

Aims and Purposes

The object of the School is to advance the education of the public in the art of writing, including tuition for writers and prospective writers.

Objects and Activities

The School is committed to running an annual residential conference for writers for one week during each summer. The programme aims to provide writers and potential writers with a range of courses, speakers and other activities intended to inspire and develop their writing in a friendly and supportive environment, allowing them to network and share experiences.

While planning the programme for the conference, the Trustees consider the Commission's guidance on public benefit and in particular, seek to enable as many writers and potential writers as possible to benefit from the opportunities the School has to offer, which are:

- A comprehensive programme of courses across as many genres as possible
- Opportunities for mentorship
- Communication throughout the year to maintain the spirit of the School
- Assisted places for writers who would otherwise be unable to attend.

Achievements and Performance

Special Circumstances Note

Unfortunately, due to the lockdown situation and continuing restrictions of COVID-19, the 2020 Writers' Summer School was cancelled on 10th June 2020. This decision was arrived at after a great deal of consideration by the committee as a whole, but in particular, by our Chairman, Cathy Grimmer, who corresponded with the Hayes regarding the ever-changing guidelines and potential impact of restrictions on the efficacy of running the School in these circumstances. Logistic considerations were a priority given the high number of delegates and the social nature of the School, as well as the potential risks to older delegates and those with additional health issues, but the fundamental issue of financial security was uppermost. Contractual guidelines stated penalties for cancellation which would effectively have crippled the School had the committee elected to cancel at the onset of lockdown or during the following weeks & months. Although bookings continued as normal throughout this period and enquiries kept coming in there was uncertainty in

those already booked and, inevitably, there were cancellations. The agreed policy was to continue as normal and respond to the advice nearer the time. This we did until communication with an official at the Hayes revealed an agreement that it was not possible to hold the School in those circumstances.

A mutual arrangement was agreed that the School would be transferred, and the contract deferred until August 2021, without penalty or an additional deposit. Delegates were informed of the cancellation via an announcement on Facebook followed by an individual email and given the choice to cancel for a full refund or to transfer their place to 2021. Those who had already cancelled were offered the chance to claim a £50 voucher against a place for 2021 as a gesture of good faith.

What follows is a report on the programme as it would have been had the School taken place. The impact of the cancellation on finances and in particular, on the reserves required to keep the School functional is explained in the Financial Review.

Programme

The planned programme for 2020 comprised five Specialist courses, eighteen Short courses and seventeen one-hour sessions, spanning a wide range of topics - favourites such as romantic fiction, writing for children, characterisation, crime writing, poetry (poetry reflecting history and the role of landscape and environment in poetry) and scriptwriting, to current issues like using social media to share, discuss and promote work, writing for wellbeing, breaking into the article market and creating authentic, non-stereotypical LGBTQI+ characters. One Hour Sessions were equally diverse, covering topics such as producing a book trailer, ten-minute plays, chair yoga, spoken word performance, the importance of location in writing, creating suspense in crime and horror writing, character motivations, crowdfunding and world building. Generally, these sessions are run by delegates attending the School and carry no fee, but three of the classes are run by external tutors which is a new concept. Popular elements of the programme were retained such as an opportunity to write or develop work in space created to provide peace and quiet; for creativity through 'Lift Up Your Pens' and 'Page to Stage'; and for reflection and relaxation through 'Lift Up Your Hearts', 'Meditation by the Lake', and 'Unwind Your Mind'. These sessions of the programme are provided by delegates themselves and supported by the Committee on behalf of the School. As well as the daytime programme, a full range of entertainment was planned for the evenings, encouraging more participation from delegates and opportunities to meet and socialise with other writers. The "Ice-Breaker" provides a space to interact with fellow delegates in a drama workshop style format and

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“Birds of a Feather” offers an opportunity to meet with other writers sharing genre interests. Other evening events include two quizzes, a fancy dress evening (delegates are free to dress up from dinner onwards), poetry and prose open mics, a buskers’ night and a disco. Page to Stage was changed to rehearsal and performance in the same day with the usual workshop element being held during the afternoon and the performance in the evening in lieu of a speaker.

(The concept of workshop/rehearsal/performance in the same day is essentially a return to the original format when the performance element was placed after the evening speaker. However, in recent years, and despite the evening programme timings shifting to an earlier spot, Page to Stage has experienced a drop-off in audience numbers due to delegates choosing to spend time with friends or attend the book signing for the evening speaker. It was decided to trial Page to Stage performances in place of an evening speaker to raise the profile of the event and acknowledge the efforts of the participants and facilitators.)

A new event – “Vinyl in the Vinery” was planned for Tuesday afternoon in the same time slot as the Tea Dance from the previous two years, offering delegates an opportunity to dance if they wish or just to chat over tea/coffee in a musical setting.

Speakers engaged for 2020 were Toby Faber, grandson of the founder of the publishing firm, Faber & Faber with a presentation of the book on the history of the firm which he edited; Julian Unthank, talking about his career as a screen writer and overcoming dyslexia; Helen Mort, on poetry and her published works; and Sarah Ward, on why people love a ghost story.

Prior to the cancellation of the School, expected attendance was 245 people, including committee members speakers, tutors, other guests, TopWrite and Assisted Places, competition places and the 2019 raffle prize winner. The number of returners was again high, and a waiting list was started even earlier than before, in February, as some room areas were full, and a few delegates had requested upgrades. The waiting list was briskly dealt with due to the number of cancellations from delegates worried about their safety in light of the coronavirus situation – there were 27 in total.

A Welcome Reception for ‘White Badgers’ (first time attendees) was planned the first evening to help put new people at ease, and a mid-week Afternoon Tea session to collect valuable feedback on how the programme was being received. Ambassadors would have provided additional support and helped with collecting the information as the committee are not involved in this session which is co-ordinated by the Hostess.

Mentorship

Twenty-three tutors agreed to provide a total of ninety-one one to one sessions covering a wide range of genres and subject matter for delegates seeking specific advice and direction for their work. These included advice on crime publication, forensics, magazine articles, synopses, online presence, fiction & non-fiction, screenwriting, structure, dialogue & plot, writing intimate scenes characterisation, poetic authenticity, designing your book cover, creating LGBTQI+ characters, and plays in progress.

Following the cancellation of the School, tutors were invited to offer one to one sessions virtually, by video conferencing platforms, telephone or email. Twenty-two of the twenty-three tutors agreed to do so and guidelines for both tutors and tutees were drawn up to facilitate them. The response was very good with some people choosing to have the sessions they had booked for 2020 delivered this way and others purchasing new ones. The opportunity was opened to anyone who had attended the School or would have if it had gone ahead and the period of delivery was stretched over three weeks surrounding the week of the School to allow flexibility in arranging times for both parties. Twenty-two sessions were sold, raising the sum of £385. Some tutors waived their fee as a donation to School funds.

Communication

Again, the School's Facebook Closed Group page and Twitter feed continued to maintain the School's online presence through links to various pages on the website. Tutors and speakers are invited to promote their work at the School using social media which helps maintain the visibility of the School and attracts new people from a wider range of areas. This drives traffic to the website which helps to maintain online visibility.

The bi-monthly newsletter was maintained dispensing updates and information to those who subscribe and providing a forum for delegates to share their writing successes. Updates between newsletters were posted on Facebook and Twitter and circulated by the membership. The School continued to enhance its website and maintain a Wikipedia page.

The cancellation news was delivered to the members initially via a post on Facebook and followed up with emails to each person still booked detailing two choices: to cancel and receive a full refund or to transfer their place to 2021. Those who had cancelled prior to the announcement were offered

a £50 Gift Voucher for 2021 as a gesture of goodwill as many had cancelled due to COVID-19 and the concerns and uncertainty surrounding the virus.

TopWrite/Assisted Places

Regular and one-off donations to the Friends of Swanwick fund provided subsidised places for twelve creative writing students through its TopWrite Scheme. The cost to students remained at £125.

Through the School's Assisted Places Scheme, also funded by Friends of Swanwick, three partial places were provided for individuals on a low income and/or receiving benefits. Ten applications were received with one pre-assessment cancellation.

Financial Review

The School's continued popularity led to a waiting list coming into play in late February, 3 months earlier than in 2019. By this time, one accommodation area was already full and delegates who booked an alternative area, requesting an upgrade to their original choice. However, it was not long before another area became full and the waiting list quickly grew. Most of the people on the waiting list were accommodated by cancellations but there were no further entries on the list after the 20th March due to the COVID-19 lockdown and the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing situation. Enquiries continued as the weeks passed and although bookings continued, those, too stopped on 3rd April. Delegates paying in instalments were encouraged to continue to do until the Committee was able to confirm whether the School could go ahead.

There were no part-time delegates at this time as the restriction on such bookings being dependant on room availability after 30th June - put in place in 2019 -was retained.

As previously stated, the sale of virtual one to one sessions achieved a total of £385, a welcome bonus to the School funds. A plea for donations by the Chairman, Cathy Grimmer, resulted in the sum of £1,712.40 being raised from direct donations, donations deducted from refunds and rolled over bookings and a percentage of sales of delegates' books though a Virtual Book Room set up on Facebook by Swanwick delegates.

Funds raised through the 'Friends of Swanwick' are treated as restricted reserves and are identified separately in the School's accounts to provide more transparency of purpose. The fund has

continued to be essential in maintaining finance for the TopWrite and Assisted Places schemes through regular and one-off donations alike. This scheme continues to be very popular due to efficient handling by the committee's TopWrite liaison and applications have increased greatly. The fund continues to support TopWrite and Assisted Places due mainly to generous donations from 'Friends', both regular and one-off, but bolstered by a fourth donation from Amazon Literary Partnership (UK) (£2,000). The number of regular donors to 'Friends of Swanwick fluctuates each year but one-off donations continue to increase. For a second year, the Committee have decided not to contribute School funds to Friends of Swanwick but the situation will continue to be monitored and should donations drop and the need arise to top up the fund, the School will consider further contributions, as long as there are available funds to spare. At the end of the School year, funds stood at £8,210.81 – all TopWrite and Assisted Places recipients chose to roll their places over to 2021.

Note: due to the cancellation of the School, it is estimated that there will be a loss of approximately £11,000, but because there was a healthy surplus at the start of the year, built up over a number of years, the School will survive this setback.

The online booking system was again the most popular mode of payment, followed by cheque payments, then bank transfers, with standing orders being the least used (1). Card payments using the PayByLink facility were used for one-off payments and instalments at the Treasurer's discretion. Refunds triggered by the cancellation of the School would have generated a high number of reversed card payments, so such refunds were given by bank transfer where possible, saving the additional charges.

The online banking facilities provided by the CAF Bank, Ltd. continued to reduce the need for writing cheques and made payment of invoices much easier. This need was further reduced by the cancellation as most cheques written are to delegates for sales of books in the Book Room.

The School's social networking continued with the bi-monthly electronic newsletter, regular updates on Facebook and Twitter and ongoing review of content on the website. The advertising budget remained unchanged from last year but the commitment to conventional advertising with *Writing Magazine* continued, maintaining the School's long-standing relationship with Warner Group Publications who provide a competition prize place and administrate all three annual competitions.

The close association with the Christian Conference Trust through their management and provision of the facilities at the Hayes at Swanwick and their efficient and reciprocal support for the Committee and the School, was further cemented when cancellation of the School became

necessary. They allowed the transfer of the 2020 contract to 2021 with no penalties or rise in cost, helping to safeguard the School. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation and the changes still taking place at the venue, the strong relationship with staff and management and the School's officers and committee has continued, to the increased benefit of the delegates.

Reserves Policy

The School faces a number of financial risks and liabilities:

- i. The Hayes requires a substantial deposit a year in advance of each School (since 2016) which is 10% of the expected overall cost.
- ii. The number of members varies each year and Trustees are reminded that the lowest number achieved in the last ten years resulted in the loss of £20,000.
- iii. Some expenditure, e.g. advertising, honoraria, advance fees for the Hayes (the School commits a number of years in advance), are incurred before any payment is received for places, requiring a minimum reserve of £7,500.
- iv. There are a number of opportunities within the School that, if pursued, would require further funds to be held in the order of £10,000. These will not be considered until sufficient reserves have been established.

A combination of all these events arising would require a reserve of £45,000 but the School acknowledges that this level of reserve is unlikely to be required. Its aim, therefore, is to maintain a minimum reserve of £25,000 in undesignated funds (i.e. not dedicated to specific purposes) and review requirements and possibilities year on year.

Structure, Governance and Management

The method of appointing trustees is set out in the School's constitution. Members of the Writers' Summer School Committee are elected each year and act as the School's trustees. The Committee is responsible for making decisions on all matters of general concern and importance to the School and for deciding on the allocation of the School's resources.

This year, the Committee met five times: one meeting in the Autumn of 2019 at the Hayes; the Spring meeting in March 2020, followed by two more in May; and the AGM was held in November, all of which were held via Zoom. Meetings usually held at the School were not possible due to

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cancellation – and the March meeting was subject to lockdown - but the committee are constitutionally obliged to hold an AGM within 15 months of the previous one, so it was decided to do this via Zoom with the Committee member only.

With the exception of the honoraria paid to the Treasurer and Secretary (set out in the constitution), no committee member received remuneration. Committee members were reimbursed for their expenses, where claimed. Officers were reimbursed 100% of the cost of their accommodation at the School and ordinary committee members were reimbursed 50% of that cost, reflecting the out of pocket costs of running the School week.

Administrative Information

The Writers' Summer School has no permanent premises. Details of the School's registered address are held on the Charity Commission website. The School is held at The Hayes Conference Centre. Hayes Lane, Swanwick, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 1AU.

Committee members who served during the financial year were:

Chairman	Cathy Grimmer
Vice-Chairman	Maria Hennings-Hunt
Secretary	Ingrid Jendzrejewski
Treasurer	Lesley Deschner
Committee Members:	Jonathan Higgs
	Sharon Payne
	Alexandra McDermott
	Lance Greenfield

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ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

ADDRESS

103 Jean Armour Drive
Mauchline
KA5 6DP

TRUSTEES

C Grimmer - chairperson
M Hennings-Hunt
I Jendrzewski
L Deschner
J Higgs
L Mitchell
S Payne - appointed 15th August 2019
A McDermott - appointed 15th August 2019

INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

Leon Stephens FCA
Brookes Stephens Chartered Accountants
New Media House
Davidson Road
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9DZ

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The Writers' Summer School
Charity No. 1168531

Statement of Financial Activities
for the year ended 30 September 2020

	30.9.20			30.9.19
	Unrestricted Fund	Restricted Fund	Total Funds	Total Funds
			£	£
INCOME				
Accommodation	-	-	-	163,381
Bookroom Sales	100	-	100	2,994
Donations	(67)	3,764	3,697	4,292
Misc	1,221	-	1,221	5,483
	1,254	3,764	5,018	176,150
OTHER INCOME				
Bank Int Rec'd	73	-	73	96
TOTAL INCOME	1,327	3,764	5,091	176,246
LESS: EXPENDITURE				
Hayes Conference Centre	-	-	-	125,366
Fees and Management Costs	948	-	948	17,901
Honoraria	7,000	-	7,000	7,000
Topwrite Expenses	-	-	-	4,600
Assisted Places	-	-	-	2,561
Advertising	2,385	-	2,385	3,585
Bookroom Sales	-	-	-	1,984
Prizes	-	-	-	3,294
Refunds	-	-	-	3,306
Printing/Postage	1	-	1	681
Travel	(35)	-	(35)	675
Accountancy	405	-	405	405
Miscellaneous	(35)	-	(35)	716
Bank Charges	1,650	-	1,650	1,955
Depreciation	17	-	17	23
	12,335	-	12,335	174,051
	(11,008)	3,764	(7,244)	2,194
Funds transfer	(1,330)	1,330	-	-
Bal c/fwd to 1st October 2020	(12,338)	5,094	(7,244)	2,194

The Writers' Summer School
Charity No. 1168531

Statement of Financial Position
for the year ended 30 September 2020

	30.9.20			30.9.19
	Unrestricted fund	Restricted fund	Total funds	Total funds
	£	£	£	£
Fixed Assets				
Tangible assets	51	-	51	67
Current assets				
Prepayments and accrued income	12,517	-	12,517	23
Cash at bank and in hand	113,862	8,211	122,073	52,168
	126,430	8,211	134,641	52,191
Creditors				
Amounts falling due within one year	(88,618)	(2,000)	(90,618)	(995)
Net Assets	<u>37,812</u>	<u>6,211</u>	<u>44,023</u>	<u>51,264</u>

	2020 £	2019 £
Funds		
Unrestricted funds	37,812	50,147
Restricted funds	6,211	1,117
	<u>44,023</u>	<u>51,264</u>

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

Lesley E. Deschner
CA

Print name *LESLEY E. DESCHNER*
Treasurer

Print name *CATHY ANNE GEMMOK*
Chairman

Date of approval *9th Nov. 2021*

The Writers' Summer School
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NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

The Writers' Summer School is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It was registered on 1 August 2016.

(1) All funds held by The Writers' Summer School are designated as follows :-

	2020 £	2019 £
Unrestricted Funds	37,812	50,147
Restricted Funds: Friends of Swanwick	6,211	1,117
	<u>44,023</u>	<u>51,264</u>

(1A) Friends of Swanwick has been set up to provide support for younger writers through the Topwrite Scheme and to provide assisted places for those in financial difficulty.

(2) The following honoraria have been paid to trustees of the school as allowed by section 13 of the Constitution:-

		2020 £	2019 £
Treasurer:	L Deschner	3,500	3,500
Secretary:	I Jendrzewski	3,500	3,500

The Writers' Summer School
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Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of The Writers' Summer School

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the charity for the year ended 30th September 2020, which are set on pages 1 to 3.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed.....

Date..... 10 AUGUST 2021

Leon Stephens FCA
Brookes Stephens Chartered Accountants
New Media House
Davidson Road
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS14 9DZ