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THE
Simon
STAR

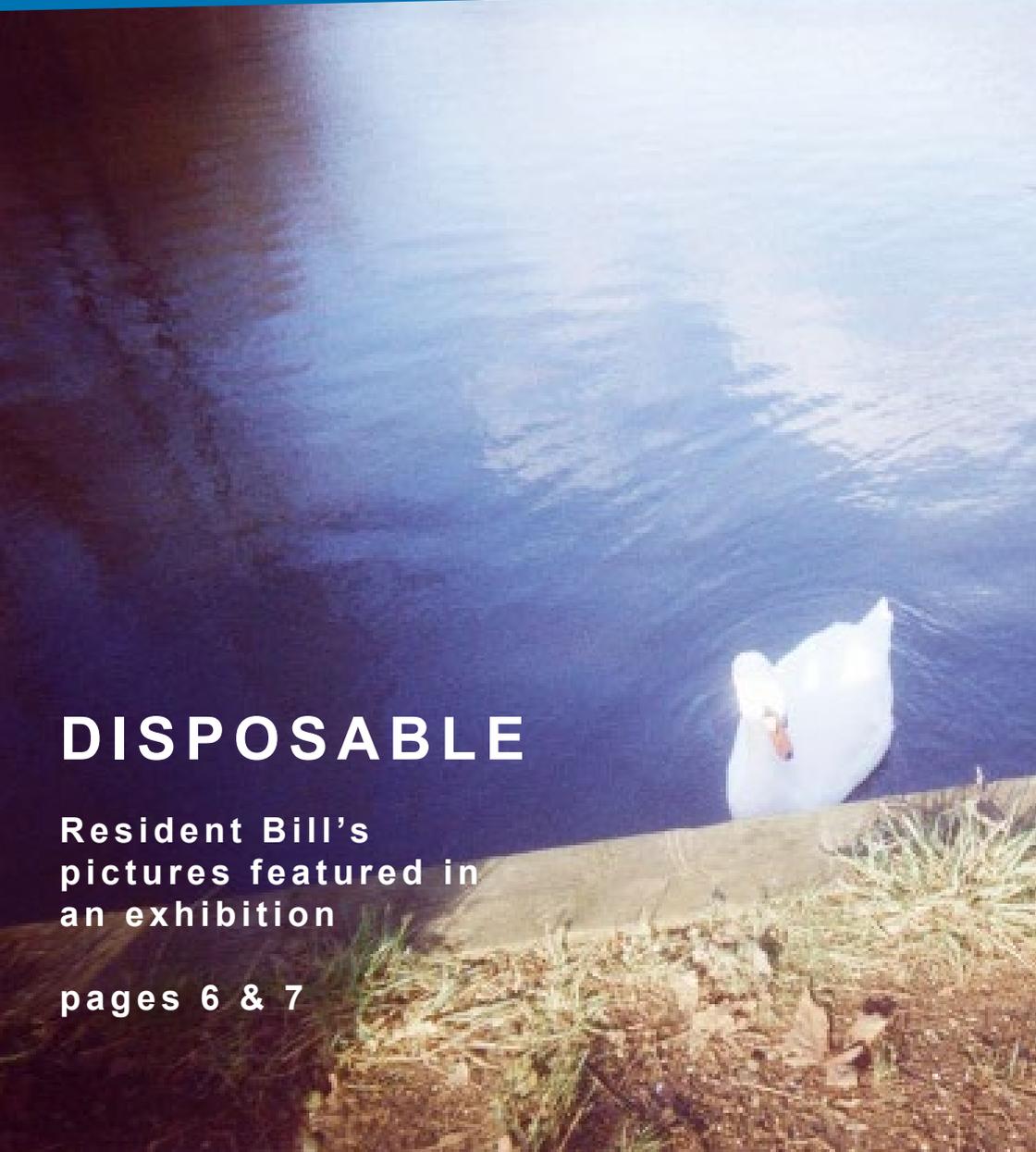


www.simoncommunity.org.uk

DISPOSABLE

Resident Bill's
pictures featured in
an exhibition

pages 6 & 7





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THANK YOU

Tara Craig for the knitted hats
Dawn and Paula for the street collections
St Giles in the Fields
Pret a Manger
Sandra Grud for all the furniture
Jenna Roberts for the bake sale
Everyone who supported Hats Off For The Homeless
Brand House Notting Hill for donation of cereal
Catholic Women's League
Tikun
St Peters, London Docks
Cardboard Citizens for performing at the Day Centre
Mortimer Chadwick Gray for the ready meals
Dave Ahern for the hot food for street cafe
Thank you to our many individual donors

WELCOME

Hello and welcome to my first Simon Star as Chair of Trustees.

Before I say anything else I want to thank MT not only for being a fantastic Chair, but for remaining a trustee and offering her support to me in this role. She has a depth of wisdom and experience that I am very grateful will still be on hand. I will try and get out and about as much as possible, meeting as many guests and volunteers as I can, and look forward to reporting back on what I find over the coming months.

Our recent AGM was very well attended, and a big thank you to all who helped organise it, and to Conor for overseeing the voting process. We are fortunate to have a very strong board, with dedicated and enthusiastic trustees committed to the ethos of the Community.

Looking forwards, our 50th anniversary year starts in September. Plans are already very well developed, but more volunteers are desperately needed to make these real. We want to hold a conference, an exhibition, a celebration for those who have given their time and energy to the Community, fundraising events, parties in the park, and much more.

Any help would be gratefully received - please contact me directly if you want to be part of what I think will be a memorable year celebrating our history, and building for a future where we help more people to stop living on the streets.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Mike Coleman

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Simon Community

AGM 2013

Our Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday 13th April 2013.



Trustees, residents, volunteers and staff sharing lunch at the AGM

On Saturday 14th April residents, volunteers, trustees, staff and community members gathered together at the day centre for the Annual General Meeting. During the Chair's report MT commented on the events of the year including the sad passing of long time community member Bill Moore as well as happier news of the achievements of the community. MT stood down as Chair of the Board of Trustees and thanked everyone for all their work.

Director Bob also talked about the successes of the year and the plans for the 50th Anniversary and the year ahead, thanked MT for her commitment to the Community and thanked everyone else for their time and effort.

The Community voted Mike Coleman as the new Chair, Emma Ciecchan as Treasurer and Company Secretary and Alan Cole, Georgia Jones, Marike Van Harskamp, MT Gibson-Watt and Peter Edwards as Trustees.

THE BIG REUNION

50TH Anniversary Party

As Mike mentioned in his welcome message, plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary are well underway and what better way to kick off the anniversary year than a big party!

Alan and Martin are busy tracking down everyone they can think of who has lived and worked in the community to invite them to a reunion party, but the community has seen so many people come and go that it is proving to be an impossible task.

If you have ever been a resident, volunteer or member of the community, or even just a supporter

over the years then we would be very happy to see you there.

The party will be on Saturday the 12th of October 2013 from 11am to 5pm in Toynbee Hall, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS

Please let us know if you can make it. You can RSVP by phone on 02074856639 or email admin@simoncommunity.org.uk We hope that you can make it and look forward to seeing you soon!

SIMONCOMMUNITYHISTORY.ORG.UK

Trustee Marike van Harskamp talks about the Simon History website and how you can share your memories in celebration of the 50th Anniversary year

Isn't it so very often the small things that stay in mind? The quiet of the night at a shelter after the noise and chatter in the evening. The resident Buddha at Anton Street. Anton's many spoons of coffee in his cup. A stolen glass eye. A welcoming word. Or, you know, the day the door fell off the van?

The Simon Community is full of these kinds of memories and stories. Often funny or even almost surreal, frequently touching or moving and always very humane. The Simon Star articles by (former) residents or volunteers usually describe such experiences. Anyone involved in the community will have been hit by that sudden salvo of anecdotes about "the time when....", "the volunteer who..." or "we once had..."

This sharing of memories about Simon people and events doesn't only oil everyday communication; it is also essential to create the sense of belonging at the heart of the Simon Community ethos. In many ways Anton Wallich-Clifford's books, especially No Fixed Abode, form beautiful examples of the importance of remembering the small things and of naming our appreciation of others – as moments in themselves, but also as part of telling a much bigger story about the early years of Simon Community and its accepting approach.



Community Boat Trip!

In this spirit, and as part of our 50th anniversary celebrations, we therefore want to capture such moments and the experiences of anyone who was involved with the community via www.simoncommunityhistory.org.uk.

Thanks to the people who have already contributed, the website has lovely descriptions of the King's Cross shelter, 1960s Simon Light Two in the East End, the first Liverpool project, and the week of the empty larder and dead pheasant at Simonwell Farm. Or, indeed, the day the door fell off the van.

“Sharing memories is essential to create the sense of belonging at the heart of the Simon Community ethos”

Reading those stories, irrespective of what period, feels very similar to real Simon life, and evokes belly laughs, feeling moved, and a sense of recognition. We would love to see the website grow this year by adding your own stories, memories or photos of the community. It's a simple process:

- just email them to history@simoncommunity.org.uk or post them to Simon Community, History Project, 129 Malden Road, London NW5 4HS
- or respond to someone's story on the website in the 'comment box' underneath
- or help gathering the stories of those less comfortable with writing through interviewing
- or check www.simoncommunityhistory.org.uk for more information

Previous contributors have mentioned their pleasure in writing their Simon Community memories, and hopefully you will too. It doesn't have to be long or perfectly written – it is about the value of sharing the small things that stay in mind...

Other anniversary updates:

Recent Simon Star issues mentioned the exciting events in the pipeline to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Things are nicely shaping up, yet we now really need some volunteers to make them



Community Day Anton St 2006

happen. We are specifically looking for people who would like to coordinate, or chip in with, the organisation of:

- the Simon Community reunion
- music events
- the photo exhibition
- our anniversary fundraising campaign focusing on capital for a new Simon house

If not you, then perhaps someone you know might be interested or looking to build up some hands-on experience in these fields?

The Simon Community reunion is booked for Saturday 12th October 2013 at Toynebee Hall (see details on page 3). It will be a great opportunity for former and current volunteers, residents, trustees and Simon people to share their memories in person – and catch up with each other and the Simon Community. We really hope you are planning to join.

Please contact admin@simoncommunity.org, uk or phone 020 7485 6639 if you'd like to attend the reunion or help out with the anniversary organisation.

Marika van Harskamp

A new way to donate

The Simon Community now accepts donations by text message. To donate, write a text message, including our donation code CRRD41 followed by the amount you would like to donate (£1, £2, £3, £4, £5, £10) and send the text to 70070.

A donation text might look like this:

CRRD41 £10.

This is a secure donation through the justtextgiving programme. Your donation will be added to your mobile phone bill. 100% of the donation goes directly to us!

DISPOSABLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Simon Community resident Bill currently has his photography displayed in a Soho exhibition. We spoke to Bill and photographer Adele Watts about the exhibition and how it all started...

Shortly after our resident Bill joined us in December last year we were in a breakfast meeting. At the start of the meeting we go round the room and tell each other what we did yesterday and what we are going to do today, as well as the practical issues of working out who will be doing what chores that day, it is a great way to get to know each other better. When it came to Bill's turn he told us that the night before he had gone to his photography class. The news that someone had a creative hobby was interesting to everyone and we wanted to find out more. When we heard that his work was being exhibited we were keen to meet the woman that started this project.

“Homeless people have hobbies too”

Bill introduced us to photographer and arts facilitator Adele Watts, founder of the Disposable project and exhibition curator. Adele's interest is in using photography to engage with people who have been socially excluded. Adele said “for me building relationships with each photographer has been as important a focus as the photographic process. I started volunteering at GLO (Green Light Outreach), a homelessness outreach project back in 2011 with the express purpose of founding Disposable.”

“Building relationships with the photographers is as important as the pictures”

Disposable began in the summer of 2012 when single use film cameras were first handed out at a central London outreach event. Without any specific brief, participants were invited to take the cameras and return them within a few weeks for the film to be developed. They would then meet

regularly as a group where each photographer would share and talk about their work.

A homeless person having hobbies is not something many of us might have thought about, but really it makes perfect sense. When we think about being homeless we think about the cold, physical hardships or the isolation, we might never consider the boredom. For the people who attend the outreach services of the Simon Community there is a lot of waiting involved in the day to day pattern of their lives. If you are not waiting for something to open, you are waiting for it to close and for you to have to go back out onto the street.

Adele's idea of giving out the cameras provided a great sense of purpose for the photographers and provided something positive and meaningful to think about, a mental reprieve from thinking about the problems of living outside.



©2012Bill Wood/Disposable

Armed with a camera, Bill was no longer just killing time in a park, he was looking for his picture.

There was a group of core members (including Bill) who had the opportunity to develop their skills through workshops and tutorials and who now have their work on show at an exhibition. Bill said “the opening night was fantastic, we never thought so many people would turn up.”

Through listening to Bill and Adele talk about the project and the exhibition it is clear that this is not just about taking photos and creating nice images. The relationships that have formed within the group and the self esteem gained through having their work appreciated.

“Photography has the ability to give voice to your innermost thoughts”

Adele said “although I’m fortunate to have never personally been affected by homelessness, through personal experience I know that photography has a fantastic ability to give voice to your innermost thoughts and to communicate ideas to people from completely different backgrounds. I hope this exhibition provides a new perspective for anyone who comes to take a look, as well as for the photographers.”

Thanks to Bill and Adele for their time and for letting us use the photos. If you are interested in finding out more about this project or seeing the work of the other photographers please go along to the exhibition. You can find details of opening hours and also a blog address below:

Disposable Exhibition 10th April to 21st June. Free entry, donations welcome. The Living Room, 3 Greens Court (off Brewer St) Soho, London W1F 0HD. Open Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat 12pm - 5pm or by appointment.

**Nearest tube Picadilly.
www.isthisdisposable.tumblr.com
info.disposable@gmail.com**



©2012Bill Wood/Disposable

Open Cinema

OPEN CINEMA is a nationwide network of film clubs programmed by and for homeless and socially excluded people. Recently Open Cinema have been making a documentary film about the Simon Community.

Many community members, both old and new, have been interviewed and the documentary looks at the whole history of the community bringing it right up to the present day.

This film will be used in school and church talks and for fundraising and is a great way to celebrate 50 years of Simon.

NIGHT SHELTER

Our winter shelter was extended this year because of the cold weather in March

As you may remember in our Spring edition of the Simon Star, our resident Philip told us about how he came to live in the Community through staying in the winter shelter and coming to the day centre. As Philip said, this year he was helping to run the shelter rather than staying as a guest.



The shelter was due to close on the last day of February, however, as the weather was unseasonably cold it was agreed that we should extend for a few weeks. There was a party on the last night with a meal and a quiz where the volunteers and guests had a really nice evening. One guest at the shelter has since come to live at 129 Malden Rd as a resident and is now working with everyone else to provide outreach services to people who are still homeless.

Thanks to Philip and resident Ian who were the shelter coordinators this year, and to all the other volunteers who cooked and slept at the shelter, a great service was provided to all the guests who stayed at the shelter.

3 MARATHONS FOR 2013

Administrator Rachel completes the first of three marathons this year to raise money for the Simon Community

"My first marathon was in Madrid which was surprisingly cold and hillier than I'd expected. There was plenty to keep me focused though, there are many street homeless people in Madrid and I ran past a lot of cardboard shelters, it's hard to feel sorry for yourself when you know you are going back to a warm, safe hotel room.

Thank you to everyone who has donated so far, we have raised £470 which is the equivalent to 26% of the entire cost of the winter shelter.

My legs haven't quite forgiven me yet, but I am back in training for the hilly Wales marathon in Tenby in July and finishing with a marathon in Eindhoven, Holland in October."

To sponsor Rachel please go to <http://www.justgiving.com/Rachel-Cullen2> or contact the office.





NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINE

Services Coordinator, Philip Hole, updates us on the activities and work of the Community.

As always, things are busy in the Community! We are seeing an increase in guests at all our services. The inductions for part time volunteers are taking place on the first Monday of each month and we are regularly welcoming new volunteers but could still use more help. At a recent community meeting, and at our AGM, we talked about street work and how we would like to do more. Our 'street work' is where we go out in pairs or small groups with flasks and sandwiches and befriend homeless people. Often the volunteer spaces on soup runs fill up, but there are plenty of other opportunities.

The women's group continues to provide a great safe place for homeless and hostel accommodated women to meet and share. However we are currently looking for an alternative venue from October onwards while the building is renovated.

There are plans to start a monthly film night in the day centre, dates have been set for the next 3 months and we are looking forward to being able to provide an enjoyable evening for people to come off the streets and watch a film together.

It is great to see the day centre getting used for new, interesting activities. We were pleased to welcome the Cardboard Citizens back in March when they came to perform their play, Glasshouse, at the day centre one evening, everyone who attended had a great time.

Since the last edition of the Simon Star we have welcomed a new full time volunteer. Seraphim from Northern Ireland has joined us at 129 Malden Rd. There are several more full time volunteers who have been for their 72 hour trial and will be starting with us soon.

Finally the big news is that we have a new house! We haven't had a 'day off flat' for volunteers for some time. This provides a vital space for them to get away and recharge their batteries. So we are delighted that the purchase has gone through, the work has been done and the house is now ready for use. It has a garden too, so we are just in time for the summer!

volunteering with Simon

If you have a few hours to spare and are interested in joining in with any of the work we do then we would be very glad to hear from you!

For an application form, more info or for details of our next induction evening please email admin@simoncommunity.org.uk or ring 0207 485 6639.

We look forward to hearing from you!

A Supporters View of nearly 50 years

Heather Chandler shares her memories of how she became involved with the Simon Community from 1963 - 2013

Many congratulations on your forthcoming 50th anniversary. Somewhere between April 1963 and August 1969 (when I moved away from London), I met two of your male workers who were our speakers during a Mother's Union meeting at All Hallows Church on the Chertsey Road, Twickenham. The meeting must have taken place during the worst of the winter months because I carried away a particularly poignant memory of that occasion which has fuelled my association with Simon ever since.

Names of these two workers have long disappeared from my head, but I do remember one chap was very tall, strong looking but of humble disposition. He told us that he slept under his desk in the office of your headquarters at that time. He also told us that all workers were volunteers and worked without normal pay but were part of a community, so shared whatever was available to eat or keep them warm with just enough pocket money on Fridays for a packet of cigarettes.

We heard tales from two of them about soup runs at night, searching out sleepers in places like the Embankment Gardens or Lincoln's Inn Fields, both well known to me

as my husband proposed to me in the first and, some years later, we played tennis with friends at weekends in Lincoln Inns Fields. We heard how your worker teams gathered up offerings of unused food from the back door of certain hotels or boxes of vegetables left after the early morning markets at Covent Garden. Always enough to make a good soup.

We listened to their stories of men and women rescued from the streets and eventually offered work on your farm in Kent to recover from the trauma of getting over years of self abuse with alcohol or meths. Drugs, as we know them today, did not seem to be part of the big problem then. At the end of their talk we asked questions.

“He wore open sandals on his bare feet ”

Somebody asked your tall fellow why he was wearing open sandals on his bare feet in such cold weather. His reply was simple. His old shoes had worn out. He had no money to buy shoes from a shop and nothing that came in from the donations of second hand clothing was ever large enough for his big feet. We

promised to check out our congregation and I am happy to say that within a week he was provided with shoes and several pairs of suitable socks.

Not long after that I moved to Ashby-de-la-Zouch with my family as my husband's job with the National Coal Board had shifted to the East Midlands. Leaving a large collection of friends in the Twickenham area was hard, but I knew I would have to work at finding new friends and my first coffee morning was organised to raise money for Simon. Later I found myself being recruited as a speaker to various groups across the area to show holiday slides, give talks or demonstrate flower arranging. Any income from the slide shows was sent by me to Simon every three or four months and it was nice when invited back to be able to show them your letter of thanks. People know then that they were donating their fee to a very good cause.

Having been born in London, I have always felt a responsibility for the homeless in my hometown. During my courting days in late 1940's, my fiancé and I walked miles through central London and I was well aware of the 'dossers' tucked down with or without cardboard shelters around Covent Garden, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly, under railway arches or in the odd doorways at a time when there was little more than a Salvation Army or St Martin's in the Fields by Trafalgar Square, who could offer any help.

In consequence I have been very interested to receive the 'Simon

Community Newsletter', superseded eventually by the Simon Star, to see how much care can now be offered to those in need.

I have read the words of Anton Wallich-Clifford, I have followed your moves from one headquarters to another, opening of new refuge houses and read many stories of the characters you have nurtured over the years. However, I have always remembered and admired those young volunteers, from the early days in particular, who did so much for such little visible reward. I feel sure many of them look back now in later life to realise how much their characters grew during that time of helping those who must have felt they had been abandoned by society.

Thank you to you and your Community for all you give to those who have hit skid row and need help to carry on.

Heather Chandler

your memories...

It was great to receive Heather's letter and hear how her own history is tied in with the Simon Community.

If Heather's letter has inspired you to write down your own memories please do get in touch so that we can put them on our history website (details on page 4 & 5).

We look forward to hearing from you!

