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**Strawberry Field unveils commemorative stone in honour of the 40th anniversary of Yoko Ono and Sean Lennon’s visit in 1984**

Marking the 40th anniversary of Yoko Ono Lennon and Sean Ono Lennon’s visit to The Salvation Army’s Strawberry Field in Liverpool in 1984, a commemorative stone in honour of John Lennon’s wife Yoko Ono and their son Sean has been unveiled today by Major Kathleen Versfeld, Mission Director at Strawberry Field at a special ceremony, together with a group of Steps to Work trainees.

The commemorative stone aims to recognise Yoko and Sean’s legacy in a poignant way and will be placed at the start of Strawberry Field’s Path of Peace, which is located within the gardens where John Lennon sought sanctuary as a child. The granite stone includes a message which reads: “Strawberry Field remembers with love and gratitude Yoko and Sean’s visit 40 years ago and their ongoing generosity. Give Peace a Chance.”

John routinely entertained Sean with stories of Strawberry Field which was the inspiration for The Beatles hit, ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’. Four years after his dad’s death in 1980, Yoko brought Sean to visit the site which was so special to his late father, where they were accompanied by Major David Botting who was Officer in Charge at the time. Following their visit, Major David Botting struck up a warm relationship with Yoko Ono, who referred to him as “the Captain”, visiting her in New York and maintaining correspondence for a number of years.

As part of the commemoration of this remarkable moment in Strawberry Field’s history, Major Botting has been sharing his fascinating recollections of the time, and the genuine connection that was built between Yoko and Sean, and Strawberry Field. Following the visit, according to David, Yoko Ono created the now famous Strawberry Fields in Central Park in an effort to recreate the sense of peace and calm she encountered on her visit.

Major David Botting was also a big advocate of providing local young people with vital opportunities to fulfil their full potential, and since his time at Strawberry Field 40 years ago, The Salvation Army continues this legacy through the Steps to Work programme. Running on the site today, the programme supports people with learning difficulties or other barriers to employment to achieve their goals of paid work.

**Major Kathleen Versfeld, mission director at Strawberry Field, said:**

“We are proud to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Yoko and Sean’s visit to Strawberry Field and their generosity with an engraved stone on the Path of Peace in the gardens which meant so much to John Lennon. The success of The Salvation Army’s support for young people at Strawberry Field today is a continuation of Major David Botting’s work here at that time and it is a pleasure to reflect on this legacy.”

**Major David Botting, who is now retired, said:**

“When the children’s home closed, my worry was that the place would be sold. I feared that someone with no links to Strawberry Field would buy it, not honour its special legacy, and make money for themselves. Instead, I’m thrilled that we never lost the spirit of the place, and the wonderful work we had done with youngsters there. It continues now with the programmes for young people at Strawberry Field.”

“I’m also delighted to help mark this moment in Strawberry Field’s history, and to commemorate the legacy of the Ono Lennon family and the Salvation Army at Strawberry Field. Strawberry Field really meant something to Yoko and Sean, just as it did to John, and I have many fond memories of that time 40 years ago that I am looking forward to sharing with the young people at Strawberry Field.”

For more information about Strawberry Field, visit the [**website**](https://www.strawberryfieldliverpool.com), and on social media - [**Twitter**](https://twitter.com/strawberryfield)**,** [**Facebook**](https://www.facebook.com/StrawberryFieldLiverpool/)and [**Instagram**](https://www.instagram.com/strawberryfieldliverpooluk/?hl=en).

[**IMAGE BANK**](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vaBvbveQUy8Xy5s2OPEAasPOgnmCSH7U?usp=sharing)

**Strawberry Field**

Strawberry Field is an award-winning new visitor attraction located in Woolton, south Liverpool, located at the iconic site immortalised by John Lennon in The Beatles' hit, ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’.

Telling the story of John Lennon's childhood and the writing and recording of the iconic song ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, the Strawberry Field attraction is home to an interactive visitor exhibition which includes the actual ‘Imagine’ piano, the original red gates, and the magical gardens where John played, climbed trees and dreamed as a child.

Through archival footage, photographs, timelines and specialist media guides, visitors to Strawberry Field can experience where John Lennon played and what happened behind the famous red gates.

Profits from the visitor experience and commercial operations go towards keeping the gates open for the good of the local community; and to help fund Steps at Strawberry Field, a series of programmes aimed at those with learning difficulties or other barriers to employment.

**The Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is an international Christian church and registered charity which has been transforming lives for more than 150 years. Working in 132 countries worldwide, The Salvation Army offers friendship, practical help and support for people at all levels of need. In the UK and Republic of Ireland this work includes more than 650 community churches and social centres. Registered Charity Nos. 214779, 215174 and in Scotland SC009359, SC037691. For more information visit the website [www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/)

Strawberry Field was purchased by The Salvation Army in 1934. The organisation opened the site as a children’s home in 1936 and for nearly 70 years the site supported some of Liverpool’s most vulnerable children until it closed in 2005.

A young John Lennon lived nearby and played in the grounds, eventually inspiring him to write the song Strawberry Fields Forever.

