

Report on the 2014 event.

On Saturday 21 June we had the fourth running of our Green Summer Fair, entitled this year - given the date - the *Midsummer Fair*. About 500 people attended, either as visitors, stallholders, suppliers or helpers, and, while most came from the Hartshill and Penkhull areas, others came from elsewhere in Stoke on Trent, from Newcastle and further afield in the North Staffs area. There were people of virtually all age groups, from babies, small children, young adults through to those in their 80s. An excellent team of volunteers – all local residents – worked hard to ensure that everything ran smoothly. Hartshill photographer Richard Redshaw was again the official photographer for the event, while Hartshill artist Sally Mancell kindly allowed her ‘Hartshill High Street’ design to be used on a special china mug which was sold in support of Hartshill and Harpfields Residents’ Association, now in its 19th year.

The overall atmosphere throughout the day was extremely positive. Many people expressed their genuine enthusiasm for what was being put on. In particular people really appreciated the fact that the Midsummer Green Fair is very different from more mainstream community affairs. Typical quotes would be ‘We really admire what you’re trying to achieve’; ‘It’s great to see so many different stalls’; ‘How nice it is that this is not a run-of-the mill event’. There was very positive feedback throughout.

The fair was a very multi-faceted affair. There were about 20 stalls around the green theme of the day, almost all offering information about recycling, environmental issues, green energy and climate change. There were also performances from local artists, as well as ‘low-tech’ games for children (hula hoops and skipping, for example). There were also stalls, including Fairtrade and Traidcraft. The day was a great mix of information exchange, inspiration, fun and enjoyment – with everyone going away full of ideas about improving the planet!

We were very pleased with the way the day went as a whole. To start at the beginning, the facilities at the venue, the North Staffs Medical Institute were excellent. For the first time in the four years that we have run it, we used both indoor and outdoor spaces that gave us great flexibility. Performers and informational stalls were primarily situated outside, while indoor were to be found the crafts and Traidcraft / Fairtrade stalls, as well as the catering laid on by the Institute’s caterers. This assemblage of different and diverse elements gave the whole event a very ‘user-friendly’ ethos, in that attendees could wander at their leisure, and each space presented a different face of the whole event. Importantly for any event held in England in the summer, the weather was very good! Obviously, on one level this is a trivial matter, but it can – and did – make all the difference, in that the sunny warmth certainly enhanced the ‘feel-good’ atmosphere. Best of all were the underlying purposes and themes of the day. In contrast to most summer fairs, this event, while being good fun and relaxing, was also very educational and inspiring in that it allowed people to really explore *alternatives* to current ways of living – and even dying, in that we had, for the first time a green undertaker. In sum, there was a real buzz at the event, and we were very pleased with all aspects of the event.

As ever, HAHO is very grateful to North Staffordshire Medical Institute for kindly allowing the use of their Conference Centre, right in the heart of Hartshill, to hold the event. Ward Councillors Randy Conteh and Shaun Pender and officers of many departments of Stoke on Trent City Council gave invaluable assistance every step of the way. The organisers are especially grateful for the Community Events funding received from the City Council via Appetite. We wish to express our sincere thanks to everyone for making the Green Summer Fair such a successful and enjoyable event.