



## News, and Merry Christmas from...

# Walthew House

Walthew House is always busy during the festive period, and this year for a change, we thought we'd produce a special Christmas edition of our newsletter to let you know what we've been up to.

We started celebrations early with a Christmas Fair in mid-November, with lots of lovely stalls selling homemade Christmas crafts and serving hot drinks and turkey and stuffing sandwiches.

The photos below show Ann, busy in the kitchen making sandwiches and Chris acting as a sighted guide for a visually impaired visitor.



Our next event was 'Breakfast with Signing Santa' for our younger deaf members. We entertained 24 children and their families with a breakfast of cereals, bacon and sausage sandwiches and toast, and the chance to chat to Santa about what they would like for Christmas. It's the first time we've received this special visitor and everyone was thrilled by his sign language skills, and also by the lovely gifts he had for all the children. We'd like to say a big thank you to the ASDA Foundation for their support, providing a grant that paid for the breakfasts and the other costs of the day. The photos right and below show Shannon receiving the cheque from the ASDA Foundation, Michelle telling Santa what she would like for Christmas, and the children crowding round Santa.



One of our most popular events is our Carol Service, led by the Reverend David Brewster from St Matthew's Church Edgeley. Thank you to Karen and Pam from St Matthew's for signing the service and to organist Lucy. Also thanks to Stockport Community Choir for their beautiful rendition of Step into Christmas and Mary's Boy Child, and to the Walthew House Steel Band for playing such favourites as Silent Night and Jingle Bell Rock before and after the service. Finally, a huge thank you to Christ Church Stockport for taking part in the service and for serving refreshments afterwards. They have their regular service in the hall each Sunday afternoon, so it was lovely to join with them to celebrate. The photo below shows the hall, packed with people joining in the service.



This year we served Christmas dinner to over 60 people – a mammoth achievement for our volunteer cook Michael and his team. Thank you to everyone who helped, including young people from Brighter Futures who helped to serve and the U3A orchestra (pictured right) for providing the entertainment.



We always do our Christmas raffle draw at the Christmas dinner. This year the raffle raised over £1,100. The photo right shows Ian, our longest standing group member, drawing the winning ticket, with our fundraiser Shannon. The first prize, of a Christmas hamper, was won by Jennifer from Offerton.



As well as our own Christmas events, we've been very involved with a number of other activities...

Some of our members joined Christ Church Stockport for a Christmas wreath making session, pictured right, which was funded by our Making More Happen project. Forever Manchester has recently awarded a grant to the project, and we are very grateful for the support, which helps to fund our involvement with other groups' activities.



We also took part in the Santa Float collections organised by Bramhall and Woodford, Hazel Grove and Stockport Rotary Clubs. Thanks to our stalwart volunteers who went the extra mile – literally – trudging for hours in the cold and rain to collect for Walthew House and other local charities.

Thank you also to ASDA and Morrisons in Reddish and Edgeley Coop which allowed us to have in store collections, and to the Coop Local Community Fund, which has also supported us this year.

Looking back at the past few months at Walthew ...

**See Hear Stockport 2018** – our biennial equipment and information event in September was our best ever this year with 34 organisations or services exhibiting. These included national organisations like Guide Dogs for the Blind and Hearing Products International, and local statutory and voluntary services that are able to support people with sensory loss, including Stepping Hill Hospital Low Vision Service and Age UK Stockport. Here are just a few comments from the people who attended:

“We got a steady flow of visitors in the morning. It was quieter in the afternoon, but that gave me an opportunity to have a look round the other stands which was good for me personally because I’m visually impaired, and also for networking with other organisations. Putting on food was good as well, so we didn’t need to go out at lunchtime.”

“It was seamless. I got a lift to and from the train station and a sighted guide to go round the exhibition.”

“Total disaster – now I’m up to speed with all the latest equipment it’s going to cost me a fortune!”

The photo below was taken in the refreshments area at the exhibition, and shows one of our specialist VI counsellors Lynda taking a breather, and Dave enjoying a bacon butty. His guide dog Ace is optimistically paying rather close attention to the butty!



In November, Walthew House took part in the **Stockport Parade of Light**, which was part of a series of events in Stockport commemorating 100 years since the end of World War One. A group of art and craft group members helped to construct some of the lanterns used in the parade. Each lantern was made of a foot tall clear cylinder, into which cut out poppies were attached and a string of LED lights inserted. The photo right shows Shui surrounded by poppy pieces, putting together one of the lanterns.



The parade took place on Remembrance Sunday with people processing with their lanterns from St. Mary's Church to the Art Gallery. Walthew House was well represented, providing a number of visually impaired people with sighted guides.

Our most popular event this year was our fiercely contested **Quiz Night**. We make the annual quiz as accessible as possible to people with a sensory loss by including no picture or music rounds and providing scribes and sighted guides.

Our newest activity is a **Technology User Group**. Volunteers are on hand to offer their expertise and the group has regular visitors from equipment companies and other organisations and is supported by a Stockport Council Digital Technology grant. The photo right shows Shelly from Stockport Libraries demonstrating how to access library services online.



Many of our activities, working with other groups in the community, are delivered through our Making More Happen project. In November, we joined the *Soup and Sweet* group, at Cheadle Hulme United Reformed Church to talk about the challenges of sensory loss and during Braille Week we visited the *Socially Yours* group at St. Matthew's Church to talk to members about Braille and other types of communication for visually impaired people.

### **A few words of thanks...**

We'd like to say a special thank you Booth Ainsworth for another year of fantastic support through their cake sales, dress down days and other events, including the Stockport 10k Run, pictured right with team members doing the Usain Bolt lightning strike pose.



Thanks also to Turners Art, for supporting us once again with their annual Art Challenge. The photo right shows Walthew fundraiser Shannon, with local MP Ann Coffey and Trisha from Turners, standing in front of some of the many entries, which were exhibited at Stockport Art Gallery.



Thank you to the charitable trusts that have supported us recently: the Beatrice Laing Trust and the Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust for supporting fire safety refurbishments at

Walthew House; the Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund and Viridor for supporting our tandem group; the Dixie Rose Findlay and Jules Thorn Charitable Trusts for supporting our accessible information work; and to the Percy Bilton Charity, which paid for the replacement of the four ovens in the downstairs kitchen. Thank you also to Hazel Grove and District Probus Club, the Phoenix Club in Tameside and Ridge Methodist Church for their donations.

Great Moor Ladies Darts Team have been supporting us with their fundraising all year and are pictured right presenting a cheque for a magnificent £1,131.



Thanks to them and to Chris Swinton, a visually impaired photographer, who donated one of his action photos – a signed copy of John McGuinness - for us to auction. He is picture right presenting the photo to our office manager Rachel Cassells.



Finally, we are most grateful for donations made in memory of Eric Barlow, and a legacy from the estate of the late Raymond Fallows.

Walthew House, 112 Shaw Heath, Stockport SK2 6QS. Tel: 0161 480 2612  
 Confidential fax: 0161 477 4441  
[admin@walthewhouse.org.uk](mailto:admin@walthewhouse.org.uk)  
[www.walthewhouse.org.uk](http://www.walthewhouse.org.uk)

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