

## **Rest, Refreshment & Reflection – plus really cute pigs to cuddle!**

These three words probably sum up what the Churches Stand try and offer visitors to the three-day county show. Through free hospitality in the form of free drinks and a chance to sit down and rest from the hustle and bustle of the show, Devon Churches reach out to a wide section of visitors to the show each year.

Setting up for the show starts on the Saturday prior to the show, when a volunteer working party sets aside a day to clean the barn and prepare the marquees ready for the guest organisations to arrive and set up on the Tuesday. The Monday is spent finding tuning areas of the site and putting up colourful banners, kindly loaned by Belmont Chapel, to brighten up the inside areas. This is alongside sorting the necessary logistical matters like making sure the dishwasher is working, to wash the many hundreds of cups need for the show days. The Tuesday is spent helping guest organisations set up and settle in, the Wednesday any last minute arrangements are finished off and then we start the show off in style with the Preshow Service in the YFC marquee followed by a reception afterwards. This is a great time where a whole selection of people from various areas of show life comes together for an hour prior to the show starting. Radio Devon always use this service for their Sunday morning service on the following Sunday. Devon Church Leaders take an active part in this service alongside a wide section of Devon communities and representatives from various areas of life in Devon.

Each morning a short act of worship, open to the whole site takes place on the Churches Stand at 9am and we are privileged and honoured to welcome both the president and president elect of the Devon County Show to these services.

On Thursday many United Reformed Churches from Devon, under the capable leadership of Tony Langmead, one of the Churches Stand committee members, served the free refreshments as people sat and listened to a Salvation Army Band made up from Salvation Army Members from across Devon under the leadership of Captain Ian Urmston from Devonport Morice Town, also one of the Devon Churches Committee.

On Friday Pinhoe Road Baptist's, headed up by Val Wetherell, provided the tea team. The entertainment was provided by the very talented and skilled Graham Parkinson, a very gifted local musician who played a very wide spectrum of music for all tastes. Graham's performances are always extremely popular and he is a welcome addition to the entertainment programme.

Saturday saw a variety of Methodist Ladies, led by Margaret Simmons, manning the tea bar and the site was awash with children who came to watch the very popular and fast moving No Strings Puppet Theatre Puppet Show, which included a life sized gorilla! People also enjoyed listening to Exwick Community Church Youth Band, whose members enthusiasm and love for what they do, could be felt by the audience.

On all three days Katherine Lyddon, the Exeter Diocese Children's Work Advisor and her superb team were kept very busy in the dedicated children area making badges, masks, whizzers, streamers, cards and loads of other bright and colourful things. This bright and colourful marquee provided a real haven for worn out parents to sit and rest

while their children took part in the many free activities, including a free bouncy castle, in a safe and restful area. Katherine made up some homemade bunting on which she asked the children what they knew about Jesus and as well as being an attractive addition to the roof of the marquee made very interesting reading.

As always the huge the telegraph pole cross, such a prominent part of the site, was well used with people nailing things they wanted prayer for onto it. These prayers were then removed and prayed for in the 4pm prayer time in the Barn Chapel in the corner of the barn. Again another area of calm and serenity in the frantic pace of the show.

If this was not enough in the main exhibition marquee there were loads of cute and cuddly animals from Pennywell farm to cuddle, free Bibles to be had from the Gideon's Stand, information on Cyprus & the Gulf from their stand. A chance to find out what the Salvation Army is up to locally, nationally and internationally from their stand. There was a huge colourful and very informative display from Devon Christian Youth Camps to look at, which included the line 'wear the same boxers for a week!' Everyone wanted a chance to try their hand at bell ringing with the Devon Guild of Bellringers and this added a lovely background sound to the stand. If you needed to talk then the Farm Crisis Network had a quiet corner where you could share your concerns. If you wanted a tasty something to eat with your free coffee or tea, or needed an energy boost, you could buy a host of delicious goodies for the Traidcraft Stand, headed up the wonderful Helen Barratt from South Devon, and you could even find something to read whilst you drank your drink from the Choice Words Stand. This Christian Bookshop, with branches in Newton Abbot & Paignton, run by the awesome and fantastic couple Pam & Roy Brittle marked their fifteenth year of joining with the Churches Stand this year.

We are very grateful to Milk Link of Crediton who very kindly and very generously donated all the milk to go in the free teas and coffees given out on the stand.

All in all we hope that in 2010 the Devon Churches Stand provided something for everyone visiting the Devon County Show.