

Appendix A: Annual Report 2017-06-20

2017 has been a very busy year for the Fairfield Association. The variety and the volume of our activities continues to increase and looking back over the course of the year, I am astonished at what we have achieved and our ability to take on new things.

Last year we celebrated 20 years as the Fairfield Association and this year marks our 21st anniversary. We now have around 300 members and friends and volunteers who reliably turn out to help. I have just filled in End of Grant Report for a Sharing Heritage Grant and filling in the volunteer hours, I was astonished to find that our hedgelayers alone were responsible for around 250 man hours of work over the winter. The same table noted the work of the volunteers who organised and ran the creative writing programme and the volunteers who organised the public exhibition. A further 60 hours of volunteer contributions.

We work and thrive as a community of volunteers and this year our efforts were recognised by the Queens Award for Voluntary Service which is the equivalent of the MBE for volunteers. This is a great honour and testimony to what we have and continue to achieve. Our anniversaries this year and last (we have never been slow to celebrate) have led to a number of projects exploring our own history and the history of Fairfield. Mick and I have written an article for Contrebis (vol.35, 2017) and Sharing Heritage Lottery funding has provided us with the opportunity to explore the history of the area and to talk to local people about their memories of the Fairfield Association. Cakes have been a recurring theme in our story and thanks to Ruth, we have a cake to celebrate this achievement at the end of our meeting. The Queen's Award will be formally presented to us in late September at the Shire Hall in Preston. Up to ten people are invited to attend. If you would like to be there, please do get in touch. We would like to be well represented.

The highlights

Our play area continues to be safe and busy thanks to the Playground Group of Andrew Brennand, David Dawson and Ken Capewell. This year we received a grant from the Lancaster Community Fund which enabled us to get the Ability Whirl roundabout serviced. This is an expensive business and we were really pleased that Ken turned up to watch and help and as a result now has the basic skills to check and do some of the maintenance work, not to mention a few parts which GL Jones left with him.

The Nature Reserve is thriving thanks to the many volunteer hours that people give and Tony Finns amazing refreshments which keep them going. The nature reserve also continues to provide more and more activities (not all hard labour!) which bring us together as a community. I'll leave it to Sue to fill in the details.

Our outreach into schools, overseen by Tony Finn, is also thriving. In the past year, we have worked with more schools to deliver a greater variety of activities. This is Tony's story and he will provide the details on this.

The Aldcliffe Road Triangle project is now almost complete and looking great. More from Dave later.

During the course of the year, there has been a full and varied calendar of community events. These included Apple Day, Wassailing, Carol singing (in the worst of weathers), the Easter Egg Hunt, Light up Lancaster at the Aldcliffe Road Triangle and Fun Day. Volunteers made all this possible. I particularly want to thank Andrew Brennand who organised a very special Fun Day, featuring the melodrome and a host of local musician, to celebrate our 20th birthday.

In addition to community events we also have many other fund-raising activities that bring us together. In particular the Fairfield Christmas Calendar and cards raise a lot of money for the Association and co-incidentally keep our many photographers sharp and at the ready. At the recent exhibition in St Nic's it became very clear how many talented photographers we have. This year, for the first time, Carol has put together a recipe book, Fairfield Cakes and Bakes, which is on sale at the entrance and will also be on sale at the forthcoming Open Garden at Carr House Farm on Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd July. The Fairfield cake stall is being organised by Elaine Weedy. If you can help please add your name to the list at the entrance or email Elaine and more cakes please! In that context, I would like to mention our younger bakers from Aldcliffe Road who have added to our funds by selling cake and old toys outside their house. Thank you very much Mathilda and Finbar.

Looking to the future

We are working, for the first time, with Beyond the Castle. A joint project with them has provided funding for our outreach into schools and a scything course which we hope will provide sufficient scythers to mow the hay meadow in future years and to keep on top of the rushes. Later in the summer, we will share a joint exhibition in the town centre.

For the first time we have a map of the whole area. It should have been delivered with your newsletter but if not copies are available at the door. It will appear at either end of the nature reserve and can also be used on our website

Our website is about to have a new webmaster. Julia McDowell who has organised it for many years, is stepping down gradually in order to finish her PhD with one fewer distraction. I am really grateful to Julia for not only providing us with a great website but also for her prompt, helpful and friendly approach. Laura Conerney who in the past has organised our exhibitions has taken on the job. As part of our Sharing Heritage work. Laura has designed a new app which at the moment will take you round the nature reserve stopping at the key points shown on the map which you should have received with your newsletter but is adaptable for other uses, as and when we need them. Watch the website to see when it goes live!

We still need funding for the footpath around Pony Wood. We failed to get a grant from Dong Energy last year. This was very disappointing but we re-vitalised our energies and we will hear in July whether or not we have funding from the Lancashire Environmental Fund.

Their grant would be capped at £30,000 but the Fairfield Association currently has funds which could be used to make up the shortfall of between £10,000 and £20,000 and the FA committee has agreed that this would be a good use of the money. In order to release the grant, we need what is called a 'Contributing Third Party payment of £3,300. This cannot come directly from our funds but it can be raised from a special fundraising appeal. The newsletter gives full details of how you can make a contribution. Alternatively, you can leave your contact details and the amount you would like to pledge on the sheet of paper by the door. Since the newsletter went out at the end of last week, we have raised £450.

Finally, I have many people to thank and this is the tricky point because in an organisation like ours it would take far too long to thank everybody. To make a short list of a long one, thanks go to: our recorders (Jane, Glenys and Shirley), communicators (Mandy and Julia Salmon), our boots, wetsuits on the ground (Graham and Ian and David), our organisers (Andrew, Ian, Tony and Elaine), the many, many photographers, and of course cake makers!