



Simon Star

Living and working with London's street homeless

Community Report



Simon's recent AGM got me thinking about how far the Community has come over the last year. Thanks to the efforts of many, we are now in a much stronger state. We have a full-time Community Manager, six full-time volunteers - who have enabled us to expand and improve our work - and a budget that adds up. Over the last year we have taken a good, long look at our work to ensure that we remain relevant and effective. During this process of retrenchment the one constant has been our outreach work. In theory the work is repetitious. We make some food, we load it into the van and then, laden with drinks, newspapers and tobacco we hit the streets - to meet with the wider homeless community; our friends - to share food, conversation and roll-ups. I say "in theory" because, despite the unchanging nature of our timetable, no two days in the Community are ever the same. What makes each day special are the homeless people themselves. Those we meet have often had difficult lives or experienced personal tragedy, but this mutual act of support and companionship not only provides them with some support in troubled times, but enriches the Community and all those involved.

It has become apparent that we can no longer continue all of our work in only one building. St. Joseph's provides space for our office, accommodation for our residents and volunteers, and is the hub of our outreach work. With this in mind we have started to make plans for the purchase of a new building, and we have begun to consider exactly how we would use the new space.

In order to sustain our work, we need more money. We have been holding regular fundraising

meetings. From this we have formulated the "Quids-in!" appeal - see page 6. If we are serious about buying, setting-up and running a new hospitality project, this is the sort of money that we will have to raise.

We had our (un)usual street-café Christmas meal on the Strand, attended by over 120 people. On Christmas Day we had a party for 40 people in "The Honor Oak" pub in Forest Hill. We owe thanks to the generosity of the kind landlord, Rupert Braun, who let us use his pub free of charge and was extremely charitable in providing both food and drink! A week before Christmas we had a party for over 100 people at the Holy Cross Church in Cromer Street. Thanks to everyone who helped us make this year's Christmas extra-special.

The winter is over. The fresh, green roots of spring have started to show. We look forward to warmer days. And we remain grateful for your continued support!

Steve Barnes is a co-worker and a trustee.

Our spring headcount will take place in early April

We desperately need people to help. Please call **Bill Moore** on **07532 451 693** if you can spare us a few hours, overnight. Family and friends welcome.

From the chair



I am pleased to report that for the first time in many years we have broken even financially; we even have a small surplus. With the continuing improvement in the quality and scope of our work with the street homeless and the ongoing reappraisal of our philosophy—we are now considering 'What is Simon?'—the Community is gradually getting back onto an even keel.

One of the hardest things to do after such a radical retrenchment is to find a sustainable pace. This no more in evidence than in our search for a new property. That we need one is not in doubt. What is in doubt is the nature of property and if it is affordable in both capital and revenue terms.

In November last year the issue came to a head when a property just up the road was put on the market. It is a church hall with ancillary accommodation that had been used for work similar to ours. On consideration it became clear that we could not afford to purchase it. In addition, the changes required to make the building fit for our purpose had planning implications. It was agreed that we would not make an offer.

The Community is far from a consensus on the sort of work we would do in a new property. The

priority is to come to agreement. To this end a sub-group has been set up to develop a brief for a new property. An outline business plan has been written, and will be refined when the brief is complete. We will then have the criteria on which to judge properties that we might find.

The Annual General Meeting was held on St Valentine's Day, for convenience rather than for any romantic reasons. I'm not sure if it was the occasion or not, but the meeting did have a particularly friendly feel. We sat round in a circle, an appropriate arrangement for a community. There was a strong feeling of togetherness. From a personal point of view it was great to meet people I had not seen for a time.

The Community report was encouraging. The quality and scope of our work, both on the streets and in the house has greatly improved since Jo Nurse joined us as Community Manager. Bill Moore presented the statistics for the year, visual confirmation of the increase in numbers of people with whom we have been in contact and who use our services.

Three new trustees were voted onto the trustee board: Cynthia Jameson, Dave Clarke and Justin Cooper. All three are co-workers. The officers and most of the trustees were standing again. They were voted back onto the board. While the votes were being counted an excellent lunch was served.

We welcomed the new trustees, reappointed the auditors and solicitors, thanked everyone who we could think to thank and went home.

John Yeudall *is chair of the trustees.*

THE
Simon
COMMUNITY

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The power of Community



This January it will be 10 years since I joined the Simon Community. While I only lived in Simon as a full-time worker for just over a year, I kept in regular contact for a few years with the Community, with various residents and ex-residents, as a co-worker and as a friend. Even now, having had little or no involvement with the Community for some years, I find that what it represents – in terms of abstract ideas and ideals, as well as memories from a very formative period of my life – still exerts a powerful pull over me.

A decade on, the Simon Community has left its mark on me in many ways. For a start, I still work in the voluntary sector with disadvantaged and marginalised people. My partner and a considerable number of my close friends are people who I met through Simons. When we get together nowadays we seldom talk about 'Community', but the experience of living together in a community and all the ups and downs that this brings with it has endowed those early friendships with a very special importance and resilience. Two years ago my partner and I got married and there were several 'Simon' babies there; we now have two beautiful children of our own.

For the last four or five years we have been attempting in our own small way to build our own community in East London. We have had a limited amount of success in opening up our home, offering hospitality and friendship in the guise of an arts and environmental project. While our first child Laurie was young we continued to run the project, and he grew up surrounded by an unusual assortment of folk. I believe that this was vastly beneficial to his understanding of human relationships. Having him around also proved to be popular, and in some cases quite therapeutic, with our visitors!

Now that we have two children, we have had to shelve our project indefinitely due to the constraints of time, money and space. But it was our belief in the transformative power of community living which led us to want to recreate this in a different social environment, to share the joys and challenges of living intensely alongside one's fellow men and women.

I have been very saddened recently to learn of the deaths of Percy Hudson, Dave Nicholls, and Billy Campbell – all people whom I have counted as good friends. Although I have not seen them for three or four years, I was still shocked and upset to hear the news, and this set me to thinking about the lasting impact Simon has had on my emotional landscape. How many other homelessness professionals can honestly say they would feel this about a 'client' they had worked with several years ago? Therein lies the power of community, and of our Community; if anything makes it different and important and still relevant in 2009, it is this.

By a former worker.

To Make A Donation

**See the form
on the back cover**



The Trustees

Steve Barnes



Steve lived in the Community as a worker (a full-time volunteer) between 2000 and 2002, for a year in 2005 and then, again, for three months in 2008. He currently volunteers part-time with the Community, and also works professionally in social care.

Dave Clark



Dave joined the Community in 2005 as a co-worker. Outside of the Simon Community he works in the international division of Help the Aged as a project manager, working with older people's organizations in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans.

Ruth Cram



Ruth was a Simon Community worker in 1969-70, and one of the original Centrepont volunteers. Since then she has been politically active and has worked as a teacher, and as a priest in the Anglican Church. Fifteen years ago, as part of an MA, Ruth researched Simon's early history. She resumed this research in 2007. Ruth is keen to see the best of Simon's original ethos lived out in the Community today.

Justin Cooper



Justin joined the Community in 2008 as a co-worker. He has worked in the City for the last 15 years in most of aspects of travel, mainly corporate. Justin is currently the lead on multi-million pound travel budgets and drives the soup van.

Alan Cole



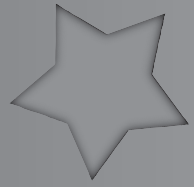
Alan joined the Community as a co-worker in 2000, and was elected as a trustee in 2004. He was formerly a worker within the Community and joined the management committee to repay the Community for the opportunities it gave to him. He is also an active co-worker, regularly helping out with the early morning tea runs and organising social events for the Community.

Adrian Evans



Adrian joined the Community, as treasurer, in 2007. Adrian qualified as a chartered management accountant in 2004. He currently works for an online retailer as a financial planning manager.

E-mail us if you have any questions or concerns:
trustees@simoncommunity.org.uk



M.T. Gibson-Watt



MT joined the Community in 1967 as a volunteer worker, meeting and marrying Anton Wallich-Clifford. She continued to live and work in the Community with Anton until his death in 1978 and remained working in Simon until 1980. She has been a trustee at various times since then and was acting director in 2002. MT has also been a trustee of other organisations concerned with social justice, the environment and the arts.

Cynthia Jameson



Cynthia joined the Community as a co-worker at the beginning of 2008. Initially from an engineering background, she has had a varied career and was at one time a social worker, working with the mentally ill. Cynthia has served on many charity committees over the years. She is still an active co-worker.

Ian Lock



Ian became a trustee in 2006, having been the Community's interim director for 12 months from April 2005. His background is in general management and HR, including four years as business services director for Ordnance Survey and eight years as HR director for St Mungo's.

Alastair Murray



Alastair has been involved in the field of homelessness since 1991. In 2003 he became development worker with UNLEASH, Church Action on Homelessness in London, which merged in 2006 with the national Christian campaigning organisation Housing Justice. He has been a supporter of the Simon Community for many years and became a trustee in February 2008. He lives in Islington and is married to Françoise. They have three children: Claire, Cameron and Theo.

John Yeudall

Chair of the trustees



John joined the Community as a volunteer in 1972 and worked in the Community for 1½ years. He was a member of the Simon Community management committee from 1974 to 1989, during which time he served as chairman and treasurer. John rejoined the management committee in 2006 to be part of the process of renewal in the Community and to use his experience to help reintroduce some of the Simon philosophy and basic principles into the charity's work. John is an architect in private practice.

We are still looking for trustees with any of the following skills and experience:
Fundraising; PR; IT and Communications.
Please e-mail us if you have some free time and would like to help.



Invitation to our Céilidh*

(* - a traditional Gaelic social dance, pronounced "kaylee")

We are pleased to invite you to our first Céilidh evening.
The music will be provided by the band "Jacket Potatoes", and
a Caller will call the dance figures the dancers need to make.

DATE: 17 of April
VENUE: The MacNamara Room at the Irish Centre, Camden
TIME: Starts at 8 p.m. until Midnight
TICKET PRICE: £10 per person (available at our office and at the door on the night)
(ask for Jo Nurse, our Community Manager, or another member of the Fundraising Committee)

A delicious Irish Meal will be served (prepared by the Simon Community Chef).

We will also be launching our



"Quids In" fundraising appeal.

We don't know one person who will donate 1 million pounds.

We are therefore asking 1 million people to donate £1 each.

The future of voluntary action

It's time to get political



Big changes are happening to the voluntary sector and this is bad news for the many small, locally-based groups working hard to meet user and community needs. For the government has discovered the apparent virtues of the sector, 'rebranded' it (as the 'Third Sector'), and is now busy dismantling the very things they say they value about it. At the same time, private sector companies are realising that there is money to be made out of poverty, unemployment, and urban decay.

The wholesale adoption of 'commissioning' approaches by public bodies has transformed the relationship between funder and funded. Whereas, in the past voluntary and community sector (VCS) agencies approached statutory agencies for funding to support their own plans and intentions, commissioning now places the initiative with the funder. The whole process forces VCS agencies to abandon their own priorities to match the specifications, and to work in ways consistent with their new 'contractor' status.

Meanwhile the historic mainstay of the UK voluntary sector – locally-based, service providing, agencies – is suffering. They are too small to achieve 'economies of scale', too numerous for the commissioners to deal with and do not operate in the required 'new managerial' mode. Some are desperately forming consortia, booking onto endless courses on how to win tenders, and adopting business models that stress hierarchical managerial objectives. Others are losing money, closing projects, or closing down altogether.

And the third arm of the VCS – small, poorly funded community groups – remains marginalised.


Why does this matter? The answer lies in the importance of this thing called 'voluntary action'. For whether it's stamp collecting or sedition, the VCS represents one part of the 'ungoverned

space' in which we can freely associate, an important part of our civil society. The liberty we have to join with others to pursue shared interests, even when these bring us into conflict with others, has been fought for and won. They are precious rights. Traditionally, the VCS has been a haven and testbed for new thinking, for community action, a way to provide services and support to people, and a platform for dissent, campaigning and social action. The VCS is much, much more than a delivery van for the state and its agents.

The Coalition for Independent Action has been set up in response to this crisis, with the aim of mobilising to counter these threats. We believe that action is needed now to defend ourselves against these changes, or the value of what we do, and a lot more besides, will be destroyed. We also need to rediscover our own perspectives and agendas – and the confidence and knowledge to pursue these assertively. Without knowing what we want for ourselves, it will be difficult to resist the plans that others have for us.

The Coalition is there to support and work with those who share these concerns. Find out more at www.independentaction.net or e-mail us at indyaction@yahoo.co.uk.

Andy Benson is the founder of the *National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA)*



"Somewhere to call home is a basic human right and without it, so many other rights fall down."

Anton Wallich-Clifford
Caring on Skid Row

Please complete this form and return it with your donation to:
The Simon Community
P.O. Box 1187
London
NW5 4HW

*Alternatively you can make a secure donation online via our website,
why not visit us at: www.simoncommunity.org.uk*

giftaid it Using Gift Aid means that for every pound you give we get an extra
28 pence from the Inland Revenue, helping your donation to go further.

Title: _____ **Full Name:** _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Please treat this and all donations I've made since
April 2000 and all donations I make in the future as
Gift Aid donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

*In order for us to be able to reclaim the tax you have paid on your dona-
tions, you must have paid income or capital gains tax in the UK, equal to
the tax that will be reclaimed (currently 28p for each £1 you give)

Please notify us if you change your name or address,
or if your circumstances change and you no longer pay
sufficient income tax and/or capital gains tax.

You may cancel this arrangement at any time simply by
notifying the Simon Community.

I wish to make a donation to The Simon Community of £ _____

I enclose a cheque/ postal order made payable to The Simon Community

I would like more information on:

- Making regular donations through standing order
- Making regular donations through direct debit
- Including Simon in my will

Please tick if **no** acknowledgement is required

I would prefer to receive Simon Star by email

My email address is _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

THE SIMON COMMUNITY IS A REGISTERED CHARITY, NUMBER 283938

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