

Chedham's Yard 2022

The Yard reopened after two disruptive years on Easter Saturday 2022 with an Egg Hunt for the children.

We have opened every Saturday during the summer with the last regular Saturday opening on 24th September. There were two extra special events namely The Queens Jubilee when the Yard offered free tea and cakes to all visitors and the 10th Anniversary Event in August recalling the progress of the past 10 years. The Yard continues to offer light refreshments i.e. cakes and drinks plus a range of wooden and metal objects made on site which provide the bulk of the income. Prior to opening the wood turning activity was moved from the wheelwrights allowing this to be returned to its original state and relocated in a small cabin at the end of the Yard which has been set up specifically to meet the needs of the wood turners.

There are three more events this year –

Halloween on 29th October a day fun and pumpkin carving

A Craft Fayre on 12th November for that early Christmas present

and finally, the Christmas Carol event on 10th December with Santa

Many Saturdays during 2022 featured a special themed event such as Wheelwrighting, Willow Weaving, Hedgehogs, Wildlife, Bats and Honey. As during previous years, we try to ensure that most featured events relate to the previous life of the Yard or highlight some aspect of the Yard.

This year we introduced the 'Blacksmith Experience' visitors taking up this option have been both male and female ranging from 16 to 75 years old. The response has been greater than expected and all dates for 2022 have been taken. We are now taking bookings for 2023.

In order to increase our overall visibility we had 10,000 leaflets printed and engaged a leaflet distribution company to assist, we also delivered a leaflet to every house in Wellesbourne and to other venues on an exchange arrangement. We have continued our poster campaign in the local villages and have updated the Website, we regularly get listed in two of the local papers and in 'Chatterbox', a Coventry based glossy magazine. We are also looking at other publicity options.

Despite continuing efforts to engage with local schools either by them visiting the Yard or going to their sites there has been no response.

Overall the footfall, has been more less as expected especially in view of the nervousness following the Covid crisis. At the yard we have taken care to make sure that the site is safe for all visitors.

There is little doubt that the disruption of Chestnut Square has had an adverse effect on the yard, the parked vehicles and hoarding masking Church Walk. Once the Stag is reopened, we hope to be able to offer lunch options again for groups visiting the Yard.

Groups visits and Presentations about the Yard have continued at a similar level as before Covid and we are already receiving bookings for 2023.

The volunteer team has remained fairly stable although during the Covid crisis some found other 'time consuming' activities and can only give limited support.

We are now planning our 2023 programme, during which we aim to have a featured event each week and are currently contacting potential demonstrators.

For 2023 we are seeking additional volunteers with vacancies in all areas including blacksmiths. The Yard will open for 2023 on Easter Saturday.

Eric Lawley

On behalf of the Trustees

September 2022