

Frodsham Players AGM 2020 Chairman's Report

2020 proved to be another successful year for the Players with three excellent shows in "Three Days in the Country," "The Railway Children" and "A Christmas Carol." We were also an integral part of the Community Centre's 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Each show was successful both artistically and financially, which is a tribute to all of those involved.

"Three Days in the Country" proved to be one of the most enjoyable and well received productions of recent years, with the quality of writing being matched exactly by the quality of the performance. "The Railway Children" played to fantastic audiences both inside and outside St Laurence and marked a fitting, emotional end to Michael Mill's tenure as director.

There are simply not enough superlatives in the dictionary to describe the triumph of "A Christmas Carol." Staging in the round gave an intimate experience for the audience who gave exceptional praise for the performance. Tickets sold out quickly, despite increases in capacity, as the show became the hottest ticket in town. A fair and positive adjudication was received and I would be very surprised if "A Christmas Carol" is not shortlisted for CTG awards. The generosity of our audiences was also in evidence as they donated over £1000 to Chester Aid to the Homeless.

The Community Centre's 50th Anniversary celebrations in October provided an opportunity to further cement our position as a key member of this organisation.

We have continued to build the brand image of Frodsham Players with the purchase of new promotional banners and a re-vamped logo. It is essential that we maximise the use of both the logo and the banners in all promotional activities.

Engagement on our social media platforms, particularly Facebook, has increased significantly this year. The page now has over 400 regular followers and attracts several thousand engagements during the run-up to show week.

More historical content has been uploaded to the website, but there is still much more to do. The existing site is also in need of a revamp as Wordpress only provides limited, and somewhat outdated, functionality.

During the year we received the Mayor's Civic Award as best performers and a Big Bees Breakfast Club

Financially, we remain in a very strong position in terms of cash and assets. This is due to the continued financial success of our productions (We have not made a loss on any production since Grimm Tales in 2017). As an organization, we must now think of suitable use of our assets through capital purchases and other means.

The programme of Members Evenings during the year was a positive step in improving the engagement of the wider membership, although attendance has not always been as good as expected. I express my sincere thanks to all those involved in running these events.

The year was, however, tinged with sadness due to the tragic death of our long-standing treasurer Diane Stredder and the retirement of Michael Mills. Both Michael and Diane contributed so much to the players and will be greatly missed.

The objectives set for the Player's in 2019 have, on the whole, been met. Details on progress is given below:

- Continue our search for suitable storage space
 - *This has proved to be very difficult. After a long period of negotiation with both the Food Bank and Lapwing Centre, our proposed partnership fell through at the last minute. However, I am pleased to be able to report that an initial proposal to the Community Centre, in partnership with Zodiac, has been positively received. There is still much to do, but I am confident that we can progress this opportunity.*
- Make further capital purchases of lighting and/or sound equipment

- *No significant capital purchases were made during the year. However, investments in banners and logo design were made.*
- Complete the transition to on-line banking
 - *I am pleased to report that, thanks to the determination and tenacity of our treasurer, we made the transition to on-line banking at the end of 2019. This will allow us to streamline our cash-flow, pay outstanding invoices in a more efficient fashion and provide more up to date financial information than ever before.*
- Increase active membership numbers
 - *We continue to attract new members, mainly through the Facebook page and website, but also through word of mouth. It remains frustrating, however, that many prospective new members enquire about joining us, but never actually appear. Given the interest that we have had from younger members during productions such as The Railway Children, Danny Champion of the World and A Christmas Carol, it may be prudent to explore the possibility of a junior production in the future.*
- Develop our programme for the years ahead on an 18-month rolling cycle
 - *Thanks to the establishment of a "season" and with the support of the play selection panel, we were successful in establishing a rolling programme of performances. The fact that we could advertise the next 2 shows months in advance in printed and social media is a significant step forward and should be celebrated. This hard work must continue in the future, particularly as venue hire becomes more difficult.*
- Encourage and support new directors
 - *It is critical to the long-term future of the Players, that new directors are encouraged and supported in their chosen production. To this end, we need to ensure that we focus on the possibilities, rather than potential difficulties. We welcomed two existing and one entirely new director in the year:*
 - *Carole Shinkfield directed her first "commercial" production with the excellent "A Christmas Carol".*
 - *Iain Bennett will direct his second show in March with "Visiting Hour"*
 - *David Varley will make his directorial debut in July with "The Rivals"*

The objectives for the year ahead are:

- Cement our relationship with the Community Centre
- Take possession of new storage are at the Community Centre
- Explore the possibility of a dedicated junior production
- Re-develop the Players' website
- Continue to invest in capital and revenue purchases
- Continue to attract new members

Finally, I would like to thank all of the officers and members of Frodsham Players for making 2019 a successful year. Without your commitment, dedication, enthusiasm and hard work none of this would be possible



Ian Lancaster
25 February 2020.