

Minutes from Farnham Community Play Meeting – St Andrew's Church

Meeting Date: 25th February 2010 – Minutes from Jon Oram contributions by Joe Michel

Present: Jon Oram, Fiona Channon, Anne Cooper (AC), Michelle Hart, Gina Lawrie (GL), Christine McDerment, Brian & Janet Martin, Joe Michel, Abi & Charli Tomney (CT) and Angela Walter (AW).

Next Meeting: 23rd March, 7:30, Farnham Castle

1) Meeting

We had a smaller but positive meeting. There were lots of apologies but we think there had been a glitch in the communication, so I apologise if that was my fault. I hope we reach you all this time. I remain very hopeful for the Farnham Play; there are already 70 people on our database, that's an extraordinary achievement at this stage.

I also hope you can make the next meeting at 7:30 on March 23rd at Farnham Castle.

2) Discussion

- a) First we discussed the feasibility study and I presented a set of questions the answers of which will help us plan the project. The idea is to present the feasibility study together with recommendations at a public meeting in two to three months time and ask the community to vote in favour or against the play, when or if we get acceptance from that meeting we'll move forward.

We felt it best to send the questionnaire to everyone already signed up and ask you to fill in what you know. We would like any information you think would be useful to us. If you have a spare hour to research questions you don't know the answers too, that would be very helpful too. If you know individuals or groups personally it would be good to hear more details about them, such as who is the contact, whether they have mailing lists etc. We want to contact as many people as possible. Please send any research, comments, and advice to Joe Michel - joe@ourfarnham.org.uk - the feasibility questionnaire is attached.

3) Parallel Project

- a) I put forward the idea of running a project in parallel with the community play. It's typical for a Claque project to run events, workshops, exhibitions that contribute to the play. Invariably a parallel project will include the research and writing of the play in a process that involves the input from as many people as possible. A limited number of play scripts and an accompanying history are then published. The parallel project is also a means to get the community to become, first aware, and then involved in the play. The projects are designed to suit the needs and conditions within the town. As an example:

For our last project in Camden Road, Tunbridge Wells, we targeted a struggling commercial street of about 100 independent outlets. The traders were becoming somewhat disengaged and slowly accepting the decline of the street as inevitable. The council had turned its back on the area; there were barely any street lights and much talk of blocking one end to extend the shopping mall across it, so cutting Camden Road off. We wanted to design a project that reengaged the traders, advocated for the street, explored and celebrated its history, drew attention to the fact it was being ousted and undervalued. On top of this we

wanted to write a play based on research into the past and present of the community, build people's confidence to get involved in creative making or performance so as to get as many people as possible involved in the play.

To answer all this we devised the following series of events:

Camden Road in Camera: We appealed to people to bring old photos of the area. We held collection sessions and drop off centres. People talked about the pictures they brought - these interviews informed and gave us the basis of the play. We gathered over 500 pictures. 50 were blown up into large posters and hung around the street on walls and in windows close to the point where each photo was taken. We had photos of most of the shops. The shopkeepers were intrigued and willingly put pictures of their shops in their windows and helped distribute tour maps so the public could walk around the areas to see all the photographs. It ran for two weeks we estimate over 2000 people took the tour.

Camden Road Electric: Designers worked with schools and community groups making lanterns. Lantern ranged in size and complexity from a small hand held pyramid to a life sized elephant. About 800 paraded with lanterns - the parade started in the brightly lit high street and walked into the darkness of Camden Road.

800 copies of script and associated history was printed and distributed to participants, libraries, schools, the museum and places throughout the town.

The East Grinstead community play is touring a mobile recording unit so people can interview friends, neighbour or family. They get to keep a CD of the recording and the museums keep another for future generations

So we have to decide a project for Farnham. We'd like to finalise something soon so we can put together and application. The sooner that's done the sooner we can start engaging people in the project. We discussed a whole range of topics at our last meeting and would like further input at the next. Hopefully we'll get closer to a decision about project to do that best suited Farnham

4) Further discussions regarding a parallel project at the 25th February meeting

Among the historic moments the group thought significant were:

- The importance of the military to the town
- Aldershot
- Bishop gave land to the army
- Building Farnham
- Us and them - North South Divide - wrong side of the park
- Pottery and Brick Making
- William Cobbett, George Sturt, John Henry Knight
- The Castle

Sports connections in Farnham (the play is pre Olympics)

- Mike Hawthorn (F1, 1929-1959),
- Johnny Wilkinson (Rugby)
- Justin Rose (Golf)
- Roger Black (Athletics)
- Daemon Hill (F1),
- Rachel Morris (Paralympics Gold medallist),
- Sailing Club at Frensham Ponds has won a National Award

Musical connections

- Farnham Festival since 1960's now not as large as it used to be
- Geoffrey Tate - conductor
- 'The Rock Choir Lady' (Caroline Redman Lusher)

Theatre Connections

- 1945 Strolling Players from France - 150 seat theatre in Castle Street
- Castle Theatre (in Castle Street and now Zizzi's restaurant)
- Redgrave Theatre (public donations equivalent of £2.6 Million)

Education

- Frensham Heights, Farnham College, Univ. Creative Arts

Food Festival

- Farnham Food Festival Institute Group
- Farnham - Hop Growing Area

Farnham Design statement

We then discussed what sort of project would suit Farnham. I asked if there were events that cause a splash?

- June Street Carnival
- Bonfire night Torch Parade to Farnham Park firework display

People suggested ideas for elements to a project

- Something similar to the 'Antique Road Show'
- Something similar to the 'History of Farnham' in a hundred objects
- Something similar to 'Who Do You Think You Are' (BBC TV programme)
- Gathering and exhibiting Old photographs
- A Drama or/ and Speech Festival

Someone commented that it should involve University Creative Arts (2,500 students) and School of Art which prompted...

- Street Arts
- Memory Walls and Future Walls (murals of gathered pictures, drawings, memorabilia)
- Lost and Found and exhibition of objects, pictures, art representations, writing of things or people lost and re-found. This could become an exhibition or a tour of a series of arts works around the town

A popular comment was that there should be something for youth. People mentioned

- Something that links the generations
- Age divide
- Maybe reaching young people through Facebook
- Something that involves young people and their technology
- Fashion

Charlotte and Angela, two young people from Sandhurst were very inspiring talking about young people and their interest - they felt sure that younger people are interested in the past, in what their parents and grandparents did in their youth, the influence of 1960's music (Beatles; The Clash) on music culture now. But the parallel project should be inclusive of now and the future.

They'd be interested in a 1960's period history event (sorry Guys but this IS history) but perhaps use modern technology, Facebook, websites, blogging to communicate. They also need listening to.

Everyone responded to a LISTENING theme and agreed with an interactive website to build ideas. Youth led initiative should be a big element.

5) The Next Meeting 23rd March - Farnham Castle at 7:30

I'd like to start the meeting with the first Sounding - This is a brainstorm that will ask various questions about your feelings and perception of the town. They are always revealing and surprising. Then we need to focus of designing a parallel project and agreeing to a date and format for the Public Meeting.

Jon Oram

Footnote:

Liz Carter wondered if someone might be interested in the following event...

Liz wrote 'The event, on 25th March at the Castle, aims to raise money for a charity called Concern Worldwide and is expected to attract lots of local business people. I think this could be an opportunity for someone on the Steering Group to meet new people and spark up some conversations about how they might see their businesses get involved with and benefit from supporting the Community Play.'

http://www.amiando.com/Twestival2010_Farnham.html