

Volunteer Meetings

Following a pilot programme last year to find out the most popular times for our meetings, we have decided to have them on either Tuesday afternoons or Saturday mornings.

Dates for the year:

Sat 7th March 10.30am – 12noon

Tues 28th April 12.30 – 2.00pm

Sat 20th June 10.30am – 12noon

Summer Social date and time TBC

Tues 8th September 12.30 – 2.00pm

Sat 31st October - 10.30am – 12noon

Weds 16th December – Christmas Social – time TBC

All regular meetings will place place upstairs at St Andrews.

Devizes Rough

The Newsletter of Devizes Opendoors
Winter 2019/2020

Night Shelter Update

Despite recent cold nights Devizes Opendoors trustees have decided not to open a trial night shelter during February and March. The plan had been to open at week-ends and during times when the temperature was forecast to be at or below freezing for three or more nights. However, trustees have just heard their application for a grant has not been successful. It is also now clear that some of those who have been sleeping rough have recently been helped to find accommodation in other towns by Wiltshire Council.

The number of rough sleepers the Shelter might have catered for was only ever going to be as high as six. Now that several of those have no need of such provision, that leaves just one or two to cater for.



The trustees believe that more cost-effective ways of sheltering such small numbers could be found, including arrangements like a bed and breakfast scheme. They also agreed that more time and effort now needs to be invested in a Befriending scheme so that sofa surfers and other homeless people are offered more ongoing support, as they seek to better their circumstances. If anyone reading this would like to contribute to the discussion of either scheme, please get in touch with John by phone (07828 041152) or email (admin@devizesopendoors.org.uk).

Once more we have been delighted by the support from local people and organisations in the run up to Christmas and a

Big Thank You Goes To...

Coate Fireworks: £500
Hot Gossip: (Wansdyke school staff) £100
Wessex Model & Toy Auction Evening: £1,500
Local Labour Party Cellar Bar: £214
Wadworth Winter Market:
Sale of hot drinks £163.18 plus £506.60
Good Afternoon Choir Concert: £833.87
Sing Alive Choir :£429.84
Chamber Choir: £51.20
Bishops Cannings Tuesday Group: £95.00
Worton Nitt & Knatter Group: £137. 10
Worton & Marston Carol Service: £181.20
Marston Chapel Carol Service: £125.10
The (Lawrence) Arts Society: £100.00
Compton Bassett Christmas Fayre: £200
Devizes Rotary: £270
Women's Institute: £12.50
Metabolics: £120

We were also delighted by the generous gifts of wrapped presents, food, Christmas cake and unwanted gift vouchers that altogether meant that our guests had a very enjoyable lunch on the 23rd December.



Donations from
Individuals over
Christmas

Monetary donations from supporters amounted to the following:

**11 donors, £1,110
1 donor, £2,000
Just Giving donors
675.09**

Homeless?

We might be able to help:
Call 07493 825258



Team Contact Emails

For information on any of the items in the newsletter please contact us by email.

- **General Volunteer Enquiries:**
volunteers@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **John —Chair of Trustees**
admin@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **Hilary—Coordinator**
coordinator@devizesopendoors.org.uk
- **Angie—Deputy Coordinator**
info@devizesopendoors.org.uk



Other Useful Numbers

County Housing Options
01225 718005

Impact (Turning Point)
01225 341520

Homeless?

We might be able to help:
Call 07493 825258

What We Do

Devizes Opendoors runs a Drop In Centre at St. John's Parish Rooms, Long Street three times a week, and one session a week on a Thursday afternoon at St Andrews. With no statutory funding it relies on grants, donations and fund raising. It serves more than 50 hot meals a week, provides a safe meeting place, friendship and support for homeless and vulnerable adults.

Through the Opendoors...

Stories from guests, volunteers, trustees and friends of Devizes Opendoors

One of our regular volunteers, Caroline Reid, who is a shift leader and trainer, has been getting to know some of the people involved with Opendoors and in this regular feature on our website we will publish her stories.

Karl is an Opendoors regular; you can't miss him, really; a tall, lanky man with a long stride and a ready smile. Oh, and a Welsh lilt in his voice! Karl was born in Neath, on the south coast of Wales, into a family of Travellers. The eldest of nine children, he learned early to speak his mind (just like his Dad!) and take care of himself, if necessary with his fists. Though he did get some schooling, aged 11-14 while he lived with his Gran, it wasn't easy. Kids can be cruel towards anyone with any kind of difference, and because he stood up for himself, Karl was often in trouble. It wasn't until a stretch in jail that he actually learned to read and write.

Life for a travelling family can be challenging, local councils issue the 28-day tickets and they have to move along to a new spot. It was easier back during his childhood to find places to set up camp, because the councils didn't keep such a close eye on the camps. Travellers are a fluid community, meeting up all over the country, exchanging news and staying in touch. Karl said he didn't really enjoy the 3 years with his Gran because he missed moving around, missed being in the countryside and the sheer enjoyment of being in the open. He keeps in touch with his siblings and his Dad who, despite being in his 70s, is still travelling.

Sure, times can be hard. You get hungry. But when you love the outdoors and the moving around, you find ways of making do. Summer berries, whatever you can find in the hedgerows plus a bit of hunting with traps and catapults. Rabbit, pigeon, even hedgehog. But, how do you prepare a hedgehog, I asked, what about the prickles? Wrap it completely in clay and cook it in the ashes of your fire! When you peel off the clay, the skin comes off, prickles n'all. Hedgehog is apparently a delicacy! Some might not agree with the killing and eating of wildlife on principle, but this is the reality of life outside the system. You make do with what's to hand.

This is where places like Opendoors can be a lifesaver: 3 hot meals a week, plus a shower and clean towels, fresh clothes and people to talk to. It's the social event of the week, says Karl. He's been in Devizes for 5 years now, and found out about Opendoors through the informal network of homeless people that exists here, just like any other town. Now, let's be clear, Karl doesn't

consider himself homeless, and never has.

He has a home, his caravan which has a cooker and a wood burning stove! His current campsite sounds like a real plus, too. The farmer on whose land he has been parked invited him to set up camp so he and his group could provide security on his land. Animal rights activists had recently set fire to some buildings, killing 70 sows and numerous piglets as a result. Since Karl's group has been on the property, there has been no further trouble! The farmer also provides some work round the farm, so everyone's interests are served.

When I asked Karl what was the strangest food he had ever eaten, he replied kangaroo and shark. Well, I didn't expect that! I also didn't expect Karl to have travelled as far afield as Peshawar (in the disputed territory between India and Pakistan), where he stayed for a while. Madness, he said, it's madness there, everyone carrying guns around with them, it's a war zone. And a far cry from Devizes. For a traveller to stay 5 years in one community, something must be working for Karl, no matter how insecure or difficult his life might seem to those who live in the system. When I asked him what one thing he would change about his life, he gave the question some thought and said, nothing really. How many of us can say that about our own lives?

Thanks very much to Karl for telling his story, and to Caroline for recording and writing it up. We look forward to more stories in the future. If you have any ideas for future articles please contact Hilary.

Volunteer Training

Following a very successful autumn season of training we will be holding more courses in April and May this spring. These will include: Volunteering with Opendoors, Safeguarding and Mental Health. More information to come in due course. If you would like to find out more or sign up for some training please contact John or Hilary.