

THE WORD



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The **F**inal word on
all things **F**earon
in 2023-24

'Every Flower is a Song for Peace' Christmas Tree Festival project, November 2023



Rosanna Cant
Chair of FCA Ltd Trustees/Directors

Celebrating Partnerships

At Fearon Community Association we truly believe that when we come together, great things can happen; so this year we have a focus on celebrating partnerships. We have many wonderful long-standing community connections and partnerships and this year has brought a renewal of these established connections, as well as building new collaborations too.

We are proud to continue our partnership with Transition Loughborough and our developing one with Incredible Edible Loughborough. Their work delivering sustainable solutions as well as growing beautiful (and delicious!) corners of our community really connects to the ethos and community spirit of the Association.

Our long-standing partnership with Anand Mangal Ladies Group continues to be an important part of life at Fearon Hall. Connecting communities through food and activity such as Diwali breakfast, Asian lunches and International Women's day, amongst others.

The staff team and volunteers have worked tirelessly this year to achieve some really great work, which is well and truly embedded in our wonderful community. The power of partnerships is at the heart of that work and we are proud to be connected to so many fantastic community organisations.

In the words of Ryunosuke Satoro...

*“Individually we are one drop.
Together we are an ocean.”*

Financial Summary

We are pleased to report that our income has continued to increase in the year to March 2024. Additional grant funding has been successfully won and the Café in the Hall continues to go from strength to strength.

Like all organisations, the cost of living is having an impact. We have seen rises in gas, electricity and rent alongside an increase in minimum wage. Depreciation has risen as we write off the ballroom refurbishments.

Moving forward the Association has taken steps to increase income and manage costs. We are confident this will increase our surplus in the forthcoming year.

BALANCE SHEET

As at March 2024

		2024	2023	
Fixed Assets		28168		
Current Assets	Debtors	3245	10800	
	Cash	2019	287	
	Bank	43101	51797	
		<u>48365</u>	<u>62884</u>	
Creditors	Due within 1 period	16029	32336	24086
		<u>16029</u>	<u>32336</u>	<u>38798</u>
Total Net Assets		60504	81270	
Provisions for Liabilities and Charges		1216	2603	
		<u>1216</u>	<u>2603</u>	
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities		<u>59288</u>	<u>78667</u>	
Unrestricted Funds	Accumulated Fund	59288	78667	
		<u>59288</u>	<u>78667</u>	

Full accounts available on request



National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan student interns



Transition Loughborough repair café



Anand Magal Ladies Group

FROM THE CENTRE MANAGER

Space for everyone



Meg Bezzano-Griffiths
Centre Manager

It's been an exciting year developing relationships with new groups and strengthening our connection with existing ones. Partnership working was one of our key priorities for the year, increasing our capacity to deliver on the identified needs within our community. For example, working alongside The Walk & Talk Project and LPT's Charnwood Mental Health Neighbourhood Lead we were part of a really successful mens event to tackle issues of loneliness and isolation which is a priority in Charnwood.

Our relationship with the Communities Food and Wellbeing Hub continues to go from strength to strength. We're delighted to support the work they do in providing health and wellness services directly into the community.

I'm super proud that we are part of the Incredible Edible Loughborough journey. The UK wide network with a vision to create kind, confident and connected communities through the power of food. They use Fearon Hall as the base for delivering their vision throughout various sites across Loughborough.

Our belief in providing a safe and trusting environment that gives people access to a wide variety of opportunities is strengthened through these and other partnerships.

In addition to nurturing these partnerships, we continue to be a centre that delivers. Whether that's through Good Food Doing Good in the Café in the Hall; Community Arts that help to address personal challenges and community issues through a range of creative projects; identifying needs for regular activities like our food surplus supermarket, and Grief Café for adults who have lost a loved one; or simply in providing a local space for people to celebrate life events and special occasions.

None of this would be possible without the amazing team of staff and volunteers whose hard work and commitment enable these good things to happen. We are only as strong as the sum of our parts.

Increasingly, we are seeing people coming to us who require help or support in some way. We provide a refuge, an ear, guidance and signposting to more relevant organisations. This is specialist work and puts additional pressure on our small team. Moving forward this will be a focus for development with the appropriate partners in the coming year.

Behind all this great work there is the need to maintain the Association as a viable business and provide a building that is fit for purpose. It is the balance between cost and benefit that is never far from my mind, alongside the desire to reach out further into our wide and varied community.





“ A real positive difference. ”

The Café in the Hall remains the heartbeat of Fearon Hall. Reflective of our diverse community, the café welcomes anyone and everyone and is a friendly space for all service users and a home to many of our community activities.

The café is open regularly from Tuesday to Friday serving a variety of breakfast, lunch and dinner options alongside some delicious handmade cakes and bakes. We have seen an increased demand over the year of people requiring low cost, affordable, and hearty food due to the ongoing cost of living crisis. In particular our Good Grub Social Club, where we provide a subsidised meal of two courses and a hot drink for £5 every Wednesday, has seen increased demand - we now serve on average 35-40 people every week. We have introduced a similar offer on Friday mornings with a small breakfast and hot drink for £6 which is also proving to be popular.

We have partnered up with Molly's Gift providing healthy lunches for the children and staff who attend their holiday camps.

Our commitment to Good Food Doing Good is further evidenced by the increasing success of our vegan bistro evenings held once a month. These are a showcase for vegan food and a way in which we celebrate diversity by exploring different food cultures. Most events sell out and are enjoyed by all who attend. In addition, our monthly weekend vegan café offers a different Fearon Hall experience, meeting the needs of a wider community demographic.

We are told by some of our regular service users that the café makes a real positive difference to their lives. Visiting us on a daily basis to engage with others or participate in the activities. Some however need more in-depth support which impacts the daily tasks and workload of the café staff. We are not just a warm space to provide food but also a welcoming and caring ear to listen and help where needed.

The coming year will continue to be a challenge as we negotiate the balance between ever increasing costs and meeting the needs of our service users. But as a team, we're up for it.

Growing Relationships



I started the Incredible Edible project in Loughborough and I don't think we could ever have grown without Fearon Hall as a base. Having the greenhouse and somewhere to store our tools is a phenomenal resource. So many people have been influenced by learning to grow their own food, seedlings and so on.

There is now somewhere we can say, "Meet at Fearon Hall." Everybody knows exactly what you mean. It's round the back, come through the gate and go to the greenhouse. We've also got a place where we can have refreshments, sit and chat after we have been working on the gardens.

I think the connection with the Wildlife garden, the Church, the Old Rectory and now I hope Incredible Edibles makes it a really massive collaborative project. People who are involved in one of those are also somewhat involved in all the others and that's really important.

It's impossible to calculate the value.

Julian Rees
Incredible Edible Loughborough

“It’s impossible to calculate the value.”



Fearon Flowers with Incredible Edible is a partnership with volunteers who attend Fearon Hall, taking ownership of the boxes at the side of the Hall. We are delighted that our planters have been replaced as part of a joint project with Community Payback funded by the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Police and Crime Commissioners office.



“My children don’t always remember stuff that we do, I roll my eyes at times and think why do I bother, but they absolutely remembered and loved your sand session!”

As a local sand sculptor, in Loughborough, about as far as you can get inland from the sea, I approached Fearon Community Association with the idea of setting up an outdoor sandpit so Hall users (and me) could learn new skills, provide free-activities to help parents and their children be active during the summer holidays, and to provide Hall users of all ages a regular space to be freely creative and to play.

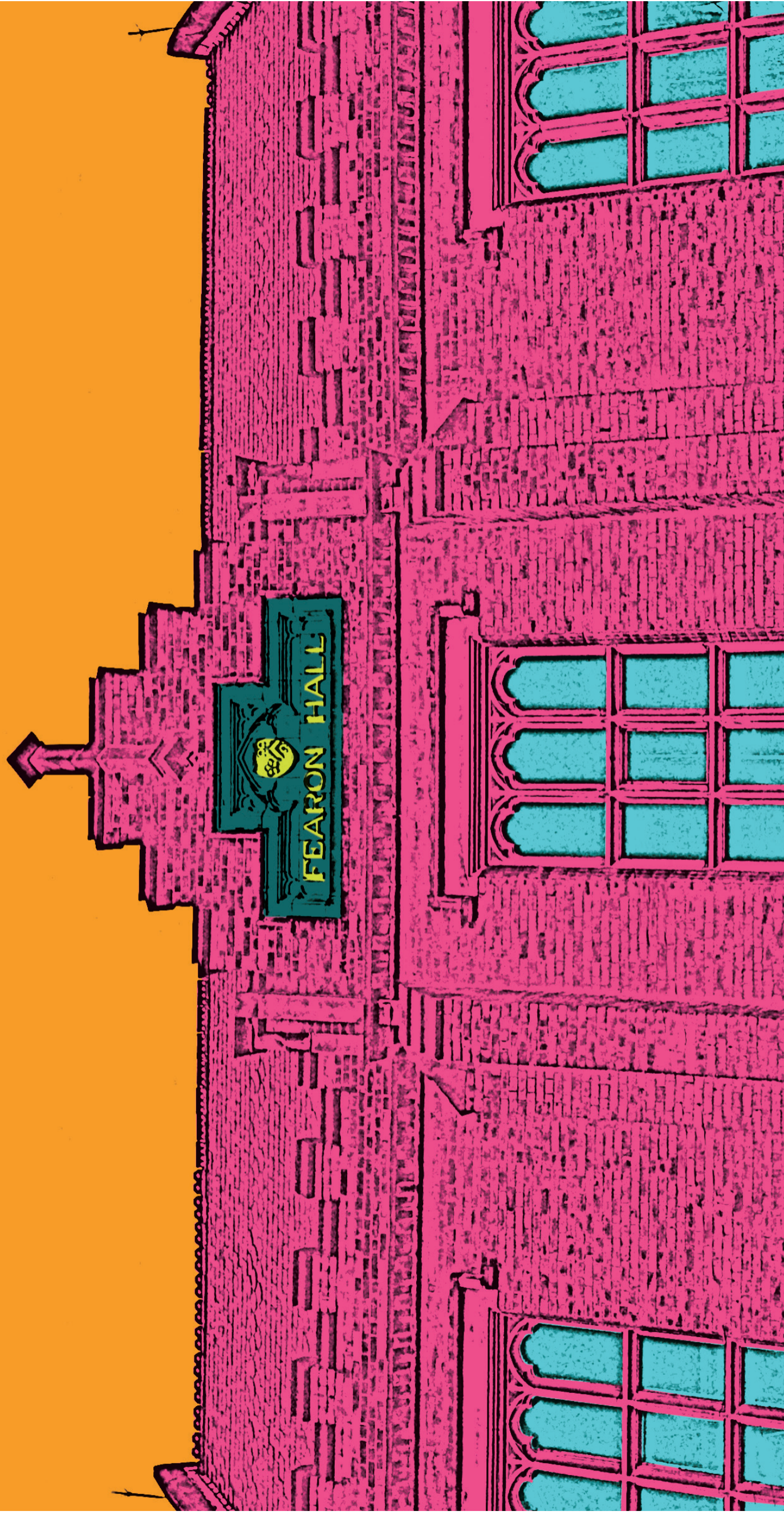
The partnership with the Hall that evolved produced all of this and more. Providing me with the opportunity to create, develop and hone my skills and supported the testing of a new, locally-unique, creative and social business which I hope to develop further in the coming year.

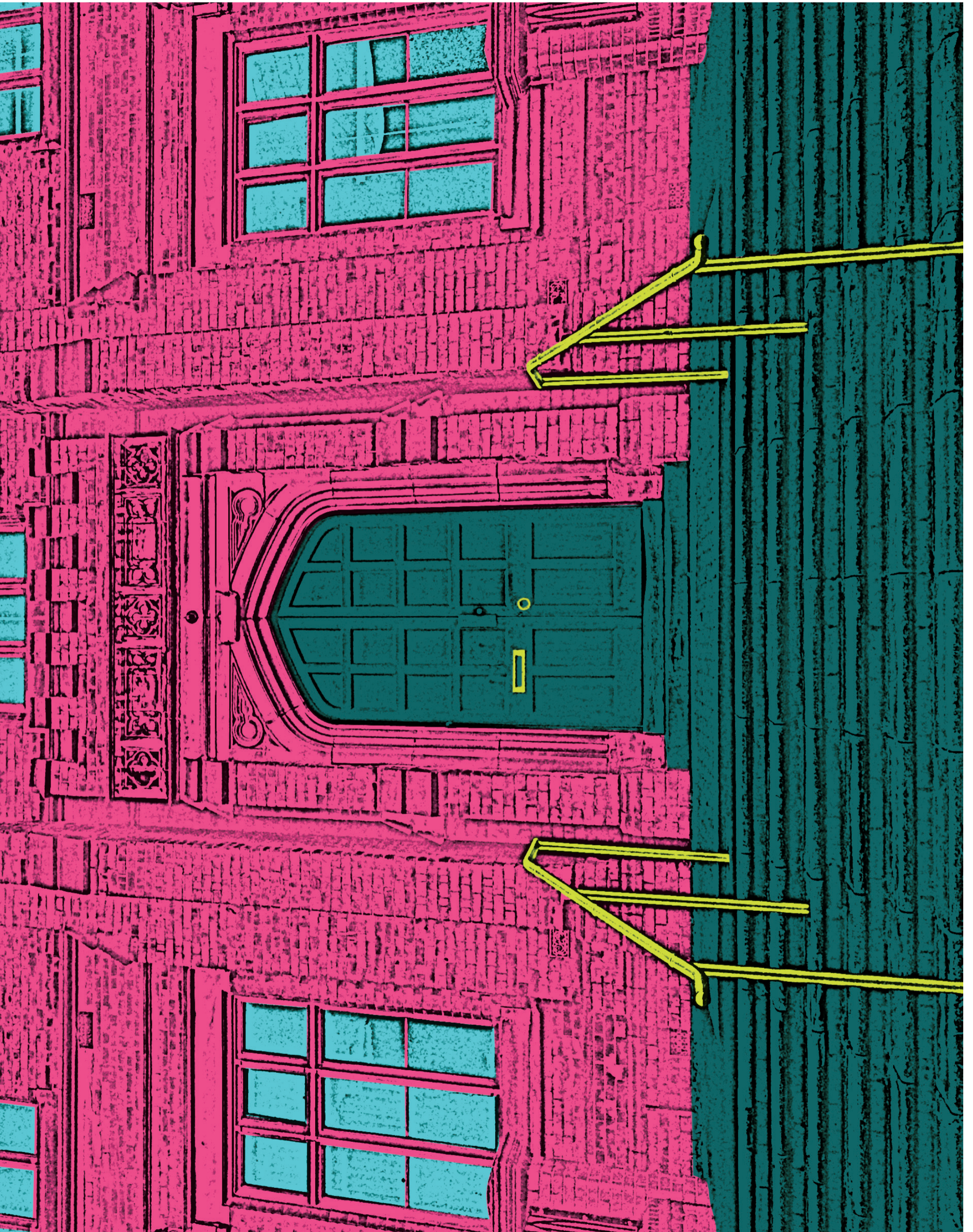
Local mental health workers visiting the Hall wanted the opportunity to commission sculpting sessions in future, to help their clients reintegrate into the community in a safe, focused and present way.

Annie O’Brian
Sand Sculptor

FEARON HALL

RECTORY RD, LOUGHBOROUGH





FROM OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Our relationship with Fearon Hall re-established a sure footing in this period as we finally got some balance after a turbulent pandemic period. Together with Meg we settled on hosting our repair cafés quarterly at the Hall and we feel their success is as much to do with the support of everyone at Fearon as our own efforts. Over this period around 150 items were brought in for repair and this just has to be a positive for all in the area as we strive for a more sustainable future. Match this with a smile, good cake and a welcoming venue and long may our partnership continue.

Jason Hamilton-Smith

Treasurer, Transition Loughborough

In September 2023, representatives from Equality Action and Loughborough Town of Sanctuary met to discuss how best to support the many groups active in supporting asylum seekers and refugees, and determine a strategy and plan of action based on the priorities.

From this the AS&R Network was born and membership now stands at 40 organisations - from the Charitable, Voluntary and Faiths Sector, the College and University, Charnwood Borough Councillors and Officers, National Health Service and East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership. We work together and support each other and have hosted visits from the former and current MPs, put questions to them and received replies from Ministers. All that was achieved in one year, so we know the Network is needed and wanted.

It would not have been possible without the partnership support and contribution from Sarah, NHS Mental Health Lead, and Meg at Fearon Hall. Meg reminds us about the human experience behind the statistics. The AS&R Network goes further and stronger making common cause, in partnership.

Jill Vincent

Asylum Seekers and Refugees (AS&R) Network

The meaning of Anand Mangal is “be happy”. There were quite a few ladies who were on their own and they were not going anywhere but just sitting at home and watching telly and I thought it would be nice for them to get out once a week, meet other people, enjoy themselves, talk to each other and join in activities. We have grown to a group of 37! We invite people from outside agencies to come and talk to them on health issues, keeping fit and exercises. Partnering with other agencies to expand what we do.

We feel like Fearon Hall is our home. We run a monthly Asian café with the Café in the Hall as well as special one off events for Diwali and International Women’s Day. It’s great that we can bring our communities together while enjoying ourselves.

Anila Sisodia

Anand Mangal Ladies Group

I started the Walk & Talk project to bring together men struggling with their mental health, providing a safe place for them to go to chat to each other about anything on their minds. It’s a gentle exercise nearly all can participate in and getting outdoors and chatting makes it easier for people to open up.

Originally a mens group, the project has expanded to include women too and offers a men only walk, two ladies only walks and a mixed group walk every week.

As a walking, talking initiative, we do not own a building so have adopted Fearon Hall. They provide rooms for us to use in the colder months as well as partnering on joint events, and of course, a cuppa and a chat when it’s needed. They have been instrumental in helping us grow as a group.

Mike Dickinson

Chairman, The Walk & Talk Project



FROM OUR ARTS IN THE HALL



Community Arts is placed firmly within the heart of Fearon Hall. Nurturing a sense of well being aligns with our strategic aims. We strive to facilitate this at an individual, cultural and economic level. The arts have the potential to bridge our worlds, harness and explore the wisdom of our different views, engage our imagination to explore new ways of thinking, and create experiences that can be shared by all people in our community.

We have seen how art can empower people, enhance a sense of well being, raise self-esteem and facilitate positive life changes. It can facilitate conversations that tackle local issues as we did with our outreach art project 'Acts of Kindness' with the Bell Foundry Estate, through the People Zones Funding. Addressing these issues together can contribute to a shared sense of community pride and identity.

We have been developing an arts programme with our Arts Co-ordinator and Curator Jacqui Gallon which encompasses an ethos in which service users have open access to the arts and are able to encounter art in all its manifestations as an everyday occurrence.

Community and the Arts

We are building a reputation for providing high quality activities and opportunities which everyone can enjoy and engage in. The activities are enriching, empowering and enabling.

At present, our art activities are subsidised though our general budget. Ideally, this free service must continue but diverting monies from other cost centres is unsustainable in the long term. We are exploring grant opportunities to help provide funding.

We have had a glimpse of what is possible to achieve through delivering a community arts programme. We have anecdotal evidence of the benefits in terms of bringing people together, nurturing well being, raising individual confidence, reducing social isolation. These benefits manifest themselves in service users commenting, for example, on how art workshops have motivated them to leave the home; or how much they like the company of the group; evidence of peer support; changes in levels of confidence, subtle clues such as smiling more and joining in conversations.

We will look to develop more formal evaluation strategies that measure the impact and outcomes of involvement in arts programmes in the coming year.

Whilst not specifically an arts organisation, we believe in the power of Community Arts. Loughborough has a vibrant arts community with which we are trying to build stronger connections and partnerships.

We do however have an ongoing relationship with the National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan where students from the university spend time at Fearon Hall as interns.

Through internships, our regular service users get to engage in new relationships, feel the buzz of different professionals being in the space and encounter new and exciting art forms. The Taiwanese internship culminated in a exhibition to which all of the community were invited to come and engage with the artworks.

“The activities are enriching, empowering and enabling.”

There’s a varied range of activities happening at Fearon Hall including...



In February 2022 when I was at my darkest I came across Fearon Hall. At the time, when all I wanted to do was curl up and die, I chose to leave the house and attend an arts class. I clearly remember sitting there in the company of others, yet in my own world. My silence and privacy were respected, yet the activity organiser engaged me with the activity. I realised there was a world outside of my own head and that maybe, within this safe space for individuals from all walks of life, with varying needs that perhaps I could exist.

Fast forward to January 2024, whilst off work with work-related stress, I turned again to Fearon Hall. This time not for solace, but for engagement with others. I found this in the form of a sewing group, who were warm and welcoming and with whom, despite, having returned to work I have kept in contact with.

It was during this time too, I sat with Meg, sharing something of the trauma I was experiencing. She listened, comforted and advised with an air of patience and genuine concern; without judgment or reprisal. This conversation resonated with me and I've since made a number of changes in my life.

Last week I returned to Fearon Hall to begin an arts course. My reason for this, is in part to test out my new additional identity; that of somebody with an apparent disability. Until now I have shied away from social interactions, even switching carers for a job that allowed me to work from home. I knew that at Fearon Hall there was no fear of judgment, sympathetic looks and questioning. I knew I was safe and that meant a lot to me.

A smile a day keeps the doctor at bay...

I was referred to Fearon Hall by a social prescriber. I came on my own, I was really worried, but I needn't have been as everyone made me feel so welcome. Originally I came just on a Tuesday for Knit and Natter, the group were lovely, I was told about a sewing group on a Wednesday, so I started to come to that too. Who knew I had it in me to knit and now sew so the advice just try it was brilliant. I also found out about bingo so I decided to give that a go too and I love it. I now come out to the Hall three days a week! There's lots going on so I have tried other sessions, including the wellbeing sessions run by the Communities Food and Wellbeing hub. The one with Dr Durrant really helped.

The Café is open when the groups are on and its delicious, affordable and friendly. I enjoy the banter with the lovely café staff.

I feel so positive, people tell me I look better, I feel it, I'm always smiling now. I miss Fearon Hall when I can't come. If Fearon Hall wasn't here the community would really miss it. It's welcoming for all from all walks of life everyone is included.

All the groups lift me up and give me confidence. I have made loads of new friends who I can call anytime and who would be there for me. If you are unsure take that step through the doors – people will welcome you and you'll become part of the Fearon Hall family.

I personally use it for the café, I love coming in for the café because it's really good food and you see people and its warm and cozy and I tend to just pop in and see whats going on. But then I also use it through my work with the Town of Sanctuary for trying to link up individuals with projects and the work that's being done. So make the best use of it. I only live 5 minutes walk away so its very handy.

I love the fact that it is always so busy. There is always people here of all different shapes, sizes whatever and I think it's a real community and a really vibrant space.

It's a warm atmosphere and I always feel welcome. I can be chatty or could sit on my own. There is always space to be. The staff, the people that are here are always very nice - a sense of community that gives me what I am looking for to expand in my life. It's in this centre and the things that are already happening here and it is what I am looking for and in fact what I was able to do. Joining in cooking a few Italian meals and I've always been supported. Engaging people, there are people here they can join in for a particular reason, come here for a coffee or a chat. It's beautiful.

It gets rid of all your worries you've got, makes you feel better while you are doing something, you can put them on one side for a bit. I had bad luck last year, lost four members of my family so I had a bit of a rough time with it and now I'm picking up a bit to where I was before sort of thing. The Doctor got me interested in this place, he said you need getting out of yourself instead of getting all lost sort of thing. He said there are some good people here and they will help you and they have. It's the best thing I ever did.

“What do you love about being at the Hall?”

“Just being here, don't know what I would do if I wasn't here.”

The hall has helped my confidence

Community
Fearon Hall is a place to smile to meet new friends and learn new skills. This is all supported by the most amazing staff. A place where everyone smiles xx

Thank You
Since coming to Fearon Hall my life has changed for the better. I now have a reason to get up in the morning, I've made lots of new friends and learnt a lot of new skills

Fearon Hall has been a godsend, a safe haven, a place without judgement or discrimination, a place where you are accepted for being unapologetically you.

A welcoming and friendly place



People through our door

Since the financial year 2021-22 we have seen an increase of 44.9% in visitors to Fearon Hall. These numbers are based on those signing in Tuesday to Friday. Bear in mind that it is estimated that 1/3 of visitors tend not to sign in.

This illustrates the increasing relevance and growing need for community places like Fearon Hall and the vital part they play in today's society.

Keeping our doors open comes at a cost. We are immensely fortunate to benefit from significant funding streams from organisations like The National Lottery Community Fund and Charnwood Borough Council Strategic Partnership Grant, to name just a couple. However, we still need to run a tight ship and work hard to generate our own income.

This isn't possible without your help. Every penny you spend with us - whether through the Café in the Hall, Hall room hire, in our community shop or attending one of our events - is used to keep Fearon Hall open as a vital community resource, helping to change all our lives for the better.