

The story of Fairy Bricks

By Kev Gascoigne



If you have never heard of Fairy Bricks then quite simply we are a Charity based in the UK that raises money and then use that money to buy and donate new, sealed LEGO® sets to hospitals and hospices around the world to aid children in their recovery from illness and injury.

It has very much been a journey to get to where we are now. It started almost by chance when I stood outside the LEGO Store in Sheffield following their Grand Opening Event. I had collected the 3300003 Brand Store set for free as part of the promotion that day but I already owned the set from an opening in Manchester a few weeks earlier. While chatting to Andy Atkinson, better known as the prolific polybag collector Atkinsar on the Brickset Forum. I suggested that as I owned the set already that maybe it would be a good idea to raffle off the set to other AFOL's to raise some money to buy LEGO for children. Andy was enthusiastic and thought lots of people would enter. So before I arrived home I contacted Huw Millington the owner of Brickset to ask his permission to run it on the forum there and he immediately said yes.

The next day I started a new thread with all the details and hoped for the best. There was a limit of 200 tickets and one per person. They suddenly started selling with several people sending much more than the £1 required but still being happy with the one entry. Eventually £277 was raised with people buying tickets from all over the world. The set was won by a UK AFOL living in Germany Paul Franklin (Legopants). I rounded the total to £300 and spent it using unique AFOL knowledge to buy sets worth £600. It was a special moment when I delivered the sets to my local hospital in Huddersfield. I was able to share this experience online by posting pictures and everyone involved quite rightly felt proud about what had been achieved in a few short weeks.

That was supposed to be it. A one time event. That was until LEGO released the highly desirable and collectable Mr Gold cmf. He was regularly being sold for £500 and it made me think. If I could find one or buy one then it could be raffled. I was convinced that it could raise lots more money than the Mini Brandstore. I'm terrible at feeling packets so I appealed to the members at Brickset to sell me one at a reasonable price. Unfortunately there wasn't one available but people started stepping forward with other highly valuable prizes, again from all over the world. From the USA to Australia messages were posted offering prizes.





Demand was so high to donate things that I had to make the tough decision to not accept more prizes in an attempt to manage the situation. Once ticket sales started it was announced the hope was to support four hospitals around the world.

Sales were strong but then exploded when Mark Richardson (SirRich69) contacted me to say not only did he have a Mr Gold but that he was willing to donate him to the raffle. People started repeat buying tickets. Lucy Boughton (LostInTranslation) built a LEGO® totalizer so sales could be tracked. There was a minifig of myself that affectionately became known as the Hairy Fairy who kept climbing higher as more money was raised. When the sales closed the final amount raised was £4800. The number of hospitals had increased from four to twelve with children in the UK, USA, France, Spain, Germany, Sweden and Australia all receiving LEGO worth over £10,000. The draw was held live on the forum and despite being a very low tech text based event everyone had a fantastic evening. It took so long it had to be suspended for a second evening. It felt special that a group of people with a common love of LEGO from all over the world had pulled together to produce something special.

After a little break I took a major decision. If things were to continue, if more hospitals were to be helped then something more formal was required. The only way to do that would be to create a new Charity. So that was the catalyst to found Fairy Bricks. I talked to lots of friends and family to gauge their opinion. Would it work? What would it be called? What would the logo be? It took a few months but with lots of people helping we made it happen. Drew Maughan (SilentMode) produced the website and Jo Wood (Coyotelily) helped massively in creating the logo. Martyn Jones (Cheshirecat) and Julie Greig were approached to act with me as Trustees to assist the decision making process.

From there things have gone from strength to strength. The AFOL community have continued to support the cause by donating both money and LEGO. We have expanded beyond the AFOL world with the general public becoming more and more aware of who we are every day. By the end of 2014 we hope to have donated LEGO to 30 hospitals. Another big raffle will happen at Brickset but there have also been appearances already at the Yorkshire Brick Show hosted by Brickshire and The Brickish Association event held at the National Space Centre. We will have a presence at Beyond The Brick, Yorbrix hosted by Northern Brickworks, STEAM and Brick 2014 held in London. All events at which we can raise funds and awareness.

Fairy Bricks is something every AFOL can be proud of and be a part of. We are always looking for volunteers to help with donations and fundraising so if you want to be involved don't hesitate to get in touch. It could be anything from buying a raffle ticket to tackling a physical challenge. I mentioned this has been a journey so far. Well it is far from over!

#