dance, a new venture which was very well received. Neither the Fire Engine pull nor the mid-day Parade took place this year, although Arco Iris led the enthusiastic final parade from the bridge to Donkey Common.

### Organisation

As always I must thank the Committee for the huge amount of work that they put into organising the Fair. Just to recap, the Constitution requires a Chair (split into two, Andrew Phillips and Fiona Smith), Vice Chair (Abdul Arain), Secretary (Caro Wilson), Treasurer (Jim Woodhouse), PR and Marketing Officer (Marisa Crimlis-Brown) and Safety Officer (Jonathan Goodacre and Josie Collier). Kate Collins (Stalls) and Jon Mills (Events) were hugely overworked, and Tom Hanrahan (IT) provided invaluable support. Isabelle Geisthardt, David Arnold and Calum Harvey-Scholes were valuable co-opted members of the Committee. We also had great help before the event from many people. I would like to thank in particular Anita Peters, Rick Enns, Frances Platt, Jackie Duckworth, Mike Bekin, Alex Jelly and Peter Harrison for their help in the organization of the stalls, Judith Salmon for helping with the buskers, and Irene Viezzoli for arranging the dance programme.

I must again emphasise that the role of the Committee is primarily to provide the infrastructure within which all the activities of the Fair take place: arranging marquees, road closure, health and safety, stewarding and stalls together with a timetable for all the events on Mill Road. There is a clear distinction between the general coordinating role and organisation of the Committee, and the more detailed organisation of the individual events that take place on the day of the Fair.

Hundreds of people are involved in organizing something on the day of the Fair, and more are involved as stewards and marshals, delivering brochures and helping in many other ways. I would like to thank these volunteers, all of whom do a great job.

### Issues

Although a vital element to the success of the Fair over the last few years has been the road closure, the actual closing and opening always raise safety concerns. Special thanks should go to Jonathan Goodacre and Josie Collier who liaised with the Safety Advisory Group, which as usual gave valuable support and advice to ensure we addressed possible problems. They also controlled safety on the day, with the valuable assistance of Eddie Barcan. I think the problems occurring during the re-opening of the road were less of an issue in 2015, and would like to thank the traders for clearing the pavements in good time, although there were one or two problems before the road closed in the morning..

An issue again this year, the result of the increasing popularity of the Fair, was the large number of applications for stalls. In spite of placing more stalls along the road we had to refuse some applications, and I would like to apologise to those disappointed. We try to make sure that we give priority to local applicants (CB1 postcodes and then CB postcodes). The large marquee on Donkey Common did not have a problem with overnight condensation, which was encouraging in view of the fact that we had installed an internal flysheet to cure the problem. However, we recognise that the milder weather also helped, so that we need to see what happens in future years.

The Romsey side of the bridge seemed much busier this year. Venues such as Romsey Mill, Hope Street Yard (a home for Cambridge 105), and Great Eastern Street car park (when the cars can be moved) and the children's activities in St Philip's Church were popular, and this year the combination of the Museum and Science activities in the Salisbury Club was highly successful. The increased number of stall along the Broadway also increased attendances, and street activities such as bicycle powered music and the Chinese lion were big attractions.

This year the Fair itself made a small surplus, encouraging in view of the fact that we would like to make the Fair itself self-supporting. This is the result partly of donations and sponsorship from local businesses (see below), but also from residents in the local community.

We could not hold a parade this year partly because of lack of personnel, and partly because of funding. For the last two years we have used a commercial company to organise workshops for the local schools and community groups. This has been expensive (comparable to all the other costs of the Fair), but we have been fortunate in obtaining funding from the City Council and from Arts Council England. However, we do not think this funding will continue in the future. If we want to continue to organise a parade that involves involve local schools and community groups we will need to find a better model for both the organisation and the funding.

### **Feedback**

As always, it is difficult to obtain objective feedback on the Fair. We had lots of positive comments, and conversely I don't think we had a single serious complaint about the Fair. Informal surveys suggest that charities and charity shops together raise up to £20,000 on the day of the Fair, and a large number of charities take a stall to increase their exposure and to raise money. Information on the success of these activities is useful when we have to justify the existence of the Winter Fair.

### **Special thanks**

We are very grateful to Andrew Bush of Bush Property Sales for his continued and generous support. It is certainly the case that the Fair would flounder if we could not rely on his funding. This year we had very valuable additional sponsorship from Anglia Ruskin University, Unite the Union (who sponsored the brochure), St Andrew's Bureau, Al Amin, Cambridge Econometrics, Cambridge Architectural Research and Ridgeons. Many of the Cambridge Colleges also contributed generously to the Fair, and all these are thanked specifically on the website. The City Council generously gave us a grant to cover the cost of some workshops and other activities at Railway House.

We must thank Steve Linford of ArtDept, who again designed and produced the full colour brochure. Thanks should also go to those who put huge efforts into delivering this brochure two weeks before the Fair, including Eileen O'Brian at the Six Bells and Susie Hinchcliffe at the Earl of Beaconsfield who let us use their premises for sorting and collection, and most importantly, Caroline Bent who organised the whole thing. We are very grateful to all these people, as we are to those volunteers who actually did the delivery. Thanks should also go to Outspoken Delivery for their cycle couriers who delivered signs and brochures on the day of the Fair.

Publicity plays a big part in the success of the Fair: Cambridge Edition (media sponsor) Cambridge News, Cambridge 105 and BBC Cambridgeshire all helped Marisa Crimlis-Brown (our PR officer) to spread the word.

There are many other people who make our lives a lot easier. It is a pleasure to thank Nicholas Hall of The Salvation Army Community Centre for making space available, Andrew Ade-Kunle at The Baptist Church for hosting the Fair HQ on the day of the Fair, Sam Motherwell for his generosity in allowing us to use his illustrations and Jim Carrington for organising the highly successful Mill Road Art exhibition in the Drama Centre in Covent Garden (by kind permission of Anglia Ruskin), together with Will Baker who has day to day responsibility for the Drama Centre and gives his time generously before and on the day. I would also like to thank the staff of Ditchburn House, who make life so easy for the Opening. Nick Welsh of Mono Industries uses his flair to give a consistent approach to the design of the website, the brochure cover and signage.

I should also like to thank the various Councillors, Council Officers and the Police who are always so helpful. More specifically, we would like to thank the staff from the Depot who worked so hard in clearing up rubbish during the day. More particularly we would like to thank Franny Ritchie for help throughout the year, over and above the work she is doing with the Traders on Mill Road.

### **Finally**

Each year the Fair seems to grow in popularity, and at the same time maintains a very special, unique sense of being 'local'. This is because the Winter Fair is not really a one day event but a year-long association of ideas, where local people who would not normally have any contact work closely and warmly together – not just the Committee, but in groups all over the area. Without the wholehearted involvement of a huge number of people the Fair would not be a success. Thank you.

Andrew Phillips, Co-Chair

March 16<sup>th</sup> 2016