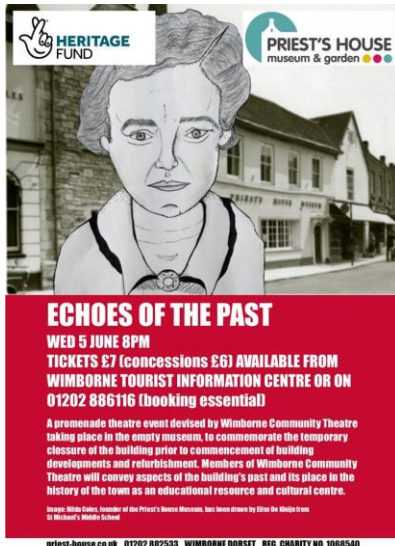


**WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE
CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Review of WCT Activities for the Year 2018 – 2019



This report covers activities between October 2018 and September 2019.

During this time WCT received an invitation from the Priest's House Museum to stage two performances as part of the Revival project to mark the closing of the museum for refurbishment in 2019 and its reopening in 2020. The main focus of the year was therefore on this project with the staging of *Echoes of the Past* in June 2019. Through this we continued to develop our skills in several areas, as well as setting up partnerships with artists, schools and organisations.

We also held several successful fundraising events to help finance the running of the group and support this and future projects.

Preparatory Workshops, Research and Development – Autumn 2018

Two workshops were held to explore ideas and themes for the Priest's House Museum project followed by individual research from members of the group and the development of the project with partners.

- On 10th October 2018 we launched the project with a workshop led by Tony on Instant Theatre based on our responses to the Priest's House Museum. We are grateful to Nashir Karmali for offering the use of a room at Alchemy for this.
- On 15th November Emma Ayling, curator of the museum, led us on a tour where we gathered very useful information on the Revival project and the history of the building.
- The group then started work on researching the occupants of the building through history as possible characters in the production. We also looked at the architectural features and changes made to the building since the sixteenth century.
- A collaboration was formed with Alastair Nisbet from ScreenPlay to deliver an animation project at a local school.
- The Millstream Theatre group based at the museum were approached to develop a scene to be included in the production.
- A Creative Group within WCT was formed to develop the creative aspects of the production.

***Echoes of the Past* Process**

- The Creative Group met on 8th and 29th January 2019 to develop ideas and

characters from research, draft an outline and plan the route for the production.

- The audience was divided into groups for the performance which added logistical challenges of timing scenes to avoid groups overlapping.
- The rehearsal schedule started in January 2019 on-site although restrictions of space in the museum sometimes meant the rehearsals had to be held in the Hilda Coles Education Room. We were also at times held back by limited communications with the Priest's House Museum.
- Sound artist, Adrian Newton, worked with WCT recording banging doors, squeaking floorboards, pacing footsteps and generally improvising sounds and voices around the Priest's House Museum. This would become the soundscape for the production, particularly the introductions to each room.
- In May Clare and Hannah Small hosted a series of three craft workshops to make Valentine cards, cloth rolls etc. to provide props and dress the scenes. The group were able to learn and develop valuable skills in this way.
- Several back-stage volunteers were recruited who proved to be a real asset working on setting up the rooms, sound and stewarding for the production in the Museum.
- Alistair Nisbet from ScreenPlay worked with students from St Michael's Middle School, Colehill, to make screen-based and Victorian zoetrope animations to tell the story of the museum. These were installed in the museum to provide part of the theatrical experience.
- Tam Gilbert worked with Millstream members to create the Kitchen Scene for the production. They also joined WCT in some sessions, particularly when recording sounds.

Echoes of the Past Production

The play was performed on Wednesday 5th, Thursday 6th and Friday 7th June 2019. It proved to be a successful venture as reflected in the audience feedback although we have not yet received the formal evaluation from the Priest's House Museum. It was also challenging as the audience was on some nights larger than expected which resulted in hasty rescheduling and restrictions of space. However, the cast and crew rose to the occasion and provided a memorable event to close the museum.

Further Activities

• New Year Social Evening

An enjoyable party for members and supporters was held at Tony and Gil's house on 12th January 2019 which also raised funds through a raffle run by Clare.

• Website

Throughout the year there was ongoing work on the website, in particular posting archive material related to *BytheWay: Sounds in a Common Wood* and *Echoes of the Past*. Gill and Barbara met several times in the year to review and update the content and continue to post news of our activities regularly on the website. Several meetings were held with Harry Andrews from Wimborne Business Systems Ltd. to help us with improvements and developments to the website. Harry has continued to provide an invaluable source of help and advice both in person and through email contact.

We have also identified some paper materials which are on the website and can now be given to the Dorset History centre for storing. Some members met on September 18th to sort and catalogue these. This work is ongoing.

• Fundraising

This year was again a successful one for fundraising.

- We held a Quiz Evening on 7th November 2018 at the Colehill Sports and Social Club which, although less well attended than in previous years, raised £295. We are grateful to John Billington for hosting this event and to Clare Small for organising the buffet and raffle.

- A Skittles Evening at the Coach and Horses pub was planned for March 1st 2019. However, due to the pub now charging a substantial deposit and not being able to provide meals, it was decided to cancel this event and find another venue for the following year.

- On 12th July we held our annual Treasure Trail around the streets of Wimborne. Thanks are due to Sue and Stewart Bullen for compiling an intriguing trail and Clare Small for providing a hamper for the raffle. Over £140 was raised for WCT funds from ticket sales and the raffle.

• Steering Group

The Steering Group continued to meet monthly to plan events and development, particularly the production of *Echoes of the Past*, as well as to ensure that the group's administrative affairs were in order, dealing with matters such as finance, insurance and Safeguarding.

• AGM

Last year's AGM was held on 3rd April 2019 at the Priest's House Museum to review the year October 2017 – September 2018 and elect officers for the following year.

The Steering Group remained unchanged, with additional support from Stewart Bullen on membership and subscriptions.

• Communication

The website remains the main means of keeping members and followers informed of our activities.

Regular Mailchimp newsletters are also sent out and members are emailed with relevant news and dates of specific events.

We have worked on developing our social media presence through Facebook and can now link posts from the website direct to Facebook. Posts are also shared with *Wimborne Minster Views and News* which vastly increases our reach to the local community.

Future Plans

Since the production of *Echoes of the Past* the group has been working on plans for the second phase of the Revival project to re-open the Museum in 2020. On September 18th we met to review the 2019 production and begin to reflect on Part 2 in 2020.

We have also been looking into the possibilities of funding for a larger scale production in 2021 about the rivers of Wimborne. Workshops on this project and

work on the bidding process for funding have already taken place in the period following the scope of this report.

However, all activities are currently suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic and we will need to review our plans when we can finally resume our more normal lives.

Thus 2018 – 19 was a successful year with our staging of *Echoes of the Past* and we also managed to extend our creative skills, particularly in sound and craft. We would, however, welcome new members as the core group is still relatively small.

We raised close to £450 through two events to help finance the group and we are grateful to supporters who come along to events and fundraising activities. However, we need to increase our efforts and look for new fundraising opportunities as support has declined this year.

Our thanks are due to several key people who continue to promote and develop the group's work, in particular Tony and Gill Horitz. Also, Tuppy Hill, our secretary, and Adrian Williams, our Treasurer, who manage the affairs of the group extremely well and also thanks to Ian Metcalfe for reviewing our accounts.

Jeff and Barbara Hart
Chair and Vice Chair of WCT
26.03.2020