



WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE AGM

WEDNESDAY 3rd MAY 2017 AT 5 MIDDLEHILL ROAD, COLEHILL, WIMBORNE

CHAIR'S REPORT

Review of WCT activities in 2016

This report covers activities between October 2015 and September 2016.

The main activity this year was the mounting of *What They Left Behind*, an ambitious production set in Wimborne in the First World War.

We also built on our successful fundraising efforts to continue to raise funds for this and future projects.



The Year's Activities:

- **Research**

Ongoing research revealed two important stories which became key to the production. We met with Chris Brown on October 19th who told us the story of the Angell family featured in *What They Left Behind* and the discovery of Olive Harcourt's diary provided Karen Wimbhurst with excellent material for the musical scene in Church House. Members of the group also attended a Memorabilia Day at the Priest's House Museum on 20th February 2016.

- **Rehearsals and Staging of *What They Left Behind***

Following extensive research and preparatory workshops with professional artists over the year, two all-day planning meetings were held at Church House on 23rd October and 11th November 2015. Karen Wimbhurst (Music), Roz Conlon (Dance), Tony Horitz (Director) and Adrian Newton (Sound) met with the WCT Creative Group and students from the Arts University Bournemouth to map out a framework incorporating creative ideas for the production.

We then moved into a busy rehearsal schedule while Tony and Gill continued to work on the script. The WCT group was augmented by the Wimborne Ukulele Band, Wimborne Orchestra, Palida and Steam Heat choirs. We also auditioned and recruited some talented young people from local schools, including Allenbourn Middle School and QE School.

Rehearsals were held weekly on Thursdays with weekend rehearsals nearer the production dates. Additional rehearsals were also held with the children from Allenbourn School and Tony and Karen worked separately with the choir and orchestra on the Church House scene. The professional artists participated in several WCT rehearsals, particularly in developing the movement pieces, and Tony also provided very useful one:one sessions with individual actors.

The production was carefully planned and executed through a project plan implemented chiefly by Gill Horitz with the assistance of Tuppy Hill and Barbara Hart who met regularly to ensure progress. Part of this involved marketing the production through teasers, walkabouts and press releases and for the first time WCT displayed promotional banners around the town.

The production was staged for six performances on 19th, 20th, 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th May and was extremely well-received both in the audience evaluations and some very positive reviews.

We were extremely ambitious in dividing the audience into groups who were led by stewards to various key locations in Wimborne town centre.

The complexity of having several groups of performers who came together at a relatively late stage worked very well and although challenging proved to be a rewarding experience for the cast as well as for the audience.

The audience were engaged and visibly moved at times:

The whole performance was exceptionally powerful and very moving. It had huge atmosphere and was incredibly poignant. (audience member)

• **Costumes**

Considerable activity took place over the year related to costumes. Existing costumes were sorted by the group on November 5th to identify suitable items for the production. A valuable partnership was developed with the AUB Costume and Performance Design BA course and a group of students took up a third year placement to design, source and make the costumes and props. On April 29th a sewing group met to make skirts and we were very grateful for the expertise of Clare and Hannah Small in this. Following the production a further sorting day took place on September 14th and identified that WCT now has a more extensive wardrobe and is better organised in terms of storage and labelling of costumes.

• **Additional Events**

- The AUB students also undertook to mount a number of artworks as “teasers” around the town to publicise the production. Sites included the Priest’s House Museum window, Paul Keating Butcher, Spill the Beans, Black Pug Bookshop and John “the fish” Bell. Adrian Newton also provided a sound installation, *Anthem for Old Road*, in Old Road and the Wimborne art group, Minna’s Artists, mounted a small exhibition of First World War art, *The Death Penny and other Memories of the Great War*, at Allendale House.
- Adrian also staged *The Dada Garden* in conjunction with the production, a highly successful and popular day of sound and art at the Priest’s House Museum on 24th April 2016.
- On 24th April and 6th and 14th May members of the group promoted the production on a “walkabout” in the centre of Wimborne in full costume.

Aftermath of *What They Left Behind*

Following the production a number of events took place.

- Tony Horitz was a speaker at the *Interpretation, Commemoration and Memory of the First World War by the Community* Conference organised by the Priest's House Museum on August 16th 2016. Gill and Clare also attended the conference.
- A reunion of the cast and participants was well attended on 29th September 2016 at the Priest's House Museum. The DVD of the production by Rob Hart was screened and future plans for WCT were discussed.
- A DVD of the production has been produced and marketed with around 70 copies sold. The DVD includes the full-length production and a short documentary film on the making of *What They Left Behind*. Thanks to Rob Hart for his work in filming and directing the DVD and also to Damien Stone who voluntarily filmed another version which is included on the DVD.
- State of Play has since produced a short film *Tommy's Sisters* for the Priest's House Museum which explores the wartime lives of some of the characters.

• Website Archive Project

Throughout the year there was ongoing work in populating the website, including updates and publicity about *What They Left Behind*, ensuring that it was kept up to date with news and information for members and supporters. We also changed our managing agents of the website to Wimborne Business Systems Ltd. and are now receiving valuable support from Harry Andrews at a much cheaper rate.

• Fundraising

This year was again a successful one for fundraising.

- We held a Skittles evening at the Coach and Horses pub on February 26th 2016 and raised £262.60.
- We also held a Quiz Evening on 18th November 2015 at the Colehill Sports and Social Club which raised £360. We are grateful to John Billington for hosting both of these events.
- We held a second Treasure Trail around the streets of Wimborne and now plan to make this an annual event. Thanks are due to Clare and Hannah Small for compiling the trail and providing a hamper for the raffle. £192 was raised for WCT funds from ticket sales and the raffle.
- The £15,000.00 grant from the Arts Council of England funded our production as well as funding received from EDDC and the Wimborne BID.

• New Year Social Evening

An enjoyable party for members was held at Jeff and Barbara's house on 15th January 2016 which also raised funds through a raffle run by Clare.

• Steering Group

The Steering Group continued to meet monthly to plan events and development, particularly the production of *What They Left Behind*, as well as 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 15th March 2016 at Jeff and Barbara Hart's house to review the year October 2014 – September 2015 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 are working on developing our social media presence through Facebook and Twitter.

Thus 2015 - 16 was a very successful year for the group, particularly in staging such a memorable production as *What They Left Behind*, working with students and young people from the community, finally realising our ambition to work with audience groups in a promenade production and engaging with various local artistic groups and professional artists, as well as raising funds through three events to help finance the group.

We are grateful to supporters who come along to events and fundraising activities, as well as volunteering to help in various roles backstage, such as acting as stewards or stagehands.

Tony Horitz remains an inspiration to the group and directs us wonderfully well and Gill Horitz continues to do a superb job in promoting and producing the group's work. We continue to be extremely grateful to Tuppy Hill for her excellent work as our Secretary and to Adrian Williams for keeping us financially on track as Treasurer and Ian Metcalfe for reviewing our accounts.

Jeff Hart
Chair WCT
16.04.2017