



Chair's Report for 2023 AGM

Welcome to the Dorchester Community Plays Association AGM. Many thanks to all the Board members for their energy, commitment and work over the past year. Thanks also to Fiona Scott for minute taking each meeting.

The Board of Trustees roles and responsibilities is currently as follows:

- Chair - Rowan Seymour
- Treasurer - Laurie Scott
- Book keeper - Fiona Scott
- Fundraising and Sponsorship lead - Emma Hill
- Grant applications lead/Vice-chair - Sue McGarel
- Company Secretary & Business Manager - David McGarel
- Premises Officer - Vacancy
- Membership Secretary – Fiona Scott
- Publicity, Website & Social Media Officer - Ruth Hayes
- Communications and Data Protection and Security Officer - Tom Archer
- Social – Liz James
- Wardrobe - (specifically during the production period of play) Sue McGarel
- Operations Manager (specifically during the production period of play) - David McGarel

Lucy Allen, Sonia Morris and Paul Wallis are Trustees on the Board in supporting roles.

The 2022 DCPA AGM was held in March 2022, when we were in the thick of rehearsals for *Spinning the Moon*. Following is a brief report on the process and success of the play.

Spinning the Moon should have been performed in April 2020, but had to be postponed after three months of rehearsals and just two weeks prior to performances due to the first government enforced lockdown at the start of the covid pandemic. In April 2022 the DCPA board of Trustees agreed that it was safe to revive the project and go ahead with 11 performances in April 2023.

Three years on approximately 25% of the cast found they were unable to participate for a variety of reasons so two workshops were held in October and November 2022 which were enthusiastically attended by previous members of the cast together with several new people. The playwright Stephanie Dale, new director Peter Leslie Wild and assistant director Penny Levick devised improvisation activities and a new cast was formed.

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This involved re-writes and changes of character for the playwright to address and a new script was launched at the end of November 2022.

From the beginning the Director insisted that this was an ensemble piece, with no main characters as such, involving 86 cast members with everyone being key to the telling of the story. This very much chimed with DCPA's ethos of inclusivity. DCPA were delighted that the cast comprised of people of all ages from 8-81; 35 males, 48 females and 3 non-binary. The cast included 8 married couples and 7 family groups, 2 of which included three generations of family. We were also pleased to welcome several cast members with learning difficulties and some with physical or mental health challenges.

The professional musical director Tim Laycock and his assistant Alastair Simpson directed a band of community musicians some of whom had performed in previous plays and some new. There were 13 musicians in total including 2 children.

Rehearsals began in earnest in January 2023 with the following schedule attended by the full cast: Friday 6.30-9.30, Saturday 9-4, Sunday 10-5, a total of 50 sessions initially. This increased nearer to the performances to include Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The band was present at most rehearsals and they also rehearsed one evening per week on their own.

Through spending most of the weekend together the cast very quickly bonded and found it an enriching experience. New friends were made and connections within the community strengthened alongside learning new skills and working towards a shared goal.

Here is a selection of comments from our cast questionnaire:

- "The intensity of rehearsals schedules has been challenging but worth it. It has been a uniquely life enhancing experience." (Female – over 75)
- "It has helped in the recovery process from injury – given goals and purpose" (Male 46-55)
- "A great experience as a whole family we have spent a lot of quality time together. Our children have increased their acting capabilities and made new friends of different ages" (Female 46-55)
- "I have learned a new skill – puppetry, I've made new friends and increased my knowledge of Dorchester history." (Gender Bender 11-16)
- "I have made friends with many people from all walks of life that I might otherwise not have done. It has been wonderful to watch friends with mental health issues come out of themselves and see their light shine. It has helped me get over a period of grief and I love the sense of family". (Female 46-55)
- "I have loved getting to know new people and hope to stay in contact with everyone and remain involved in future projects." (Male 26-35)
- "I have learned new skills – making props, voice projection and performing. I have definitely had fun and really makes me feel part of something special." (Female 36-45)
- My self-confidence has increased; I feel less isolated and more part of the community. OMG it was fantastic! I had so much fun. (Non – binary (fluid) 11-16)

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During the rehearsal period a team of 12 volunteer sewers finished off costumes begun in 2020. New cast needed new costumes and several original cast members were re-cast so some costumes needed altering. The objective of our professional designer Dawn Allsopp was to:

“Create our own Medieval world and not a historical representation of the early 1500’s. We also wanted to re-use and recycle as much as we could while creating the costumes and as such have used donated fabrics and charity shop finds.” This very much fitted with DCPA’s Environmental policy to:

‘Embed environmental sustainability in all aspects of DCPAs practice’, ‘our project will try wherever possible to utilise second-hand clothing and accessories and we aim for our props to be mostly found objects or made from recycled materials.’

Many of the cast were involved in prop making: birds from recycled feather boas and fascinators, clay pots and empty bean tins covered in hessian for honey pots. Members of the cast and community kindly loaned or donated items too.

During the rehearsal period our play officer and safeguarding officer recruited other local volunteers to support the project. Once the performances began, a total of 43 front of house volunteers did a myriad of jobs from welcoming people, checking tickets, selling programmes, working behind the bar, acting as fire wardens to helping audience with disability to their seats. 9 chaperones took great care of the children in the cast.

Spinning the Moon was performed over two weeks, totally 10 performances including a matinee to an audience of over 1,800.

Here is a small selection of comments from our audience questionnaire:

- “Novel, interesting, interactive, engaging. I hope to return for a second show” (Female 17-35)
- “Well done to all who created this. A really worthwhile production exposing cruelty, tradition and heritage” (Male over 65)
- “We were totally enthralled all the way through, loved every minute” (Female 46-55)
- “Blown away! Outstanding, brilliant, never seen anything like it!! Astonishing” (Female 56-64)
- “The immersion in the action. Brilliant! I wish every play was like this. Fascinating history as well as a dramatic and exciting performance” (Male 46-55)
- "I was so thankful to be invited to share this experience. Huge congratulations to everyone involved as the dividends in participating in such a community event are amazing across many areas. The sense of community is needed even more today as so many are struggling with living in a society that appears not to care about each other." (Female 56-64)
- "It's fantastic to finally see this being performed after waiting so long due to it being postponed. So many familiar faces. Seeing our community coming together to perform was brilliant. (Female 36 - 45)
- The performance was very interactive for the audience. It was wonderful being in the middle of the action and amongst the actors.

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Spinning the Moon – Dorchester's 7th community play has been a huge success.

The board of Trustees has met three times since the end of the play in April and work has been going on to tie up all the loose ends.

- Props, costumes and effects have been sorted and we have secured long term storage on the 4th floor of Dorchester Town Council Offices in North Square – grateful thanks to Steve Newman, Town Clerk and officers for this tremendous support
- We have reported back to all our grant funders and thanked local businesses and supporters
- All outstanding monies have been received and paid out as necessary – a big thank you to Laurie Scott for his financial management, attention to detail and for steering us through so efficiently, thanks to his work DCPA is in a secure financial position
- We held a meeting for prospective Trustees and have co-opted Christine Barsky, John Butler, and Ivana Jelinic onto the board – to be ratified at the AGM. Fran Sansom and John Savage also wish to join
- Looking forwards DCPA are in partnership with the Town Council to celebrate the anniversary of D Day in 2024. Lucy Allen and Liz James are the liaison trustees

As you can see, the work that the DCPA board of trustees put in is extraordinary, it is thanks to every one of them that DCPA continues to grow from strength to strength.

I would particularly like to thank Sonia Morris, Sue McGarel and Laurie Scott who are stepping down as trustees for all their hard work.

I am stepping down from the board but will remain in the background and available to advise and support whoever takes over.

Rowan Seymour

DCPA Chair

January 2023

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**DORCHESTER COMMUNITY PLAYS ASSOCIATION
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR
ENDING 31/12/23**

	£	£
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		2022
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Membership	335	357
Fundraising	5,288	3,420
Funding for £10 challenge	860	
Grants	4,500	9,416
Donations	282	8,503
Gift Aid	-	236
Advertising/ Sponsorship	-	3,310
Net Ticket Sales	22,517	
Bar/ Programme Sales	4,554	
Equipment sales	880	
Total Income	39,216	25,242
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Net Administration Costs	1,423	351
Arts Council Grant Clawback	591	
Grants and Donations	250	125
Premises Costs	5,720	
Costs relating to Fundraising		70
Dorchester Arts Fees	2,036	980
Professional Fees	23,525	
Bank Fees	104	86
Costumes	599	
Stage Management and Production	18,549	3,150
Bar	990	
Total expenditure	53,786	4,762
Net Income/Expenditure for year	(14,571)	20,480

**DORCHESTER COMMUNITY PLAYS ASSOCIATION
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 23**

	£	2022 £
ASSETS		
Fixed Assets	-	-
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	29,273	43,824
Cash in Hand	-	20
	29,273	43,844
FUNDED BY:		
General Reserves brought forward	43,844	23,364
Deficit/ Surplus in this year	(14,571)	20,480
General Reserves Carried Forward	29,273	43,844

I have examined the Receipts and Payments Account, Balance Sheet and underlying records for the year ended 31 December 2023. I have received all the explanation and clarifications that I sought and have no matters to report.

Alec Bailey M.A., F.C.A.

