

The Springhead Trust

Achievements 2020



Springhead
a rural centre for creative and sustainable living

The challenges of 2020



With the restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19, 2020 has been a very challenging year for the Springhead Trust, and we have been unable to welcome all our usual visitors.

However, we have had unexpected achievements in some areas, have improved our facilities, buildings and grounds, have found alternative ways to support those in need, and have had the time to work on improving the resilience of our organisation and to ensure our future financial viability.

Pictured: a socially distanced audience enjoys a 'one man' performance of Great Expectations at the Rotunda Open Air Theatre in August

December 2020

Environmental education



Whilst our regular school visits have not been allowed to take place, we have been busy preparing for the return of school groups in 2021:

- In February 2020 we employed a Co-ordinator for our Productive Gardens Project who has restored and improved our kitchen gardens, making the environment suitable for school groups, planning educational activities and ensuring we are ready to increase school involvement in growing, cooking and eating Springhead's produce in 2021
- We have converted a double garage into an insulated, heated field studies classroom to provide covered facilities in the gardens. It will also enable us to accommodate more children and to split them into smaller bubbles as needed
- We made plans with the local village primary school, St Andrews, for a series of regular visits from year 3 and 4 pupils. The first of these took place at the end of October 2020 (pictured), when pupils learnt photography skills, explored the gardens and even tasted our fresh spring water

'Our children and staff hold Springhead in huge affection, they always look forward to their visits and return to school invigorated by the experiences they have had there'

Michael Salisbury, Head Teacher, Shaftesbury Abbey Primary School, January 2020

Community use



Springhead has continued to provide a haven of tranquillity for a limited number of visitors who have been able to visit the ornamental gardens:

- We held the annual 'Garden of Delights' and Christmas fair in 2019, and a snowdrop open gardens day in February
- Apart from a short period during lockdown, our team of garden volunteers has remained busy, maintaining the ornamental gardens to ensure we remain ready for visitors
- During lockdown, we opened our gardens on a number of occasions for the local community, such as a day in late May (pictured) when families and other village residents gathered elderflower for making cordial
- We have recently become custodians of the Shaftesbury Heritage Snowdrop Collection and are now caring for and propagating rare varieties. We plan to open up our gardens on weekdays and on one weekend in the month of February for the snowdrop flowering season
- We have been hosting carers who look after vulnerable adults and have come to Springhead for safe respite and to quarantine between live-in posts when they are unable to stay with their own families

Arts and culture



The number of arts performances we held was much reduced due to the pandemic, and we were disappointed to have to cancel events such as Miracle Theatre’s annual open-air drama production. However, we were still able to provide several opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about the arts:

- In February, in partnership with Artsreach, we staged an evening of storytelling and sitar playing (pictured) with Emily Hennessey and Sheema Mukherjee, and a separate workshop for visitors to participate in Indian storytelling and music
- We also held a harp workshop and concert with Sarah Deere-Jones
- We staged a Covid-secure one-man performance of Great Expectations in August at our open-air theatre in August
- The world-famous Monteverdi Choir performed for a private audience in the spectacular surroundings of our lakeside gardens, raising funds for, and awareness of, Springhead as an arts and environmental charity

‘The gardens with the amphitheatre provide a wonderful performing space and are enjoyed by many of the hundreds of visitors we attract at the summer outdoor theatre events’

Yvonne Gallimore, Co-Director, Artsreach, Dorset August 2019

Environment



While having few visitors has meant changes to our programme and a reduction in opportunities to raise awareness, achievements have included:

- We continued to produce renewable electricity from our mini hydro scheme and our solar PV panels, exporting 18971 kw to the grid in 2019/20
- Volunteers from the Dorset Coppice Group coppiced willow in Springhead's waste water treatment beds in early 2020 (pictured)
- We supplied some local households (including those shielding due to medical conditions) with boxes of organic fruit and vegetables and provided fresh produce for carers staying at Springhead. We also donated produce to Open House in Shaftesbury, a service which supports local families in crisis
- We continued to garden organically in line with our covenant, for example using aquatic weed from our lake in our organic compost making, and producing liquid plant feed from nettles and comfrey
- We actively managed the kitchen garden for wildlife and have retained large areas of bramble, long grass, laid hazel hedges, wild stream banks and naturalised flowers, as valuable habitat for insects, birds, reptiles and small mammals, including foxes, hawks, owls, hedgehogs and stoats
- We continued to lay sections of our hedgerows using traditional methods and tools, with the help of a local volunteer hedgelay

Organisational achievements



We have taken advantage of having few visitors on site during the pandemic to improve our sustainability through reviewing strategy, operations and governance, and carrying out capital improvement works:

- With funding from the Heritage Emergency Fund and the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage, we have worked with a number of external specialists in order to improve our long-term sustainability as an organisation
- A business planner and marketer is helping us produce a new, 5 year strategic plan, to ensure that we meet the needs of our users and supporters
- We are reviewing and improving our systems of monitoring and evaluation
- We are reviewing all our policies and procedures to ensure that we are compliant with the law and following best practice across a number of areas
- We have employed a digital communications consultant who is assisting us with a review of our social media, providing training and support to increase income, and improving our regular communications through digital channels
- We had a range of surveys undertaken to inform our plans for restoration of our listed Mill Building (pictured, in June 2020)
- We raised funds to carry out urgent maintenance work to the Mill Building including roof repairs
- Following marketing and rescheduling of events from this year, we have created a full diary of school visits and other events for 2021

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Thank you for your support

<https://www.springheadtrust.org.uk>

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