

IPSWICH ARTS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 18 October 2018

CHAIR'S REPORT

Welcome to the 2018 of Ipswich Arts Association.

At last year's AGM, I was able and pleased to report that the Association had managed to recruit Mary Odam as our new Secretary, and I am again pleased to report that Mary has continued diligently to support the work of the Association during the past year, often at some difficult periods.

I also report that the Association needed to recruit some new Trustees, and in this we succeeded, but with natural turnover, I am afraid that I have to report that again there are vacancies which need to be filled this year.

Notwithstanding the fact that there are times due to holidays, sickness or work commitments some Trustees are unable to attend meetings, the Association's Executive has met regularly and has, at all times, been quorate. It has been able therefore to transact all the business which was required, and has- in part- been helped by the existence of a new Strategic Plan that has guided its programme.

As far as Governance is concerned, I have to report that the Executive did discuss whether or not the Constitution of IAA needed to be amended through an Extra-Ordinary general meeting to reflect the absence of Ipswich Borough Councillors on many occasions. It was decided that, for the present, this should not be the case. However, I do have to report that although there are three Councillors nominated by IBC, often they have been absent from our meetings (even though apologies have been received), and this does mean that we have a weakened link with the Borough.

Activities

Ipswich Arts Association has long been in existence to facilitate discussion between various arts organisations regarding matters of common interest. This year it has been about the new Privacy Rules (GDPR) and the Executive supported our Secretary to attend a workshop so as to be better informed. The guidance received was disseminated to member societies and additional guidance has been shared when requested.

Behind the scenes I have been pleased to be invited to give advice and assistance to a number of our music organisations that were seeking to recruit new conductors- indeed, this year there has been a serious challenge to find musicians to fill this role, but I am pleased to say that most have been successful, even if it required the organisations themselves to examine how they work.

More obvious have been the public activities supported by the Association.

Each month we have been able to provide an Ipswich Town Lecture or Concert and attendances have generally been up on a year-on-year basis. The quality of the events organised by Vera Rogers and Joy Bounds with their respective teams has been high. What has been disappointing is the financial contributions made by members of the public. We ask for a voluntary contribution of £2 per person at each event, and sometimes the amount on average has fallen short of that figure. It

seems those supporting music events are more generous than those who attend the lectures. However, the matter is kept under review.

It has also been an encouraging year for Ann Cloke's team who keep a watch on the Ipswich Charter Hangings. A new edition of the Ipswich Charter Hangings book was printed during the year- a major financial outlay for IAA -but sales have been encouraging and Ann has managed to secure a number of outlets that retail the book. This means that gradually the initial print outlay will be recouped.

The same is true of postcards which have proved good sellers. Attendances at St Peter-by-the Quay has remained constant but figures to demonstrate that are difficult to obtain.

The executive debated at some length, whether or not to organise another Open House during 2018. After reflection and with the advice given by Trustee Wendy Missons, who has been responsible for the event, it was decided to proceed and so Open House took place in June at the Ipswich Tourist Information Centre. Each lunchtime there was a talk given by members of the Ipswich Society, Ipswich and Colchester Museums Service or Ipswich print Workshop. Sadly, the attendances at these were embarrassingly small but we are grateful for the work that was undertaken. On the other hand, the quality of the exhibition organisation by 12 member societies was higher than previous years. It has been decided that we shall proceed with another Open house in 2019, but without the talks, this making it a less labour-intensive event.

Also during the year, IAA was an active partner in Ipswich Music Day, again hosting three classical stages at Bethesda and St Margaret's Churches, and the Masonic Hall, Soane Street. The team led by Ivan Gilson and Christine Pearce provided a full programme in each with one school taking part. That may not appear to be significant, but we made a special point this year of trying to encourage schools as participants, and we hope that one may become two or more in succeeding years. Attendances at the three venues was generally encouraging.

Less obvious, but important to many societies was the revamp of the main publicity outlet for IAA events at the Ipswich Corn Exchange. It may be a little known fact- but one window is dedicated to the publicity of member societies' events- whether or not they are in IBC premises. Terry Cloke has been responsible for a revamp of the window display which was looking very "tired" before he undertook the revamp. What is surprising is how few societies want to promote their events and there is generally room for publicity material to spare.

Terry has also created a mobile publicity display featuring the work of IAA, and this can now be seen at the various events which we promote.

Throughout the year we have maintained the website of IAA (about which I will say something more in a moment) together with the three issues of the IAA Newsletter. Earlier in the year we had discussion at one of the IAA's General Meetings as to whether or not we should maintain the print version of the Newsletter sent to member societies. Its cost and the rising cost of postage was something to be considered. The outcome of that discussion was that we should maintain the service, and so we have honoured that. Of course, any society can request more copies for their members.

Governance

I have reported that the IAA Trustees have met regularly during the year and there was one meeting of officers and Project leaders also at which there was discussion about ways in which communication could be improved across the various projects.

I have to report that this year we have had a significant change in the number of new Trustees and there are still vacancies which must be filled. These vacancies include the appointment of a new Treasurer for Ivan Gilson is standing down from that role, even though he wishes to continue as a Trustee. One of the peculiar aspects of IAA is that – being a Federation – it is difficult to recruit volunteers to the role of Trustee- not least because if people have time and energy to spare they are going to give it to their own member society. That is understandable. However, IAA depends on having people who maintain a keen interest in the arts in as wide a church as possible. We particularly need to recruit Trustees from sectors other than classical music, and also someone with a keen interest in the web and our use of it.

Having said that, we owe a big thanks not only to our Trustees but also to the many volunteers who have given time to the various projects I have mentioned. There are few organisations like IAA in the Eastern region, and therefore, its continued health does depend on that supply to be maintained.

In concluding this report I want to thank the Executive and the many societies who have rejoined IAA during 2017-18. We aim to continue to provide a service and we will be recommending that subscription rates remain the same as in the previous year. This can be done – not by reducing that service- but by being competitive in the contracts in which we engage.