

# The Friendship Café Ltd

## Trustees Annual Report 1st April 2016 — 31st March 2017

Registered Charity No. 1098562

&

with Companies House No. 4403457



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The Friendship Café aims to provide social, educational and recreational facilities to people in Gloucester in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles of Association, as updated on 16th December 2014 and this report intends to give a glimpse of how these objectives have been achieved.

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# Trustees 2016-17

Reyaz Limalia – **Chairman**

M. Iqbal Patel

Hanif Patel

Mahmoud Patel MBE

Ismail Ginwalla MBE – **Secretary**

Mohammed Junaid Ghanti – **Treasurer**

Mrs Nasim Bhula

This report has been produced as the summary for the financial year 2016—2017.

A bi-monthly e-newsletter is available to anyone who subscribes via  
[editor@thefriendshipcafe.com](mailto:editor@thefriendshipcafe.com)

Approved by the Trustees on 11th December 2017 and signed on their behalf by:



Reyaz Limalia



After decades of volunteering, Farouk Mehta  
and Shuaib Kathrada visit the Queen's  
Garden Party, Buckingham Palace.



# Activities

The Friendship Café main hall gets used for lots of different events by many different communities, including events such as the Tamil family celebrations to Holocaust memorial events.

## Archery

Archery continued throughout the year, thanks to our qualified coaches and parent volunteers. Training took place twice a week, with one session for adults and one evening for children. In addition there were 'taster' sessions at the 'Safer Gloucester' 'Paws in the Park' event and a number of group sessions held for specific groups of young people as part of a bigger programme of activities, arranged by other groups such as Young Gloucestershire, Fair Shares or Gloucester Rugby who were working mainly with young people not in education, training or employment.

This year's plan is to have more qualified coaches to support this extremely popular activity.



Thanks to Marc Griffiths /  
Barnwood Trust for  
providing the picture

# Dads & Lads

The Dads & Lads group continues each Friday evening, used as a general get-together of fathers, uncles, grandfathers with young people, but also as a platform for our other events and opportunities for volunteering, including mosaic workshop and the annual BBQ in Gloucester Park at the City Council and police event 'Paws in the Park'.



## Other events

Aside from our regular activities, we've also used our venue for events such as -

- ♦ a community litter picking day arranged by Councillor Lauren Fearn
- ♦ local young people using the car park for a fundraising outdoor sleep over to raise funds for the Salvation Army's homeless fund
- ♦ storytelling sessions for Syrian refugee children by author Nadine Kadane, arranged by volunteers from Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees.

Meanwhile Reyaz Limalia, our chairman, was invited to Downing Street for a government level meeting regarding the community sector, whilst Farouk Mehta and Shuaib Kathrada went to the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, well deserved for both, for their decades of volunteering. Thank you to Dame Janet Trotter for nominating our volunteers!





# St James City Farm

Another busy year has flown by for City Farm. From orphan lamb bottle feeding sessions to local gardening and work experience students, as well as regular introducing farming and animal care to children, we had visits to 'CountryTastic' at the Three Counties Showground, Gloucester Day parade, countless fetes and public events, involvement with other organisations (e.g. Barton & Tredworth Cultural Fayre, Easter and Christmas events) as well as our own programmes.



We are grateful to numerous supporters, only a few of which can be mentioned here as examples.

- ◆ Nicks Timber donated wood so that our volunteer, Dave Robinson, could make us a 'wooden milking cow'
- ◆ Gloucestershire Young Farmers Association and local retired farmer Eric Freeman sponsored two cows
- ◆ Staff from Lloyds, Mars-Wrigley and Ecclesiastical helped with painting and decorating work
- ◆ The National Farmers Union (NFU), Gloucestershire Farmers' Mutual Trust and the Freemasons sponsored us for some much need hurdles, fencing repairs and animal housing.
- ◆ Hartpury College sponsored animal feed as well as in-kind support such as tree pruning, fencing and transport. We are grateful for the College as our main long term partners and advisers—a fantastic resource to have in the County.
- ◆ Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue helped place the hefty pizza oven at the allotment in place.
- ◆ Whilst all help is appreciated, big and small, the most significant donation came from Emma Willis MBE who donated a brand new 4x4 truck—one of the most important necessities for running a farm!

The volunteers continue to underpin the work, and without them there would be no city farm, but then as they get up-skilled they also move on, with people like Brett who got an apprenticeship and a job with Tumpy Green Equestrian and Ryan who secured a place at Hartpury College. We thank them all for their huge efforts all year round!



**HARTPURY**



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

# Riding School

The riding school sponsored by the numerous benefactors continues to support approximately 35 children each week, and this year we had additional stables completed which will see even more riders in the near future. We have more demand than we can meet with this activity but are still having great success.

As well as a great confidence booster, some young people now have equine-based career aims, parents have told us of the calming effects on the children and for some it is the escape from other family issues. On the competitive side, we had with support from the Pony Racing Authority and Bourton Vale Equestrian Centre for 5 young people who participated in racing at Wincanton, Lingfield, Wolverhampton and Cheltenham racecourses. We also paid a visit to Olympic Rider Emile Faurie's yard in Oxford, helped out at Homme House Horse trials in Ledbury, attended the Olympia Horse show in London and had visits from the mounted unit of Gloucestershire Constabulary.

Many thanks to the dedicated volunteers and staff who support this key aspect of our work, giving children who would never have a chance otherwise to participate and benefit from this activity.

*“Thank you for giving me the chance to race, I don't think that I would be able to race without the people who helped me; I wouldn't be who I am today.”*

Aamilah,  
Aged 11

The riding school is a centre approved by the British Horse Society (BHS) and we remain grateful for their ongoing support and advice.



Approved Riding School

*Emile Faurie Foundation*

*Reaching Children Through Horses*

*Registered Charity Number 1121710*



# Words of Recognition

We get young people from all backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of the area. Although we often have children who are marginalised and in real difficulty, it is nice to sometimes get feedback such as this.



“Working at the City Farm has provided me with the most **valuable experience** I have received anywhere, as I prepare to apply for a Veterinary Medicine degree course this Autumn. Not only have I gained crucial animal husbandry skills and knowledge across a range of species, but have been immensely fortunate to work with people from all walks of life and **feel part of a community**. I love volunteering at the farm as it gives me a chance to meet and learn from a whole host of people, in a friendly and **community-orientated** setting. The farm is a fantastic asset to the community and I feel privileged to support it in a small way.”

George Abrutat

“I was hugely impressed by everything that I saw and the way the **spirit of community** pervades everything that is done there. You have achieved absolute wonders and the fact that many of your users put so much back into the project is wonderful to see. I wish Ryan every success with his agriculture course at Hartpury and hope that he can take it further during his life. It just goes to **show the impact** that working with animals can have on young people. [...]

I am looking forward to getting involved in more of your activities over the next 12 months or so.”



Andrew Tabor,  
High Sheriff of Gloucestershire



“I would like to take this opportunity to say a **big thank you** to you for volunteering to help out on our Syrian safety event[...]. It turned out to be a fabulous day. [...]Watching you interact with the refugees, especially the children, was a joy. They all thanked us as they left and their **smiles** and **laughter** said it all.”



“My daughter Yvonne started secondary school about two years ago, up until then she had been with the same 30 children since playschool. The first three months of secondary school was **really hard for Yvonne to fit in** with different children, to meet different personalities and new teachers.

Yvonne found it hard to build friendships groups with her peers and make bonds with teachers to be able to **talk to about her problems**. After many meetings and discussions it was decided that Yvonne should find something to do outside of her comfort zone to build her confidence.

Yvonne started horse riding lessons at the farm about 18 months ago - she has gone from a **very shy quiet girl** with no eye contact and not a conversation to be had with either Sharon or Mike (instructors), to a girl who **can have a conversation** with the staff and **even a laugh with Mike and his jokes**. Both myself and my husband can see a massive difference with Yvonne - her confidence and attitude to life.

On her last parents evening I was even told she had put a hand up in class to answer questions which she would never have done before. Yvonne is now talking about going to Hartpury College to do a small animal course , which is **fantastic to hear her talk about her future**.

None of this I believe would of happened if she hadn't met the staff and had riding lessons at St James City Farm. To them **we are all very grateful**. ”



A group photo featuring Martin Surl, Police Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire and our main supporters for over 4 years



“When our teenage son started at St. James City Farm as a volunteer he was **severely depressed** and suffered with **social anxiety** to the extent that it was hard to get him out of bed, let alone his bedroom.

After being persuaded by a youth worker to 'have a look around' just over a year ago, the farm has significantly contributed to a complete turn-around in his life and his outlook: the **relaxed hands-on approach** and guidance he has experienced has made him much **more independent**. He loves the animals and caring for them, he interacts with other volunteers and the public and has been to many shows and events with the animals which has **greatly increased his confidence**.

The farm's team of volunteers and staff are full of **enthusiasm** and teaching methods that really work. Our son has now been accepted onto an agricultural course at Hartpury College to start in September, and he is looking forward to his future as a **happy** and **confident** young man - thanks to City Farm!”



“Thank you for your work and that of all those who enable the Friendship Café and St James City Farm to be places which enable the **flourishing of local community**. As you know I am passionate about people of different ages, background and faith creating healthy networks of relationship. The Friendship Café and St James City Farm make a significant contribution to this.

Thank you for the way you bring both **joy** and **support** to people of different faiths and no

Bishop Rachel Treweek,  
Bishop of Gloucester





“Having the City Farm on our doorstep is a **fantastic facility** for our pupils, who would normally never get the chance to come near farm animals, horse riding or agriculture.

We have a great relationship with the farm staff and volunteers.

Our Year 4 children attend regular horse riding sessions; they have participated in caring for the farm animals. For some children who may require additional support, the animal interaction often helps them **focus** and **boosts their confidence**. As they got older, a number of our children have gone on to volunteer at the farm since the connection was established when they were young; this volunteer programme then helps them with college and work applications in adolescence.

These opportunities would normally be out of reach and unheard of for children from the inner city, so as the Head of the school, I can only state how pleased we are to have the City Farm next to us and **working closely** with us.”



Angela Anderton,  
Headteacher at St James' CoE Junior School



# Helping Other Organisations

The Friendship Café also gets involved in supporting other groups working to benefit our area.

Below is a letter received from one such group.

“During the Easter holidays The Friendship Cafe hosted Gloucestershire Young Carers’ ‘YAC Futures’ event, an education and careers event just for local young adult carers. In the morning the young people took part in workshops run by Lloyds Bank, Midcounties Co-operative, University of Gloucestershire and South West Apprenticeship Company.

After a great lunch provided by the Friendship Cafe’s Joanna, the ‘speed networking’ activity began where young adult carers got to chat with over 25 different local professionals to find out about employment opportunities and different career routes.

As well as getting information about different jobs and companies, it gave young adult carers experience in interview and networking situations, increased confidence and self-esteem. One young person has even been invited to an interview for an apprenticeship following the event!”





*“Being a young carer, supporting someone in your family who is ill, disabled or experiencing mental ill health can have a **huge impact** on a young person’s education and later on their employment prospects. Our charity supports young carers to pursue their aspirations and linking them up with employers is part of that. Young carers, with support, can go **far**.”*

*Huge thank you to the **Friendship Cafe** team for all your help to make our careers event a success!”*

Jess Price,  
Young Adult Carer Worker

To find out more about Gloucestershire Young Carers head to their website:

<http://www.glosyoungcarers.org.uk/>

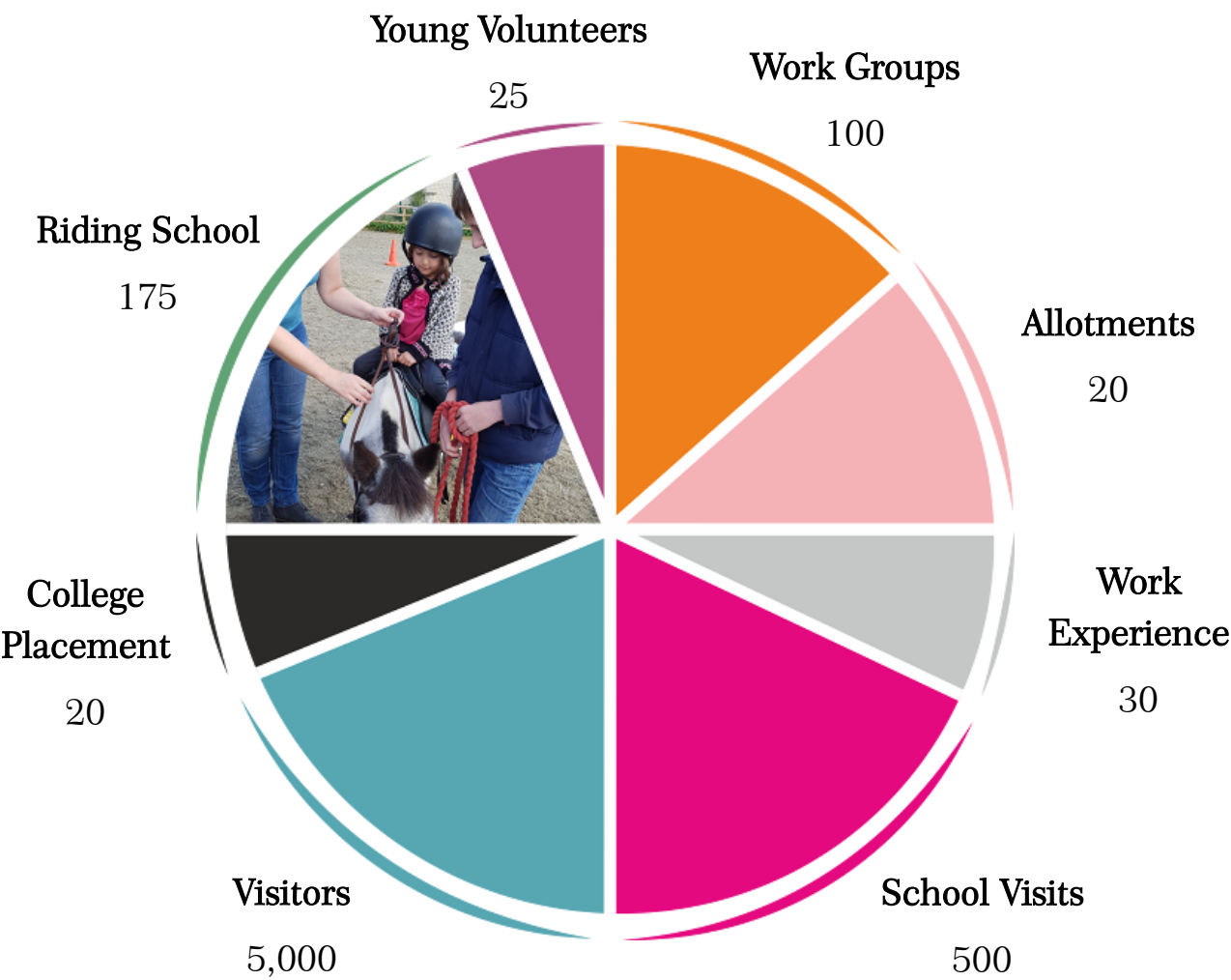


Other groups that we work closely with include Fair Shares (our key partner) with whom we work with together on woodcraft, lunch clubs and art groups, as well as significant mutual support.



Annual Numbers (approx. average) benefitting from  
Friendship Café and St James City Farm activities

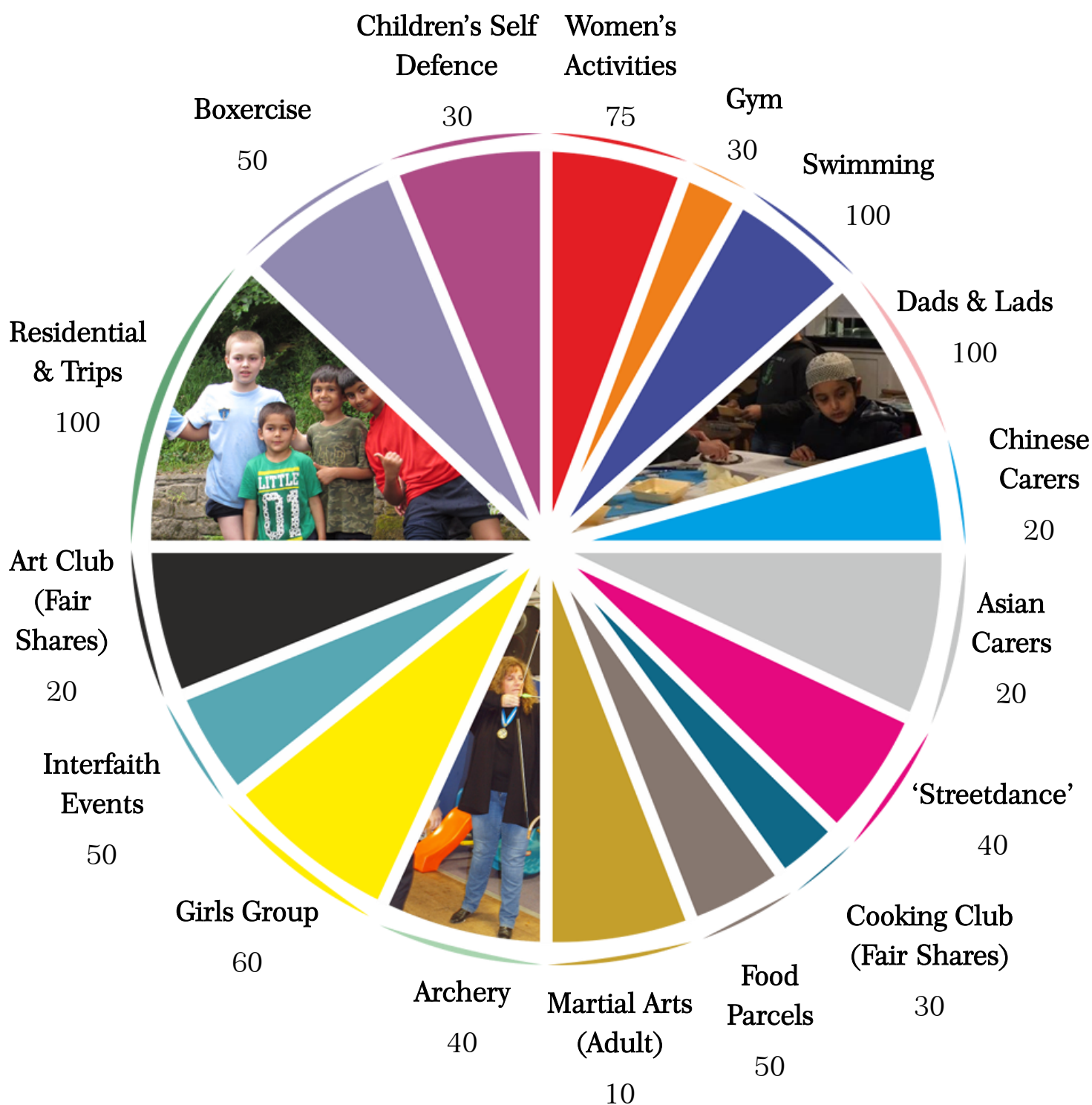
St James City Farm & Riding School





# The Friendship Café

(Chequers Bridge Community Centre)



There are approximately 800 different beneficiaries, not including large community events, on and off-site that we are involved with. These numbers don't include beneficiaries by other numerous groups who hire or rent the centre one-off or long-term. Some groups above are supported directly or are independent.

# 'Gymnation' at 'City Works'

End of an Era

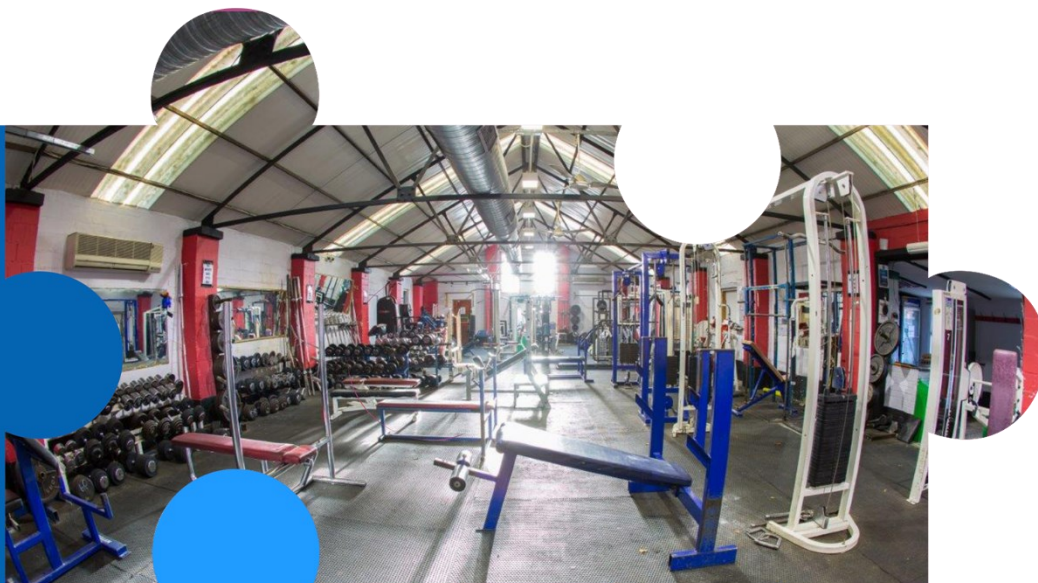
1996—2016

'Gymnation' the cornerstone and foundation upon which we started all our subsequent community work and which started off 20 years ago, was sadly closed down, after much deliberation, due mainly to the changing financial position and the difficult decision had to be made.

As well as a gym, it was a community hub for the people of Barton and Tredworth.

*"Given the multicultural makeup of Barton and Tredworth, it wasn't uncommon to have people of perhaps more than a dozen nationalities **training and laughing** with each other. I don't know of anywhere else where people of all races and religions could congregated with the common goal of **self-improvement**."*

We sold off most of the equipment, which had little second-hand value, but kept aside some for a small area at the Friendship Café which is currently under development as a small scale gym that will be able to cater for a small number of people and potentially specific groups of young people.



“Gymnation was the first gym I ever went to. Having trained there on and off for the last 15 years or so, I'm saddened to see it close.

When people talk of 'spit and sawdust' gyms, they are describing Gymnation well – but it was much more than that. It was a community hub, a place where, in today's world of budget gyms and impersonal experiences, you were sure to be welcomed every time you walked through the door, with a real cast of characters sweating away in the next room. Even when life got in the way and I'd neglect exercise for a few months, or if I trained elsewhere, I could walk back in to see a familiar face at the counter and feel at home.

I was able to learn so much not only about training, but also other cultures, something we could all do better at. People are quick to say people of other nationalities rarely make an attempt to integrate, but at Gymnation this couldn't have been further from the truth. I really do think, with the gym gone, the community's worse off for it in relation to this, and also in the sense that it was a place for young boys to mature, away from the streets.

With a rise in similarly-priced 24 hour gyms and what appeared to be a fairly lax approach to enforcing memberships were paid, I can't say it's a shock to see it go.

Sure, some of the equipment was ramshackle. There were cobwebs that have no doubt been there almost as long as I've been alive and, it's not as if the issues that affect most inner city communities and gyms didn't occasionally surface inside.

But I, and many others, will miss it.

From the sound of Phyllis (77 year old) castigating a room full of chuckling body builders to watching an enormous Russian man casually bicep curl a barbell that an overly optimistic young guy had just dropped on his own neck... I'll miss it.

It's my hope that something could rise out of the ashes. Maybe not right away, but in time, the loss will be felt and who knows what will come of that. For now, I'd like to thank the surprisingly short list of people who've enabled Gymnation to exist for as long as it has.

Thanks to Carol, whose bellowing to put the weights away always echoes in my mind every time I pull a dumbbell off a rack.

To Malcolm, whose stories kept me entertained almost as much as his ability to avoid giving an answer as to how old he really is.

To Rich, a man with the training and dietary habits of an Olympian and a voice so gruff it makes Vin Diesel sound positively falsetto.

And finally, to Imran and Haroon. This unheralded pair give to and selflessly serve the community, and their efforts don't go unappreciated. (Imran never really got into the spirit of training, but Haroon's big enough for the two of them, anyway).

Here's to Gymnation.”

Rich Leigh Smith,  
Former Member





Aamilah getting ready for her debut  
race at Cheltenham Racecourse





## The Friendship Café Ltd

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