SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SHIPTON FAIR

As someone who took no part in the 2019 Fair, I have no yardstick against which to measure the success of the 2022 Fair. However I have come to some conclusions upon my impressions of the event and comments made by others including those to whom I have delivered raffle prizes. My comments are in no particular order and do not have the benefit of checking the relative financial success of each stall.

1. I inherited the Fair Committee the membership of which reflected those who devoted the most time and energy to make the Fair such a success, and everyone on the Committee should be congratulated on their efforts. We have not had a meeting to reflect on the event but I am planning a celebration of sorts later in the month on a date to be agreed. The Committee has four members of the Parish Council and four co-opted members all of whom have been appointed for their skills and expertise.
2. The weather dictates the success of any event and we had perfect weather with a warm sun, some clouds and a soft breeze. This factor resulted in the beer and Pimms running out before 4pm as well as the hog roast and we are awaiting 10% of the gross takings of the latter.
3. The particularly successful elements of this year’s event are:
4. The leaflet drop was an effective way of notifying residents on the doorstep and we delivered or handed out 4,000 copies leaflets to people’s houses and various hostelries
5. About 2,000 raffle tickets were sold which is less than the books printed but nevertheless a very creditable performance
6. Although I had some concerns about the lack of volunteers, on the day we had volunteers from range of sources including the Scouts – to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude – the Shipton Cricket Club, the Shipton Volunteers, the WI and the Air Cadets who joined us on the day. It was particularly noticeable that after the event closed at 4 pm the recreation ground was cleared and all the games locked up in the container by 6 pm. Due again to some stalwarts who worked hard to achieve the packing up!
7. The Stiltman was a successful innovation and some of the newer stalls such as the Climbing Wall and the blacksmith were welcome, and those providing food were doing good business and those attending have praised them
8. The Witney Band were excellent and should be booked early for next time!
9. We await details of the earnings, but Hoop La was particularly successful and the Fossil Hunt proved attractive and could be expanded next time.
10. The items which could perhaps we organised differently or improved following comments made to me
11. There was an electrical fault which may have been caused by the power required by the ice cream vendor – although he was still happy with his takings – and it is likely that there may be additional power required next time
12. There were suggestions that we should have a bookstall, more plants for sale, a pizza parlour, a few more games (volunteers permitting), some specific activities for toddlers and younger children. [My view on the bookstall is that at Milton it appears that there was less interest in buying books and that storing them is heavy work and takes up too much space!]
13. Two of the booked craftspeople did not turn up and those that did all required tables when only one requested it beforehand. In the event we needed more tables and will have to keep a permanent arrangement to borrow some from Milton.
14. We need to make contact with more of our voluntary organisations in the Village both to persuade them to take a stall or run a game but also to provide volunteers on the day. We had stalls from the WI, Football and Bowls Club, FarmED, St Mary’s – who made £500 on the White Elephant, Jigsaw and Bric a Brac stalls – and, of course, the Scouts.
15. Someone commented to me that there was no clear sign indicating that tea and cakes were available in the Hall.
16. Other issues to mention
17. It has been suggested that we should not have the event on August Bank Holiday Monday as a significant number of people were away which, for example, resulted in difficulties obtaining first aiders. However as this is the first such holiday in three years which has not been affected by lockdown, travel chaos and countries in the red category, it is perhaps not surprising that people grabbed that weekend for a break. However the principal reason for no change is that this weekend has few, if any, clashes with alternative events whereas we would have to organise the event in June to avoid any clashes.
18. I suggest that we might introduce some farm animals to our next event such as Cotswold sheep, some pigs and piglets and perhaps a goat or two; in addition, I would also like to introduce some more rural crafts, in addition to the blacksmith, such as a saddler, stonemason and thatcher.
19. I know of an RAF-affiliated organisation which can be booked some months in advance to send a flypast of either a single Lancaster bomber – which did four passes over the Moreton Show – with a Spitfire and Hurricane. This is free of charge and hopefully would fit in with other displays in the area. We could, of course, pay many thousands of pounds for our own Red Arrows display!
20. I suggest we look for monetary sponsorship for some activities starting early in the year of next Fair.

Simon Randall

6 September 2022