

Lantern Parade 2023 – “Christmas in Storyland”



The lantern-makers turned out in full force on Saturday 02 December to light up Stony Stratford as part of the annual Switch-On Fun Day. The procession is the stunning culmination of the month-long **Stony Stratford Lantern Project** which was another massive success with a sell-out 280 lanterns! Frame-making sessions were held at two local schools plus two full weekends of public workshops at York House Centre and we also gave the option to purchase a make-at-home lantern kit instead this year. The York House sessions brought people of all ages together for this fun, artistic project. Everyone's happy chatter made for a great community atmosphere and Bean in Stony provided a fabulous café to keep us all fed and watered with drinks, snacks and light lunches.

This year's theme was “**Christmas in Storyland**” which inspired local families to create an **AMAZING** array of imaginative and colourful story-related lanterns including The Tiger Who Came to Tea, Snow White, Zog, Stick Man, Supertato (and Evil Pea), Snow White, The Snowman, , Harry Potter, Hedwig and Fawkes the Phoenix, Pooh Bear and Piglet, Where the Wild Things Are, storybooks (including our famous Cock & Bull Story), gingerbread men, a couple of Nutcrackers and a whole host of Mr Men and Little Misses...

The Lantern Volunteers were delighted to finally be able to make one of their 'large lanterns' again this year. Paddington (complete with marmalade sandwich, marmalade pot and portrait of the Queen) wowed the crowds at the back of the procession. Our grateful thanks to Stony Stratford Cricket Club who allowed us to use their pavilion to make the large lantern this year – much appreciated!

The weather was bone-chillingly cold (but mercifully not raining) and the Lanterners were welcomed by live music from The Concrete Calves Woodwind Band who played a selection of tunes for us as we enjoyed hot mulled cider. The procession was led by Terrie Howey, standing in as Stony Stratford's Town Crier for the day, and the Bernese Carting Dogs, and we were delighted to welcome back local community samba band 'Panacea Samba', led by Pete Lockwood, to provide us with fabulous rhythms. The streets were packed with thousands of amazed onlookers as we made our way along the High Street to the Market Square. Everything went to plan, and we arrived in time to enjoy the festivities before the switching-on of the beautiful Christmas lights. A magical event for everyone involved, creating Christmassy memories to treasure!

Many thanks, as always, to the unstoppable team of over **40 Lantern Volunteers** who give hours of their time and a massive amount of energy to make this spectacular community arts project possible, to Bob & Sue Adams and their team of Stewards for keeping us all safe during the procession, to the CLASS Committee and their volunteers for organising the Switch-On Fun Day and, of course, to all the helper elves who maintain and put up our wonderful Christmas lights. A truly community effort!

Grateful thanks to our funders – Stony Stratford Town Council, Stony Stratford Business Association and Milton Keynes Community Foundation - for their financial support, helping us to keep the project as affordable as we can. We would also like to extend our gratitude to all the local people who made a donation to become '**Friends of Stony Lanterns 2023**', the money was used to fund free lantern spaces for families in need and we were also delighted to welcome some Ukrainian refugee families. Excess funds will be put towards future Lantern Projects.

Shall we do it all again in 2024? Of course, we will!!! Lantern sales start from 01/10/24, so put a reminder in your calendar now...

Join our Facebook Group – Stony Stratford Lantern Project

