

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2018/2019

One of the huge joys of the Test Valley is the ‘get up and go’ of small local communities who want to make things happen. Such was the ‘Over the Top’ project of St Johns in North Baddesley who draped their ancient church tower in red knitted poppies. This fantastic local project was their tribute and contribution to the one hundred years anniversary of World War One. The end result was stunning, beautiful and moving, attracting the attention of the national press. Test Valley Arts Foundation (TVAF) is delighted to have invested in this excellent venture.

This combination of being able to support local ventures together with organising and commissioning innovative projects is still the bread and butter of TVAFA. Sometimes the projects seem to run and run – Ruth Facey’s ‘Make Your Mark’ began some three years ago – this was local people, inscribing, drawing, imprinting on copper plate something creative. One plaque is proudly displayed in the Andover Museum and during 2019 we were able to place the other one in St Johns House in Romsey. Cat Randle’s ‘Talk about Festival’ also launched during this year – the project built on the success of a ‘Celebration of Young Writing’ but this time focused on poetry. Cat had a fantastic response, the variety but outstanding quality of our young creatives is out of this world as is their ability to use modern media to get their message across. Bewiser Insurance put up the cash with The Lights, Awbridge Transport, local schools, Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) and all the teachers, parents and guardians assisting and encouraging our young people to be creative.

Roy Chatfield our former Treasurer and award winning playwright put to us another unique idea. Readers will recall that his first bespoke play ‘Now we tell our Tale’ – directed by John Baxter - was an entertaining and lively exploration of Andover’s history particularly around the post war period and the London Development Corporation - was so successful that we reprised it several times. ‘It Happened in Hampshire’ an amusing history of Hampshire from its early beginnings to the present day was soon to be in production. We launched it on the 5th February 2019, directed this time by Sharon O’Leary, to a full house at The Lights, where three actors brought to life the rich heritage of our County. It was brilliant! The play then went on to tour a number of local schools where this unique way of teaching history was applauded! Again, Bewiser Insurance supported us, as did The Lights and our two local authorities.

There is a general acknowledgement that TVAFA has ‘made a real difference’ – both in terms of supporting artists, creating Chapel Arts Studios, developing new audiences particularly around the performing arts, reaching out to local/rural communities, moving from a quiet, small grants focus to reaching out through events and particularly the 25 year anniversary programme into the whole

Borough which reached over 15,000 people. But from time to time every voluntary organisation needs to ask itself some fundamental questions.

The Board did a thorough review of its activities and future and concluded that we would like to continue to exist but more importantly have an inspiring range of projects and ideas which will excite and be enjoyed by ALL in the Test Valley and beyond. What we could do is spend what we still have in the bank in an innovative manner attracting both private and public sector support on local projects and awards – in the end the cash will run out and TVAF will cease to exist. But we could seek to enhance the original endowment with a ‘top up’ so we can secure the next 25 years.

Both Test Valley Borough Council - who originally set up TVAF – and Hampshire County Council were approached; we discussed with them whether they would like to continue to invest in specific projects or consider topping us up. TVBC responded by encouraging us to approach their Community Asset Fund and HCC awarded us a cash sum. So TVAF does have a future supporting Arts and Cultural Projects in the Test Valley community!

SO HERE IS A BOLD INITIATIVE -TEST VALLEY 2020 A BOROUGH OF CULTURE

Inviting ALL to do something during 2020 – promoting festivals, concerts, performances, everywhere! Where nothing happens at present something lasting is created. Providing real opportunities for artists and local communities to meet and work together through a variety of happenings. Demonstrating THAT Arts and Culture is for everyone. So below is the web site please look and join in! We are fortunate that HCC, TVBC, Hampshire Cultural Trust, Bewiser Insurance, the Romsey Festival, The Forum Group of Magazines, have already pledged their support for this once in a lifetime opportunity. <http://www.testvalleyarts.org/testvalleyarts2020.html> Rebecca Maddox of www.artfulevents.co.uk has agreed to help us organise this huge project she can also be contacted through the website.

The Arts Bus ,or as it is now called The Bus of Many Things in its bright green livery, passed its MOT again thanks to the care and attention of Marshalls in Andover. Rodney Allsop-Seward our dedicated volunteer driver continues to take it around the Test Valley with occasional visits to the New Forest and beyond. The bus is a regular fixture at the Romsey Show, The Eastleigh Mela, Trout ‘n About Stockbridge and many other venues, often accompanied with a local artist or two who engage many hundreds of young people. We are very grateful to Broughton Village Hall, Anita and Trevor Draycott and our old friends Peter and Linda Boulton for letting us park the Bus on their premises. Chapel Arts Studios (CAS) will gradually be taking on the responsibility of programming and looking after the Bus in the future.

Chapel Arts Studios has had a very busy year mainly focused at getting formally established with a set of Trustees and all the other essential formal requirements necessary to become a registered charity. Arts Council England is the main investor in CAS – but they are hugely active in generating support from many other organisations. They continue to be very active in the Test Valley community and David Dixon is very much in demand both in Hampshire and across the UK. Much more information is available at <http://www.chapelartsstudios.co.uk/>

I am very grateful to ALL our Trustees at TVAF for their continued support and effort. John Dumper our Treasurer took over last year and has made an enormous contribution to the smooth running of

our finances. Sue Messa our overworked and dedicated Development Officer continues to ensure that TVAF is well represented in the Test Valley community but more importantly lends substance and drive to the many ideas/projects dreamed up by the Board. Maija Liepins resigned as a Trustee during the year given her growing commitments at Chapel Arts – we are very grateful for the time and effort she put in particularly when we were trying to start up our website.

It's been another busy, innovative and exciting year. 2020 looks like already being a rollercoaster!

Yinnon Ezra MBE MA FRSA Chairman Test Valley Arts Foundation