

The Chatteris Festival

The Chatteris Carnival was an independent event run by volunteers and had been in existence for a number of years but slowly died a death because of EU legislation, a lack of committee members and the high cost of insurance (each truck driver had to inform their insurance company who would be on the float, this alone was an impossible task). The non availability of trucks and tractors to pull the floats, having to adhere to health and safety guidelines and sleeping policeman/traffic calming measures in the High Street meant it was not possible to continue with the float parade. The Chatteris Carnival finally finished in its original format in 2006 and the parade by then had become a walking parade. For 2 years there was no Carnival or Festival, no big community event in the summer, the only major community event was the Christmas Lights switch on the first weekend in December.

In 2008 Fenland District Council formed a partnership with Chatteris Town Council and placed an advert in the local papers to advertise for people to come along and join the newly formed Chatteris Festival under the umbrella of the Four Seasons Events. Funds were given by FDC and the 4 local town councils (this included Whittlesey, Wisbech, March and Chatteris). The Chatteris Festival in this format has been in existence now for 10 years. The Festival is now held at Furrowfields Recreation Ground instead of Wenny Recreation Ground, as it is a larger site, more accessible and can become a closed site which helps with security. The parade is a walking parade as we are FDC and CTC funded and floats **will not** be a part of our parade.

2008 – Chatteris Medieval Festival the theme was Medieval

2009 – Chatteris Medieval Festival the theme was Medieval

2010 – Chatteris Historic Festival the theme was Historic

2011 – Chatteris Historic Festival the theme was Historic

2012 – Chatteris Historic Jubilee Festival the theme was Jubilee & the Olympics

2013 - to date - Chatteris Midsummer Festival

Our themes have been varied from celebrating the Armed Forces Day to marking the start of the 1st World War and the 70th anniversary of D Day, Songs of the 60's or over the Rainbow, Diamond Jubilee & Olympics, Rio Olympics, Mardi Gras, Animals on Parade, and this year - Musicals.

In 2012 we introduced Party in the Park and **WOW** do we have some brilliant singers/bands and performers in Chatteris and the surrounding area.

Some people question our policy to not allow alcohol to be brought on to the site. This is for licencing and safety reasons. The bar holds the licence for the site and does not allow underage drinking. It is difficult to enforce underage drinking rules if alcohol is brought on; in addition all alcohol from the bar is served in plastic cups which prevents broken glass and cans littering the field.

We have volunteers who help put up the bunting and ladies from the WI who make the bunting. (Previously we have had brownies and guides making the bunting.) We have volunteers who put up the signage in and around the town, volunteers who litter pick during the festival, volunteers who steward to list just a few of the things the volunteers do. There are too many tasks to list.

Our volunteers, CTC and FDC work throughout the year attending monthly meetings to ensure that everything runs smoothly and all the time trying to bring a different theme and attractions to the festival. In summer 2017 for the first time, we used a Facebook poll to choose the theme for this year. This proved popular and we will use this media again. Watch out and cast your vote for the 2019 theme.

Our local businesses and shops support us by buying adverts in the programme, decorating their windows and joining in with the Rotary Club window competitions. They also donate money to pay for entertainers and attractions over the weekend or goods which are used for raffles. We hold evening events during the year to raise funds for the festival, check out our Facebook page, the Chatteris discussion page and Chatteris Town Council website.

Local schools, nurseries, clubs and individuals dress up and parade through the town in costumes within the theme chosen. They are joined by the Town Crier, the Mayor and local celebrities and various musical bands (last year we had camels and horses in the parade too).

We try and have other events in the lead up to the weekend; Thursday evening this year there was a Pamper evening. On Friday there was a Cabaret evening using the theme of Musicals. We have a dog show on Sunday mornings and this year for the first time we had a Horse show (non riding), we have it's a knock out and tug of war contests, fairground rides and attractions, a beer tent and food stalls. Last year we introduced in the marquee unmanned community stalls for local clubs to advertise themselves.

As you can see from the above we the Chatteris Festival Committee's ideas are evolving all the time and it would be great if you could come and join us bring some different ideas to the table for us to explore.

Our first open meeting (AGM) for the 2019 Festival will be 5th September. Or follow us via Centrepoint, our Facebook page, the Festival website, the Chatteris discussion page and Chatteris Town Council website.

Also look out for us at the Christmas light switch on, we are the stand selling mulled wine.

Thank you for supporting us, and we hope you have enjoyed the last 10 years.

Next years festival will be held over the weekend of 29th and 30th June 2019.

Sharon Selman

Festival Chair