



Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection

Charity Registration Number 272392

Trustees' Annual Report for the period 1 January -31 December 2024

Objectives and Activities

Introduction

Established in 1976, the Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection has been active in fund raising and giving grants to the Collection for the conservation, purchase and display of artefacts.

The Theatre Collection was founded in 1951 and has grown to become one of the world's leading collections relating to the history of British theatre and live art. The Collection holds artworks, audio visual material, costumes, designs, set models, playbills and programmes of this most ephemeral of art forms. The collections are particularly strong from the late 18th century onwards and document the onstage and offstage life of theatre. It provides a unique insight into theatre and live art, their creative processes and broader cultural contexts.

It is used by students, the theatre community, both professional and amateur, academics, artists, designers and historians, as well as members of the public.

The Theatre Collection has achieved both Accredited Museum and Accredited Archive Service status, and in 2020 its collections were Designated Outstanding by the Arts Council, England. The Collection's holistic approach to collecting across archives and objects, and the interconnectedness between the collections, make it an outstanding research resource. It is open to all and entrance is free.

Statement on Public Benefit

The Trustees of the Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection confirm that they have complied with the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the Friends Association in the year to date. These activities have generated funds to support the Theatre Collection, they have also promoted its work and facilities to members and the wider public. Membership is open to all who share an interest in the Theatre Collection. The annual subscription is decided at the Annual General Meeting and is currently £15. This low subscription enables more people to join but allows higher donations from those who wish to give more financial support.

The Theatre Collection seeks to benefit the wider community by providing the public with the opportunity to gain knowledge and enjoy one of the world's largest archives of British theatre and live art. The Friends Association is fully aligned with those activities and objectives both through its events planning and grant making decisions.

2024 Under Review

The year under review has been a challenging period for the Association's Council of Trustees. As with many charities, recruiting and retaining Trustees willing and able to undertake specific roles is difficult. The Association has been without a Chair for more than a year following the resignation of Peter Leppard on health grounds. The Treasurer, Paul Madine, who has undertaken the role for more than 20 years and Rosemary Silvester, who has been organising events for members and the public for almost 15 years, wished to step down. We have been successful in recruiting a new Treasurer, Les Finnemore formally takes over the role on 1 January 2025. Paul Madine is acting Chair.

As has been reported to members previously, the Friends' Council has spent considerable time over the past few years beginning with Peter Leppard's initiatives in 2021, followed by alternative proposals by Trustee, Martine Shackerley-Bennett, looking at ways to refresh and develop the Friends Association. Unfortunately, nothing could be agreed.

New impetus was introduced following the receipt by the Friends of a significant legacy from the estate of a former Friend, David Machin.

Although the legacy had been known about for some time, its value had not been determined by David's executors until mid 2024 when the Friends received £300,000.

Because the Friends now hold such a large sum of money, it needs to establish clear investment and grant assessment policies. Its current financial reporting methods and standard of annual audit of accounts already comply with Charity Commission regulations.

The Council of Trustees decided to ask the University's Alumni office, in consultation with the Department of Theatre, to seek potential volunteers who have an interest in the work of the Theatre Collection and the Friends Association who would bring new ideas and insights to help re-invigorate the Association and provide a larger pool of potential Trustees.

Several University Alumni responded positively and expressed willingness to be involved in the future development of the Friends.

Alison Allden, a long-standing member of the Friends and a former member of the senior team at Bristol University, agreed to join the Council as a co-opted member to establish and lead an Advisory Group to review and bring forward recommendations that will inject renewed energy and purpose to the Friends in time for a relaunch to coincide with the Friends' 50th anniversary in 2026.

The Advisory Group's tasks include the review of the Friends Mission Statement and Articles of Association (Constitution), develop an investment and expenditure policy; and establish funding priorities for the Theatre Collection appropriate to the Friends' Mission.

It will also develop a communication strategy and plan, to include consideration of websites, regular newsletters and social media, and build capacity for fundraising and advocacy by the Friends for the Theatre Collection through the development of a strategy for a targeted and manageable programme of events and fundraising activities that might encourage new members.

The Group will also advise on building connections and relationships with other Friends organisations externally (locally, for example, the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Club and Friends of Bristol Museums and Art Galleries), and internally with the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) and the Theatre Department as a whole.

The Advisory Group expect to conclude these tasks towards the end of 2025. The Friends has not made any financial awards to the Theatre Collection during 2024 in anticipation of the recommendations of the Advisory Group.

Achievements and Performance

As explained above, because of the David Machin bequest and the ongoing discussions and planning for the sustainability of the Friends Association, no grants were made to the Theatre Collection during 2024. Two requests were received towards the end of the year, one is pending a decision, the other was agreed and will be fulfilled during 2025.

The Friends hosted the following events, organised by Trustee, Rosemary Silvester.

January 17th -

Social Open Evening & Discussion, Montpelier, Bristol.

"Attracting new Friends"

FREE EVENT with wine and nibbles.

February 8th -

The Irvings: Lives in Theatre:

Hybrid talk & Q&A by Emma Howgill, in person at the Theatre Collection Reading Room and online via Zoom

March 5th -

Bodies of Influence: Hypnotic Performance in Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 'Trilby':

Online talk via Zoom & Q&A by Dr Isabel Stowell-Kaplan
(had to be postponed to a new date to be arranged.)

March 27th -

Visit to Bristol Common Press, University of Bristol.

April 22nd -

Tour of Bristol Beacon.

27 June 27th -

AGM, Theatre Collection Reading Room.

December 11th -

Exhibition at Theatre Collection Recent Accessions:

Special Preview for the Friends with refreshments & mince pies.

Financial Review

The Income and Expenditure Account for 2024 together with the Balance Sheet showing the Association's assets are given on the following page.

The most significant event is the receipt of the most generous bequest by David Machin. David who was a long-standing friend of the Theatre Collection, and the University in general, died in 2016. The Friends were aware since his death that he intended that we should receive a significant sum but were delighted when told that the bequest was £300,000. This has put the Association into quite a different financial league, and, as reported above, will be preparing policies both to safely manage the funds and distribute them appropriately over the coming years for the benefit of the Theatre Collection. The newly elected Treasurer, Les Finnemore, has extensive experience dealing with such sizeable funds and will be working closely with the Advisory group led by the very experienced and influential Alison Allden.

Our more normal income remained steady. Our membership subscriptions have fallen slightly as numbers reduce. We currently have 58 members and three honorary members. We continue to be grateful to those loyal members for our income and their additional donations, particularly those able to Gift Aid their contributions. With the addition of the David Machin bequest to our income, our Deposit Account interest receipts have improved significantly.

As reported elsewhere, the Friends did not make any grants during the year to the Theatre Collection.

Other expenditure has been kept to a minimum with Liability Insurance and postage making up the majority of the Association's outgoings. The expenditure on meetings and the AGM includes printing and distribution of papers, although as much as possible is sent via email.

The Balance Sheet details the cash balances held on deposit or in the Current Account. A provision of £400 is held to cover any costs the Theatre Collection incurs associated with its Oral History Archives. £1,000 is held permanently as a reserve fund in accordance with our current Reserves Policy established in 2007.

We are grateful to Rachael Fleetwood BA, MBA, ACMA, GCMA for inspecting and signing the accounts.

Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

2023		2024
£	£	£
Income		
980.00	Membership subscriptions	855.00
497.98	Additional donations from members and others	637.00
	David Machin Bequest	300,000.00
117.36	Interest on deposit account	4,080.86
324.98	Inland Revenue Tax refund	274.94
80.00	General Fundraising Events income (gross)	50.00
	Sale of Cards	10.00
<u>2,000.32</u>		<u>305,907.80</u>
Expenditure		
1,000.00	Grants to The Theatre Collection:	0.00
0	Oral History Project	0.00
0	Events costs and transaction fees	26.90
26.00	Meeting Costs incl. AGM	62.57
55.73	Stationery & Newsletter	1.30
96.00	Public Liability Insurance	96.00
93.72	Postage	40.75
<u>1,271.45</u>		<u>227.52</u>
<u>728.87</u>	Surplus/ Deficit for the year	<u>305,680.28</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	£	£
General Fund Balances as at 1 January 2024	5,597.59	
Add: Surplus/ Deficit for the year	305,680.28	
		<u>311,277.87</u>
Assets	£	£
Balances on Deposit at Nat West Bank (Liquidity Manager 30 day Acc)		
Reserves	1,000.00	
Restricted Funds:		
Oral History Project	400.00	
David Machin Bequest	304,754.87	
Other Unrestricted funds	3,289.97	
	<u>309,444.84</u>	
Balances at Nat West Bank		
Unrestricted funds	1,833.03	1,833.03
		<u>311,277.87</u>

AUDITOR'S REPORT

I have examined the above Financial Statements with the books and receipts of the Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection and have obtained the information which I consider necessary. In my opinion they give me a true and fair view of the Income and Expenditure of the Association for the year ended 31st December 2024 and of its financial position as at that date.

R Fleetwood

Registered Charity No: 272392

R Fleetwood BA, MBA, ACMA, GCMA

Council of the Friends of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection 2024

The Council met to conduct business on three occasions during the year plus organised and hosted the Annual General Meeting in June. Each meeting was quorate.

At that AGM the Friends' Treasurer, Paul Madine stood down from his role but remains a Trustee and will act as Chair until Peter Leppard's replacement is found. Paul has been treasurer for more than twenty years. He is being replaced by newly elected Trustee Les Finnemore.

The other newly elected Trustee is Charlotte Monk who also has been elected Secretary to replace Lizzie Moss who has resigned because of work commitments.

Two Trustees, Claire Herford and Martine Shackerley-Bennett's three-year terms of office expired at the June AGM but they both agreed to stand for re-election and will serve for a further period of up to three years. The Friends' Constitution allows for a maximum of ten Trustees. Peter Leppard resigned as a Trustee in August due to continuing ill health. It is hoped that the vacancies can be filled during the coming year.

The full list of Principals, Trustees and observers is listed here.

President: Stephanie Cole OBE

Vice President: Sir John Kingman FRS

Vice President: Emeritus Professor Martin White

Trustees:

Acting Chair: Paul Madine

Secretary: Charlotte Monk. (Elected June 2024)

Treasurer: Les Finnemore. (Elected June 2024)

Membership Secretary: Claire Nabney;

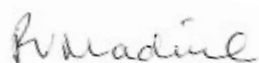
Rosemary Silvester; Lizzie Moss; Claire Herford; Martine Shackerley-Bennett; Peter Leppard (until 1 August 2024)

University of Bristol Observers:

Jo Elsworth, Associate Director (Culture and Collections); Julian Warren, Head of Theatre Collection; Lucy Powell, Keeper: Theatre Archives; Dr Jill Sullivan, Assistant Keeper: User Services; Professor Elaine McGirr, Professor, Department of Theatre.

The Friends are grateful to all these people for their continuing work, encouragement and support.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.
Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees



Paul Madine, Acting Chair

Date: 18th March 2025