

WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Review of WCT Activities for the Year 2020 – 2021



Painting by Clare Small

This report covers activities between October 2020 and September 2021.

Wimborne Community Theatre was in lockdown for most of this period. We were unable to run some of our planned activities such as workshops or fundraising events but were later able to rehearse for the production *Timeless Stream* which took place in October 2021. Some activities took place on-line but we were able to mount the Treasure Trail and run rehearsals in September. Throughout this time, we continued to research and develop the Rivers project and meet regularly on Zoom if not in person.

Workshops, Research and Development

Due to Covid restrictions, workshops and meetings to explore ideas and themes for the Rivers project were mostly held on line. We were successful in gathering memories and creative contributions from the community by inviting them to contact us on-line, rather than at the meeting we had originally planned at the Allendale Centre on the banks of the Allen in September 2020.

- On 22nd October 2020, a creative Zoom meeting put together material and ideas.
- On 9th and 10th February 2021, we interviewed on-line four potential directors for the Rivers project and appointed Joe Hancock from Burn the Curtain, who offered stimulating ideas and new directions for outdoor theatre.
- On 26th February 2021, Adrian Newton presented an interesting paper *Pollution in the River Stour* which helped with the development of the project.

- On 6th April 2021 the artists involved took part in a site visit along the River Stour.
- On 27th May 2021, an exploratory meeting was held on Zoom to collect current ideas.
- On 11th June, 2021, an initial meeting of artists involved in the project was held on Zoom to discuss such issues as funding, story structure and the involvement of local groups and partners.
- On 20th June 2021, WCT held a planning day in the garden at Clare Small's home to outline our plans to date for a two-part project (Part 1 on the River Allen; Part 2 on the River Stour). At this stage Part 1 centred on a sound-fishing expedition with an exhibition at Walford Mill. Part 2 introduced a quest related to the environment.
- On 7th July, 2021, a meeting/workshop was held live on the Stour starting at the gravel area near Canford Bridge.
- On 29th July 2021 the Creative Group met on-line to discuss which ideas from the Facebook WCT Creative Thinking page could be developed further.

Rehearsals for the production *Timeless Stream*

Timeless Stream formed Part 1 of the Rivers project based on the River Allen and centred round Walford Mill.

We were delighted to welcome several new (some returning) members who brought with them enthusiasm and creative talent. They continue to be a huge asset to the group.

- On 21st July 2021, an introductory session at the Mill was held, exploring the potential of the site and likely scenes for *Timeless Stream*.
- Rehearsals continued to be held through July and September.
- The final production and exhibition were successfully mounted in October 2021.

Further Activities

• Christmas Social Evening

We were unable to hold a Christmas party this year but on December 18th we spent an enjoyable evening together on Zoom, with games and activities provided by John and Tracie Billington-Beardsley.

• Website

Throughout the year there was ongoing work on the website, particularly to record our activities during periods of lockdown.

The need to update the website became increasingly apparent during this year and we were fortunate to receive a £1000 grant from the Valentines Trust. Our thanks go to Ashley Rowlands for advising on this and also to Wimborne Business Systems Ltd. for undertaking the work at a discount of 50%. Gill and Barbara are currently working with Harry Andrews and Toby Williams from WBS to produce a new look for the website.

• Grants and Fundraising

We are very fortunate in having Gill to advise us on grant applications and have successfully obtained grants from the Dorset Performing Arts Grant including a top-up grant, ACE, and Dorset Council without which we would have been unable to stage the two productions in the Rivers Project. The Valentine's Trust grant has also enabled us to develop the website.

However, this has been an arid period for WCT in terms of fundraising. The Treasure Trail planned for 4th October 2020 and the Quiz planned for 11th November 2020 both had to be cancelled due to Covid.

However, on 25th September 2021 we were finally able to run a successful Treasure Trail along the River Stour which served as a publicity event for the production of *Timeless Stream* and raised £136.

Thanks are due to John and Tracie Billington-Beardsley for compiling the challenging trail and Clare Small for providing the raffle prize of a splendid hamper.

This year we also tried to form a Friends' Group to support WCT but unfortunately received very little response.

Fundraising is now becoming a priority for WCT as Covid has presented new challenges.

- **Steering Group**

The Steering Group continued to meet monthly to plan events and projects, particularly the development of the Rivers Project, as well as to ensure that the group's administrative affairs were in order, dealing with matters such as finance, insurance and Safeguarding. The meetings were mainly held via Zoom but from August we were able to meet in person.

- **AGM**

The AGM to review the year October 2019 - September 2020 and elect officers was held by Zoom on 15th April 2021. The officers remained largely unchanged but Sue Bullen and Tracie Billington-Beardsley were co-opted on to the steering group. Viv Arkell was approved as Safeguarding Officer and Stewart Bullen acts as Membership Secretary.

- **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.

Regular press releases have been picked up by the local media and articles have appeared in the Blackmore Vale magazine, the Stour and Avon magazine and Dorset View.

We continue to develop our social media presence through Facebook and sharing posts with Wimborne Minster Views and News and other local Facebook pages to increase our reach to the local community.

- **Future Plans**

Covid permitting, we are excited by the prospect of developing and performing our next production on the Stour planned for July 2022 and working with Joe Hancock and other artistes.

We have been asked by Wimborne Town Council to contribute to the celebrations of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

We will also be fulfilling our commitment to the Museum of East Dorset to provide a dramatic celebration of the re-opening of the Priest's House Museum in 2023.

We also look forward to restarting our fundraising activities, such as the Quiz, Skittles and Treasure Trail.

Thus 2020 - 21 presented some good opportunities as well as the challenges of coping with the restrictions of the pandemic. A particular success was the recruitment of several new members to the group who are proving to be a great asset.

We were very sad to hear in January 2021 of the loss of one of our WCT family, Marion Leatherdale. Marion was not only a long-term member of WCT but also a member of the Steering Group and our Safeguarding Officer. She was an invaluable part of Wimborne Community Theatre and will be greatly missed by us all.

We raised £136 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 to cover ongoing expenses and make up the shortfall experienced due to Covid.

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. Thanks also to Ian Metcalfe for reviewing our accounts.

Jeff and Barbara Hart
Chair and Vice Chair of WCT
03.04.2022