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COVERING BEESTON, CHILWELL,
ATTENBOROUGH, TON and BRAMCOTE

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Fortnightly - Free

Express Survey feedback

WE asked you, our readers, what you thought of *The Beeston Express* as it approaches its fifth birthday – and you've told us.

We've had a fantastic response, so first we would like to say a big "Thank You" to everyone who took the time to complete one of the *Express Survey* forms published in the issue of February 15. Thank you, too, to those who made the additional effort to download and print the form from the website.

Our objective was to find out exactly what readers think of *The Beeston Express* as we think about the way forward.

Starting as we did from a position of complete ignorance in May 2003, it could be said that our naiveté has played a critical part in the paper's development in many ways. With no preconceptions to cow-tow to and no bosses to high-handedly call the shots, all that has guided the paper's course so far has been a feel for what local people want to read about, and how they want to read it. This is by no means to say that we know what we're doing yet – the number of mistakes in the issue of February 14 proves that beyond all doubt – but one thing we do know is that people living in and around Beeston like having their own local newspaper, one that covers local issues. You've told us so.

Respondents have taken time to complete many of the 'open' questions of the survey in detail. We've been given some clear guidelines as to how we should develop the paper's content, with some good ideas for features being put forward. There are definite opinions about what is and isn't liked. The 'Beekeeper' cartoon attracted polarized opinions and a few people take exception to the anonymity of *The Free Ranger*. One thing that did surprise us is how few of you were aware of the

existence of the website, let alone be interested in looking at it.

Fifty five percent of you have a copy of *The Express* delivered to your home, a further 26 per cent collect a copy from a newsagent. The thing most liked about *The Beeston Express* is its informative content (96 percent) and community-based coverage (93 percent). The Letters page is popular, as is the Wildlife column and Leisure Page – although there are those amongst you who can't see the point of the Recipe.

We were delighted to learn that a whopping 99 percent of readers think that our reporting in a fair and balanced manner is either 'excellent' (45 percent) or 'accurate enough' (54 percent). Just one reader thought we were 'well short of the mark' – but went on to say that he did read other free papers and that we were better in comparison.

Learning

As the years spent creeping off the bottom of the learning curve have passed, we've already taken some fundamental decisions to make the paper better – moving to a regular 12-page issue and the shift to full colour. The print run has increased from 6000 to around 8600, and continues to rise.

The extra work and cost generated by both the increase in pages and number of copies has been absorbed, as it would in any new business settling down to make a name for itself. The problem is, of course, that as resources become stretched, things take longer to deal with and it becomes more difficult to keep abreast of basic tasks. Extra pairs of hands are needed.

Now we believe that we have the go-ahead from our readers to take *The Beeston Express* to the next stage, but no decision has been taken

on whether the route chosen should be to make the paper a 'paid for' yet. Sixty seven percent of respondents would be willing to pay for their *Beeston Express*, but there are those who think such a change would affect the very nature of the beast adversely, others who think there needs to be more in it to justify charging for it – perhaps this is a case of chicken and egg? Without an increase in resources we are going to struggle to find the extra content. More research has to be done in this area – one suggestion is for a subscription scheme.

Advertising

Advertisers might find interest in the fact that 96 percent of our readers read the adverts, with 64 percent using advertisers when appropriate. The "I know a man who can" column is enjoyed by 88 percent of readers. We would like to include this on a regular basis, but it needs you, our readers, to write in.

To keep you informed as we move through the planning process, our current thinking is that the paper needs to be in a position to pay for good quality, reliable resources that will enable us to be more professional. Perception of *The Beeston Express* is very, very positive and most people feel that it has influence within the community, generally by keeping people informed of what's happening.

There is a massive amount of change looming on Beeston's horizon – whether or not the tram arrives. As change happens, *The Beeston Express* wants to be the local paper that people instinctively reach for – a well-informed and trustworthy missive.

We'll bring you more feedback from the Survey in the next issue, but promise to ease off on the percentages! Look for more reader comments, and the result of our prize draw.

The Miracle of the Easter story

CHURCHES in Beeston and Chilwell united to perform Miracle Plays on Good Friday as a way of bringing the Easter story alive.

Directed by Father Kevin Clark of the Church of the Assumption, players from the churches started the story on a bitterly cold morning at Broadgate Park with the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, scenes of the denial and trial of

Jesus before Caiaphas and the trials before Pilate and Herod. A busy Friday High Road then became the Way of the Cross. Police stopped the traffic heading to and from the car parks and shoppers paused to watch or to follow the procession. The portrayal of the Crucifixion took place in Beeston Square before the body of Jesus was moved to a 'tomb' at the Church of the Assumption

on Foster Avenue.

Miracle Plays were first performed in medieval times as a way of bringing Biblical history alive and the 'Easter Cycle' is just one set among many that are still performed all around the world.

Military Cross for Craig Brelsford

THE Chilwell soldier killed in Afghanistan in September 2007 has been awarded a posthumous Military Cross, one of 28 awarded by the Ministry of Defence and the most handed out at any time since World War II.

Sergeant Craig Brelsford, serving with the Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters) was shot and killed

as he attempted to rescue a comrade during heavy fighting against the Taliban in Helmand Province. He was just a few days short of his 26th birthday at the time and his mother, Susan, had sent him a parcel of 'treats' for his birthday – but she doesn't think he would have received them.

She said: "I have been invited to Buckingham Palace to accept this medal on behalf of my son, who died when he went back into the fighting for the third time to rescue his comrade. I will be very proud to do so."

The Military Cross is one of the highest awards for gallantry.