



THE GASTONS FUND NEWS

In January we decided to make a bid to buy the Gastons from the Governors of Tewkesbury School. This was following the agreement to do so at a packed meeting at the Hop Pole.

Since then, a great deal has been going on, and it's now time to report on progress.

Unbelievably, from a standing start, in two months we are in a position to be able to make a sensible bid for the field. We've had an amazing response to the appeal, with donations large and small arriving from Tewkesbury, all over Britain, Europe, North America and as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

We have now informed John Richards, the Governors' agent, that we are in a position to bid and await a response from the Governors. We have asked to be treated as preferred bidders. Our position is that the objectives of the School Trust and our objectives overlap in the area of education so there is a case for special treatment. We are not asking for a discount on the guide price, but we are offering added value in the future use of the land.

This is an almost unbelievable position to be in after so short a time, raising over £100,000, which shows the public regard for the fields and our heritage.

We are now only approaching the end of the beginning. Ownership is just the first phase, and will mark the start of the real work, to transform the fields into a community, tourist and heritage asset. We will need even more funds to achieve this, so the fundraising efforts will continue. We are, though, not going to be under such time pressures, and will be able to make grant applications to bodies like the Heritage Lottery Fund for many elements of the work and are hoping for volunteer help for others.

We have a lot of talking to do, particularly with the people who live around the fields, a lot of planning and thinking and some permissions to obtain. We'll be giving details of what we propose soon. Our first act will be to apply to have the site registered as a village green and to get as much protection against future development as we possibly can. Though the Battlefield Society are leading this project, we're receiving a great deal of help from many other bodies. We hope that this will continue into the next phase and that they will use the area for their own activities.

In the meantime, we have some quirky fund raising events arranged. These all arise from offers of free performances, some from friends we didn't know we had!

On 29 March, there's a barn dance in M&Co's shop in the High Street. Venue donated by M&Co. The band is Green Man Rising, who are donating their services. Tickets from M&Co.

On 19 April, there's a sixties disco in the Watson Hall, following the vintage theme running through the day's events there. More details to follow.

On 25 October, the Heart and Soul Community Choir are performing in the Watson Hall, with proceeds split between the Gastons Fund and the Foodbank

We also have offers from a Swindon-based theatre group and a Cotswolds story teller which we're trying to find dates and venues for.

All we need now is for the Governors to accept our offer.

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