



2021 AGM – Chairman's Annual Report

Long ago, in a land free from Lockdowns and social distancing, when I was much, much younger, I was chosen as Chairman, (that's how long ago it was) of our busy and happy band of Thespians...

I was elected, I think, because no-one else seemed to want the job, which was reputed to reduce strong men (and women) to mere cyphers – whose principal job was to keep the peace and smooth any waters that might become troubled.

But... even with the limitations of the past year, it's been much more enjoyable than that, thanks to the pleasure of working with talented and enthusiastic members to create our own little bit of theatre for the community.

It hasn't been straightforward – but many people have continued to work behind the scenes to improve our facilities and resources so that we can hit the ground running as our new season starts.

In particular, thanks to Diane Fuell, Lyn Fryer, Hazel Cawte and volunteers who have sorted, consolidated and moved our entire wardrobe to a new, warmer, dryer and civilised home. (It even has a loo!) Don't miss the opportunity to pick up a bargain at the Grand Costume Sale on September 18 when we will be selling off surplus stock.

Also to Peter Sheppard and his team of volunteers who have now completed the major refurbishment of the main Henfield Hall, which will no doubt make 'going to the Theatre' in Henfield even more enjoyable.

Thanks to Rosemary Nice's determination and the hard work of her cast, we did manage one experimental production last year – a sound only version of The Stepmother. Originally programmed for March 2020 it stayed 'topped up' in rehearsal on Zoom in preparation for October 2021, but sadly after so many months the new date became impossible due to personal commitments of the cast. And so, undeterred, Rosemary adapted the play and we recorded a final set of Zoom rehearsals which were edited into the sound only performance. If you haven't yet heard it, you can find a copy in the 'Video' section of the Members Only area of the website.

Despite the lack of action on stage, your Executive and working committees have remained busy throughout the past year with regular Zoom meetings to keep abreast of Lockdown rules and ensure that licenses were transferred to new dates (several times!), and our publicity kept HTC in the public eye. Particular thanks to Ian Henham for taking over management of our website which is now fully functional. Thanks too, to everyone involved in the various events that were organised via Zoom to keep us all in touch

Our new programme is now established starting with The Government Inspector in October. This is our entry for the 2021 Brighton and Hove Drama Awards, so book your tickets early, as our success in previous years means that seats will be at a premium with other groups who will want to check out the competition!

Our Youth Group, started by Karen Blunden in 2019 will get off the ground again this year with a number of workshops culminating in a 'Members Only' presentation of Blood Brothers in November – watch out for details.

Treasure Island – the Panto follows in January 2022. We are breaking tradition by performing this on two consecutive Friday and Saturdays – with a matinee performance on both Saturdays. This new arrangement means that we can have a Christmas break from rehearsals, and a total of 6 performances. We hope members and audience will like the change.

In March we have Bedroom Farce directed by Anne Stern, in July an outdoor production of The Mysteries directed by Jane Haines, and in October, Angela Reid directs Pressure.

Our next major musical production Hans Christian Andersen directed by Susanna Seaford is now scheduled for the Festive season slot in January 2023.

So... having survived the plague, now let's concentrate on growing and improving on the splendid legacy that we have inherited from past Henfield thespians..

And now finally, to a few 'housekeeping' topics which require your attention

Membership Fees

You will recall that at our last AGM in 2019 we discussed revising our membership fees. This was understandably interrupted by Mr Covid, and the ticket vouchers issued earlier this year were a token to compensate for a year of inactivity. However, now that we are looking forward again, we believe that our current fees are relatively low compared with other, similar groups; we wish to encourage young people to join us; and to recognise that they are now in full-time education and/or training until at least 18 years of age.

So, we're now looking forward again and recommend that our Membership fees are revised as follows :-

With effect from 1st July 2022:

- Single adult membership – increase from £15 to £20;
- Joint adult membership – increase from £27 to £30;
- Junior membership – reduce from £7.50 to £5 for those in full-time education and/or training (including those in FE/HE); this category to be known as "young person's membership".

Constitution

When I was elected as Chair in 2019, I had served as a member of the Executive committee for the previous 3 years. Our current constitution says that this time is counted against my 5 year term as Chair, and consequently I should stand down in September. Given the circumstances of the past two years I would be happy to continue as Chair, but this would require an amendment to the Constitution to disregard prior consecutive service.

Also, Patrick Field has served as Treasurer for the official period of 5 years, for which we owe him our grateful thanks. Patrick would love to stand down if we can find another willing volunteer. To help the situation however, Patrick would be willing to serve another year if no-one immediately steps forward – but again this would require a change to the Constitution to give the flexibility.

Members of Functional Committees also continue to serve beyond their official term, and strict adherence to the rules would result in the need for a number of new members to step forward.

We will therefore also be proposing to amend the constitution to allow an extension of service on Functional and Executive Committees if new members are not forthcoming. We believe this is also a practical response to our reduced membership.

The Exec has discussed these issues, and feel that the proposed amendments are justified because our current membership, although stable at around 140 is now considerably smaller than times in the past when our constitution was formulated. Consequently, we have a smaller pool of people to call on to fulfil the requirements of Committee members and Officers.

I'm sorry if this seems to be personally motivated, but we believe it is a sensible and practical way to ensure a greater degree of flexibility to running our Company.

If you are unhappy with these amendments, it is essential that we have sufficient nominations for new Officers and Committee members. A nomination form is therefore included in the Calling papers for you to take this opportunity.

Social Events

For a number of years we have had a working party of members who have taken on the responsibility of organising social events, including AGMs and Launch meetings..

We would like your opinion if social events outside of normal HTC activities should be a responsibility of the Company, so that we can formulate an appropriate response.

Peter Ingledew