

## WIMBORNE COMMUNITY THEATRE

### CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

#### Review of WCT Activities for the Year 2024 – 2025



*WCT Performance on the Minster Green  
at the opening of The Green Festival, October 2024*

This report covers activities between October 2024 and September 2025. Activities mainly centred on preparation for the *Home* production with workshops, community events and planning meetings.

We also held various fundraising events and social activities.

Although we did not stage a major production, we continued our work on devising and researching material which could be used in the future *Home* production.

#### **Home Project**

- We held a coffee morning in October to capture the views of the community. This was unfortunately not well attended in spite of members leafleting the new estates and the streets of the town. However, we were able to gather some interesting stories from those who came.
- A programme of workshops was held that explored stories and characters and built a series of potential scenarios.
- The Steering Group continued to look for suitable locations with further visits to the Police Station and Law Court in October. We were unable to find a venue in the town but received a favourable response from Kingston Lacy and decided to consider this option further. We opened communication with the staff there and made a site visit where we identified a potential location.
- The newly created Production and Creative Groups met throughout the year to plan and develop the project.

- In April and May 2025, we held “Auditions” in the form of workshops when we invited potential directors to lead us in activities based on the material we had developed on the theme of *Home*.  
Feedback was gathered from members of the group and following a successful interview in June 2025, Rohan Gotobed was invited to become Director for the production.
- In June, we also made a site visit to Kingston Lacy with Rohan and WCT members to experience the dramatic possibilities of the location.
- In the Autumn, we decided to mount a small scale production to share our progress in an afternoon of theatre, songs and community conversations. We held 4 workshops to rehearse for this in which we explored why certain objects connect us with our memories of *Home*. There was also an opportunity for local people to contribute to the final production by sharing their own stories of *Home* focusing on their own lives, homes and the town. Entitled *Home, Sweet Home?*, it was performed three times on October 18<sup>th</sup> 2025 on the Minster Green.

### **Funding for the *Home* Project**

It has proved difficult to secure the funding needed and this has had an impact on planning both the scale of the project and the dates of the production. We are extremely grateful to Gill Horitz for giving much of her time working on funding bids.

- An initial bid submitted for funding to the Arts Council was rejected. We took advice and resubmitted it but once more were unsuccessful. Apparently, it is now much more difficult to secure funding from the Arts Council.
- We did, however, secure a £5000 grant from the Talbot Village Trust and also funding from Dorset Council Community Fund which has enabled us to continue to work on the *Home* project.
- In September, we were invited to become part of the Wimborne Town of Culture initiative, in which we would be one of four Landmark projects. This meant that funding our *Home* project is now dependent on an overall Town of Culture bid to the Arts Council which would provide WCT with approximately £10,000 to £12,000 of funding. The outcome of this will be known in April 2026 and the production will now most likely take place in September 2026.

### **Further Activities**

#### ➤ **Planet Wimborne**

As an associated community group, we enjoy very good relationships with Planet Wimborne who achieve a lot for our town. Jackie, Dave and Barbara have attended meetings and contributed to their Vision for Wimborne.

We were pleased to accept an invitation to perform a short piece to open the Green Festival on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2024. We dug into our archives to select readings written by local people on the theme of Rivers and ran several workshops to rehearse for the event.

Planet Wimborne supported this with a grant of £100.

#### ➤ **Save the Children Parade**

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2024 we again took part in the Save the Children Parade with a float as part of the procession through the town. To highlight the theme of *Home*, our float depicted a homeless person in their tent contrasted with a more conventional Merry Christmas scene.

#### ➤ **River Allen Landscape Recovery**

We were invited to join this 20-year project with substantial funding and, following a meeting of the Steering Group, submitted a synopsis of ideas on the theme of Rivers to be included in their proposal.

➤ **Visit to St Giles House**

In July, a small group of us visited St Giles' House, the home of the Earl of Shaftesbury, to discuss with him the possibility of using the house and grounds as a location for a future WCT production. He was very open to the idea and we plan to consider it again in 2027.

➤ **Archiving**

In January 2024, some members spent a morning going through the physical materials we have collected with a view to cataloguing them for deposit at the Dorset History Centre. While some progress was made, further work is still needed to complete this task.

➤ **Christmas Social Evening**

Jeff and Barbara hosted a very enjoyable Christmas social evening on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 with lots of fun and games.

➤ **Website**

Work has continued to keep the website updated with posts about recent activities. Gill Horitz and Barbara Hart, with the occasional help of Harry Andrews from Wimborne Business Systems Lt d., met regularly to make revisions and additions to the contents.

➤ **Fundraising**

It was a successful year for fundraising. £1874 was raised to help finance the group's projects and ongoing expenses, such as room hire and insurance.

**The Barn Dance** held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at Holt Village Hall raised £847. This was a new event for WCT and our thanks are due to Tracie Billington-Beardsley for her organisational and marketing skills which helped make it such a success.

**The Skittles Evening** was held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at Colehill Sports and Social Club and raised £146.80. Another Skittles event was held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at The Coach and Horses Skittles Alley and raised £215. Thanks to Tony and Jeff for running the evening.

**The Quiz** held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 raised £537.20 and was very well attended. Thanks especially to John Billington for acting as an excellent Quizmaster and also to Clare Small for organising the raffle and a delicious ploughman's supper which was enjoyed by all.

**The Musical Evening and Picnic** on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July, held at Tony and Gill's house in Colehill, raised £128. It proved to be a pleasant social event for our members and their friends to get together to share food and enjoy some musical entertainment, provided by a live recital of popular songs from Local Vocals' Community Choir and local baritone performer, Ian Metcalfe. Thanks are due to Tony and Gill for their hospitality.

➤ **Steering Group**

The Steering Group continued to meet monthly to plan events and projects, as well as to ensure that the group's administrative affairs were in order, dealing with matters such as finance, insurance, risk assessments and Safeguarding. Further work was done by Sue Bullen, our Safeguarding Officer, to ensure the policy was up-to-date. Many thanks to Sue for all her work in this area.

The Steering Group increasingly calls on Tuppy Hill, as secretary, who keeps us well-informed and we are very grateful for this.

➤ **AGM**

The AGM to review the year October 2023 - September 2024 and to elect officers was held at Tony and Gill Horitz's on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025. Tracie Billington-Beardsley stepped down from the Steering Group but otherwise the officers remained unchanged. We thank Tracie for her work for WCT. Jane Skellett and Hannah Small were co-opted on to the Steering Group. Sue Bullen continued to act as Safeguarding Officer and Stewart Bullen continued to act as Membership Secretary.

➤ **Communication**

The website remains the main means of keeping members and followers informed of our activities and is updated regularly. Regular *Mailchimp* newsletters are also sent out and members are emailed with relevant news and dates of specific events. Hannah Small has continued to develop our social media presence through Facebook to increase our reach to the local community.

➤ **Our Future Plans**

Our main focus will be on the production of *Home*, once funding has been secured for this.

We also hope to increase our membership, particularly with a wider age range of members.

We will continue to organise fundraising activities, such as the Quiz, Skittles and Barn Dance, and to look into other possible activities, such as another Musical Picnic or Games Evening.

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Thus 2024 – 25 was a year of preparation as we continued to develop our ideas for the major production of *Home*.

We raised nearly £2,000 to help finance the group and we are grateful to supporters who come along to events and fundraising activities. However, we will continue to look for new fundraising opportunities to cover ongoing expenses.

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*

*21.03.2026*