



Newsletter

Issue 9

October 2007

Chair's message

Welcome to this edition of the Swindon Mela Newsletter.

Once again the sun shone on the Swindon Mela 2007 and what an incredible day as people from far and wide turned out in their droves for the cultural highlight of the year, the jewel in Swindon's crown, the Swindon Mela 2007. And all this after fears that the event may have had to be cancelled because of the dreadful weather!

As well as the usual attractions which drew visitors from all the surrounding towns and cities, new additions such as Nellie the Elephant really enhanced the Mela experience even more, as a record 17,000 people enjoyed the sights and sounds of yet another successful and landmark fifth event. A huge thanks to all involved including the Committee and all volunteers, supporters and sponsors. Liz Lavender was faced with an incredible challenge to co-ordinate such a major event after such a short time in the job and she deserves all our thanks. Well-done Liz.

On a personal note folks, I have to inform you that I have decided to step down as Chair at the next AGM owing to other commitments. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have been a founding member and to have been at the helm of an event that has made such an impact on Swindon and gained such a proud reputation throughout the country. Thank you all for your support and hard work.

Best Wishes
Rizvana Sheikh
Chair, The Swindon Mela

Mela 2007 in pictures

www.swindonmela.com - Check out the gallery page for recently uploaded pictures of this year's event! Lots of pictures of all 3 stages, behind the scenes and familiar faces. If you have any photographs you think are especially good and want to include in the gallery please give Liz a ring on [466565](tel:466565)

Special thanks to Sach for keeping the site together

Showcase stage- Jaz Bhui

Hey folks! Wow....what a fantastic event this year's Mela was. The Acts on the showcase stage were brilliant and definitely getting better and better every year. All the acts were amazing especially the 'Inspirasian' dancers from Bristol. The overall feedback from the public was positive and it was easy to see that everyone enjoyed the day and supported all the various acts that were on stage.

This year we saw a wide variety of acts from various communities that we have here in Swindon. This not only made the showcase stage colourful and vibrant, it was also good to see people from our community performing on stage to wide appreciation. Hope to see many more of them next year.

If anyone has any new acts or ideas for next year's Mela or would like to help programme the stage please contact Jaz:
simbah.2000@virgin.net !! ☺

Activity Zone – Co-ordinated by Manjit Singh Dol

Once again this was a very busy section of our fantastic Swindon Mela. The activities including Turban tying, Sari tying, Carrom Board, and Henna tattooing were free and available to all. The turban tying was so popular that even our local police officers and the Mayor of Swindon had their turbans tied along with 100's of others. The sari tying was one of the favourite activities for many younger girls. Henna painting was also very popular and if you wanted you could have a go yourself or let one of the Activity Zone volunteers put it on you professionally. For all the pictures please visit our website gallery

The best thing of all was that the volunteers were our own local people from Swindon. If you would like to volunteer to help for an hour or so next year with any of the Activity Zone activities it would be great to hear from you. Please contact me Manjit Singh on msdol@hotmail.com or 07509967443.

Health Zone – Co-ordinated by Mina Bhogal and Kay Nanji

Here are some of the comments received from the therapists that had a stall in the Health Zone this year:

“Great day, well organised, lots of help, laughter and fun Would love to do it next year.”
Janet Doran – Heart of Spirit

“Thanks should go to you and all your team for running such a well-organised event and under such difficult circumstances with the weather. I had a wonderful time as ever and loved the whole experience.. the new area worked well the main area was packed so is it time for a 2-day event to be considered? I would definitely support this...a wonderful event, full of lovely people and a great community atmosphere.”

Jan Wojtowicz – Alternative Health

“Thank you so much for a fantastic day - It just wouldn't happen with out you... We did 250 body fat tests and were flat out pretty much all day despite being off the beaten track!”

Jenny Talkington – Body Fat Testing

“A massive well done - what an amazing day - well attended, colourful, exciting... I just loved being involved. The Health Zone worked well where it was this year...many thanks to you and the whole team - a tremendous and outstanding achievement - the Mela just seems to grow and grow.... Jai Swindon!”

Helen Ganberg – Integral Yoga Centre



Helen Gamberg - Yoga workshop



Young Carrom Board players

In praise of the Mela – just some of the letters we received after the event

Thank you so much for all of your help and support that you gave me through the Mela. I would like to praise all of the stewards who were friendly and helpful, it was a busy day and they were there on hand.

The Mela itself was great I am so pleased to be part of it, and look forward to having another stall next year. It is a great opportunity for any therapist to promote their business.

A big thank you to all the staff that helped with all of the preparations.

Trish Rawlins

Beauty Therapist

Just wanted to say congratulations on a wonderful event. All the committees' hard work paid off. We had a fantastic day and evening despite the rain. Had a lot of positive comments from people on the day. Loved the atmosphere on the day, and the turnout was fantastic, despite the fact at times it was hard to get through the crowds. Well done and looking forward to the next one. Please pass on my congratulations and thanks to the Mela committee.

Nan Bains

BME Women's Community Development Officer

Just a quick note to say congratulations to you and the rest of the team for supporting such an excellent event. Saturday was my first taste of the Mela in Swindon and I was really impressed - I know just how much work has to be done to pull off such a "spontaneous" feeling event. As a festivalgoer, the experience of the organisation, car parking, stewards etc was thoroughly professional and a credit to the Council.

Bill Cotton

Director of Economic and Cultural Development



Crowds enjoy the Mela Market



DCS on the Main Stage

Messages from Liz Lavender SBC Festival's & Events Officer

Finance

The Mela raised over £20,000 in sponsorship this year and we have money from grants to spend on creative workshops to contribute to next year's event. The final balance will be available in the Annual Report at the AGM.

The European Mela Network

The EMN conference and AGM will be on 1st November in Manchester. It would be great if one or two of you would join me for the day. Its really interesting to meet up with other Mela's see what went well for them, where their problems lay, get ideas, see who is planning what next year. It can be a real inspiration. Networking really does have its benefits – exchanges in information, new opportunities, seeing how others do things, contacts that will save time and money and a jolly good social. Oh yes and it's a chance to catch up with Toby again – who has assured me he can't wait to see who turns up!!! www.melanet.eu

Another word of thanks

I would like to publicly thank those who have helped me so much this year to ensure the event was a success. First up is Mina Bhogal – organised, efficient, good company and comes with yummy snacks. Mina had contributed so much to this year's event she deserves a medal. Thank you Mina. Also worth a mention is Matt Davis from the Arts Centre who had never done anything like this before but came up trumps in organising the stewards. Finally Clarry Bean my line manager whose words of reassurance and ability to make a cup of tea at just the right time saved the day on several occasions.

The Lembher Issue

Apologies for all those who felt cheated regarding the lack of Lembher. After months of reassurances, signed contracts and down payments it was a huge disappointment and an all time low to be told 10 days before the event that he had not been granted a work permit. Note neither Swindon Mela nor SBC applied for his work permit. This was done through the artist agency and one of his managers. We appealed against the decision, we failed, and we were just as upset as you. There was just nothing that we could do. We will not be using that particular agency again!

Independence Stories Exhibition

(Digital Art Exhibition) 01- 31 October 2007

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol, BS1 6QH (Next to temple Meads Railway Station)

A new exhibition 'Independence Stories', commissioned by Asian Arts Agency to commemorate 60 years of India and Pakistan's Independence goes on show on 2nd October

The exhibition seeks to identify the personal "Independence" stories of Bristol based people from South Asian backgrounds. Bristol based visual artist Tajinder Dhami has worked with Aikaterini Gegisian from Watershed to transform the stories into digital artwork that will be in the form of voice-overs, interviews, still and moving images, animation, etc.

In addition to the exhibition, Asian Arts Agency will also present a theatre performance based on the division of India and Pakistan; "**A lifetime on Tiptoes**" by London based Man Mela Theatre Company on 23 November at Easton Community Centre Bristol.

For more information contact

Asian Arts Agency

0117 951 4131

www.asianartsagency.co.uk

Mela Membership – Mina Bhogal

It is my role as Membership Secretary to keep the Swindon Mela database updated with its members contact details. There are times when certain changes will occur to either email addresses or mobile phones. To keep receiving latest information please remember to forward any changes to me at mina_bhogal@hotmail.com

Membership forms can also be downloaded from the website



Under Data Protection Act 1998. We will only use your contact details for our membership database and to keep you informed of activities related to the Swindon Mela. If you have any questions about the Swindon Mela or your personal information you can contact [Liz Lavender on ☎ 01793 466565](tel:01793466565)

MELA AGM

A provisional date for the AGM has been set for Thursday 29th November 2007 (Please note this date could be subject to change) This will be an important meeting as we prepare to enter a different phase for the organisation, a time to strengthen our links with the community and develop our organisation to ensure its sustainability and progress. Having come so far in 5 years it is crucial that we have the manpower and skill input to continue our work and enjoy future Mela's.

The Executive is soon to undertake an audit to highlight the areas of skill, knowledge and expertise we need to see us through the next 5 years with a view to creating a management structure that spreads the load and is effective.

If you are interested in knowing more about what we need, telling us what you could do or what aspect of the Mela interests you most please contact us.

FULL DETAILS AND INVITE TO THE AGM WILL SENT TO YOU IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

For information do not hesitate to contact –

**Liz – llavender@swindon.gov.uk
Paul – paul@vas-swindon.org
Mina – mina_bhogal@hotmail.com
or go to
www.swindonmela.com**

**If anybody has any articles that they would like featured in forthcoming newsletters please e-mail them to
Harpreet Bhui
harpreet_bhui@hotmail.com**