



Proud of the Past - Excited about the Future

NEWSLETTER

March 2017

This is to bring you up to date on the various activities of the Initiative since the last Newsletter in March 2016. It has been a busy year for the Initiative.

First there were the events arranged specifically for Members - a talk by the then new Town Clerk, Lisa Courtney; a behind the scenes visit to the Saffron Walden Tesco store; a guided tour of West Wood Nature Reserve near Thaxted; a visit to Ashdon Village Museum; a Look Up tour of Saffron Walden with Blue Badge Guide Sarah Kirkpatrick; a guided tour of the Saffron Walden Water Recycling Centre; a talk at the Annual General Meeting by Tim Atkinson, Director of the Arts & Media Centre at Fairycroft House; a talk by Support4Sight and, in February, a guided tour of St Mary's Church in Saffron Walden.

For the wider community we arranged the third Saffron Walden Maze Festival in August; the fourteenth Dance in the Square in August; the sixth Societies Showcase in September for local clubs and societies to recruit new members; the Late Night Christmas Shopping in December and the Social Quiz in the King's Arms in January.

The Late Night Shopping this year was combined with the Christmas Lights Switch On and, for this, the Initiative worked closely with the Town Council. Initiative Director Patrick Hawke-Smith organised the 36 charity stalls and Initiative Director Jacqui Portway organised 16 entertainment events paid for by the Town Council.

The Initiative also helped out with the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan project. Six members carried out detailed Heritage and Character Assessment surveys of different parts of Saffron Walden.

The biggest projects during the year were the third Maze Festival and the creation of the fourth permanent public Maze next to Swan Meadow car park. The Maze Festival was co-ordinated by Barbara Wilcox and was larger than previously, with the programme listing 49 items. This included 5 exhibitions, 12 art and craft workshops, 6 theatre/comedy performances, 3 guided tours, and 12 temporary mazes on the Common. After grants and sponsorship funding, the cost to the Initiative was £1,200.

The new Maze at Swan Meadow was co-ordinated by John Ready who created a strikingly original design for children and visitors. The maze was formally opened in August by world maze guru, Jeff Saward. After grants, sponsorship funding and donation of materials, the cost to the Initiative was £2,000.

In 2015 the Initiative launched Welcome Packs for new residents to the area. We have continued to distribute these through Estate Agents and the Tourist Information Centre.

In 2016 the Initiative worked closely with Essex Record Office to have an oral history Listening Bench installed in the town. The ERO paid for the bench which is situated near the entrance to Saffron Walden Museum. The Initiative edited two 8 minute audio streams of recollections of Castle Street and the Town Centre from around the mid-20th Century. In the first 3 months the Bench was used 1,500 times.

After running the free monthly business *Saffron Start Up* sessions for over six years, Chris Hingston decided to wind these down and concentrate on the monthly *Saffron Business Friends* networking meetings in the King's Arms.

During the year Donna Sharp re-designed the Initiative's website to make it more mobile friendly.

Saffron Walden Initiative is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee which means that we are a Company with no shares and so can be regarded as a non-profit making organisation. The Board is elected by the Members. There are currently 195 registered Members.

As a Member you can participate in the activities of the Initiative by suggesting new community projects, member visits and talks and by volunteering to help with projects and events. Also, we are always keen to attract new members so existing members are encouraged to try to recruit friends by bringing them along to events.

For the record, the Directors elected at the last Annual General Meeting were: Patrick Hawke-Smith, Chris Hingston, Chris Knight, Jacqui Portway, John Ready, Peter Riding and Cindy White.

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Chairman

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www.swinitiative.org