**Stratford sub Castle Christmas Café 2019 -**  review by Clare Ereira

Our now annual Christmas Café took place in the Reading Room on 7th December. It seems a long while ago now, with all the seasonal festivities behind us all, but it was nonetheless a memorable occasion.

The room was buzzing from the start, with many familiar faces but also some newcomers to the village in attendance. We were also pleased to be able to welcome a number of staff, students and parents from Stratford sub Castle Primary School, who came to support our café and boost the proceeds, which were earmarked for a project at the school.

As in previous years there was a good variety of delicious soups on offer for lunch alongside bread and cheese and, of course, mulled wine and festive baked goods to get everyone in the mood for Christmas!

There was also a well-stocked produce and crafts table filled with wonderful home-made and nearly-new gifts, and this did an excellent trade with many taking the chance to pick up an early bargain for Christmas, plus a wide range of raffle prizes which meant there were lots of lucky winners on the raffle – including myself, who bagged the star prize of a wonderful hamper.

As always, our café was warm and welcoming and everyone seemed to be enjoying the chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones, as well as the delicious food. It’s a great tradition which, alongside our summer cafes through the warmer months, helps to keep alive the ‘village’ feel of Stratford.

It was, therefore, the icing on the proverbial cake to be able to hand over proceeds of £1160.50 to SSC Primary School for their Outdoor Classroom Project, for which we received a very appreciative thank you letter from the school’s Head, Kay Bridson. The money will go towards finishing off a lovely garden space and ‘outdoor classroom’ which will benefit children in the school for years to come, especially those with additional learning needs.

If anyone would like more information on this project or to see the outdoor classroom for themselves, please contact our Café Co-ordinator Barbara Mayall (Tel. 01722411337) to arrange.

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone who made the cafe such a great event and we all look forward to seeing you at the summer cafés.

All good wishes for 2020.