

Winchester Dramatic Society

Chesil Theatre Development and Improvement Appeal

The Appeal aims to ensure the long-term viability of Chesil Theatre as a vital centre for the arts and a community asset; in particular to fund a new annexe to expand the existing building as well as continuously upgrading facilities for the benefit of audiences and performers alike. This is the story so far.

1999

- Winchester Dramatic Society first approaches St John's Winchester Charity, owners of the adjacent land, with regard to a joint redevelopment project.
- Total net assets £25,159. £28,897 in the bank.

2000

- Joint architects and quantity surveyors appointed.
- Informal discussions with Winchester City Council Planning Department.
- Feasibility studies carried out.
- Total net assets £32,743. £33,515 in the bank.

2002

- At an EGM members agree to pursue the development project in principle and make funds available for professional fees.
- Total net assets £39,369. £47,516 in the bank.

2003

- Consultations held with City of Winchester Trust, Diocesan Advisory Committee, Chesil Street neighbours and others – all welcome the scheme.
- Total net assets £46,116. £53,730 in the bank.

2004

- Chesil Theatre Fundraising Appeal launched to the media under the heading *Building a Dream*, with magical characters in Shakespeare's "Dream" from our youth theatre to help tell the story.
- Appeal Committee formed and brochures distributed.
- Planning application lodged with Winchester City Council.
- The Gannett Foundation fund an infra-red hearing system for the auditorium.
- *Christmas Chronicles* by Lisbeth Rake performed - an evening of nostalgia and readings at Theatre Royal Winchester, in conjunction with *Hampshire Chronicle*.
- Gala Film Night and reception – *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*.
- Fundraising stall in St Maurice's Covert.
- Civic Night and raffle held during *She Stoops to Conquer* at the Theatre Royal.
- Website appeal pages completed including Amazon link to create commission.
- Impact assessment regarding flood plain requested.
- Total net assets £65,871. £44,786 in the bank.

2005

- Revised planning application submitted (including recently purchased strip of land by St John's) and approved, subject to conditions.
- Gala Film Night and reception in The Great Hall – *Pride and Prejudice*, celebrity guests include Matthew Macfadyen and Brenda Blethyn.
- Chesil car boot sale in cattle market car park.
- Bridge and afternoon tea event with Nina Connolly.
- Auction of Promises with Isabelle Haigh and Jo Ashwell – pledges range from a meal for four, to a foot massage, to ironing a basket of laundry, to a ride in a combine harvester.

- *Claustrophobia* at Chesil Theatre presented as a benefit by Platform 4, Winchester's professional touring company.
- Environmental impact assessment requested.
- Initial discussions on land purchase commenced.
- "Friends of the Chesil" donation scheme launched.
- Total net assets £86,123. £63,750 in the bank.

2006

- Successful grant application made to The Mercers' Company for assistance with auditorium refurbishment.
- Raffle during performances of *Hay Fever* at Theatre Royal.
- Film Gala and reception – *Pirates of the Caribbean II*. Delighted to see Chesil Youth Theatre member Luke de Woolfson's name in the credits!
- Wine tasting evening and food quiz.
- *Shiver* presented at Chesil Theatre by Platform 4, again as a benefit.
- At the AGM members authorise the purchase of land needed for the new building.
- Winchester Open Weekend introduces new members of the public and donations to our organisation.
- Total net assets £105,504. £86,634 in the bank.

2007

- Documents confirming grant of planning permission finally received.
- The Skinners' Company Lady Neville Charity grant funds for refurbishing the lighting rig.
- Bid made to The Big Lottery Community Buildings Programme, but like 75% of applications was not successful.
- Gala Film Night and reception – *Elizabeth the Golden Years*. "Extras" in doublet and hose include Chesil Theatre members.
- Jane Harding makes her walled garden available for a garden party with entertainment.
- Ecological surveys continue.
- Ruby Party celebrating 40 years at the Chesil Theatre boosts funds.
- Total net assets £132,675. £112,707 in the bank.

2008

- Family of the late Fred Sharples, a long-standing member, make donations - including Fred's cellar used as prizes for "Fred with us in Spirit" raffle.
- Paul Byrne (Tom Williams' son-in-law) completes charity cycle ride to Paris in aid of the Chesil.
- *The Moon is Down* reading held at the Chesil Theatre.
- Sales of *The History of St Peter*, written by Chesil member Richard Green top £1,252.
- First of the Chesil Outreach projects raises funds: *A Play in a Day* arranged with All Saints Primary School, Highcliffe.
- Gala Night and raffle held at Theatre Royal during performances of *Charlie's Aunt*.
- Mark Ponsford performs *Wilde Night Out* at the Chesil Theatre.
- Unsuccessful bid to Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Archaeological surveys progress, but are far from reaching a conclusion.
- Contracts exchanged on the 999-year lease for the land required for the current planning consent.
- Grant application for tertiary glazing to auditorium unsuccessful.
- Savills and Fine and Country Estate Agents help with advertising and sponsorship.
- Total net assets £167,172. £152,264 in the bank.

2009

- Mark Ponsford performs *The Music Hall – Undated!* an amazing one-man show.
- Chesil clothing goes on sale – T-shirts, polo shirts plus hoodies for Youth Theatre members.
- Chesil Outreach visits St Swithun Wells School in Chandlers Ford.
- £30,000 grant approved by Winchester City Council.

- Donations come from sales of wine at our neighbouring Chesil Rectory Restaurant.
- Playreading *An Englishman Abroad* and a homegrown “Shakespeare Fest”, celebrating the bard’s birthday.
- Ten years after founding the scheme the Chesil’s reserves are over £200,000, after expenditure of £64,000 on costs/fees for the project and on improvements to the theatre facilities.
- Thanks go to Peter Barker Memorial Fund for their donation.
- Peter Liddiard sets up a project working group to gain feedback from members and prepare a phased building and improvement programme.
- “Development Project - The Way Forward” (a review of the first ten years and forward to the next ten) presented to Chesil Theatre members.
- Grant application made to Garfield Weston Foundation unsuccessful.
- Dutton Gregory solicitors sponsor publicity items.
- Total net assets £238,836. £202,782 in the bank.

2010

- Promises auction raises another £1,500.
- Plans announced for Phase 1 of the scheme – a multi-purpose light-filled foyer and rehearsal space, extended dressing room and storage areas with improved facilities for the disabled. Only another £250,000 needed to start building!
- £13,000 received by way of Gift Aid over past two years.
- A further £30,000 (Town Forum and District) grant confirmed from Winchester City Council.
- President’s Night held at Theatre Royal during performance of *Pygmalion* – a way of thanking our councillors, sponsors, advertisers and many other supporters.
- Total net assets £279,932. £238,682 in the bank.

2011

- Successful talks completed with St John’s resulting in improved terms for the land purchase.
- Music hall entertainment performed in Littleton with donation of £600.
- New planning application prepared, necessitated by change of plans by St John’s and their acquisition of property in Colebrook Street.
- New donations from members, “Friends” and Youth Theatre parents totalled £10,462 with standing order donations at £1,763 per month.
- Final £30,000 (Town Forum and District) grant confirmed from Winchester City Council. This makes a total from WCC of £90,000
- Total net assets £360,660. £317,847 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2012

- Revised planning application submitted, including plans to reinstate the porch. Extension of time to original scheme approved. Revised application (for Chesil Theatre only) welcomed by councillors but rejected for amendments.
- Fundraising events include Richard Green’s evening of *Magic Mystery and Mastermind*, Cecily O’Neill’s *American Evening* by Playgirls and Partners plus two rehearsed play readings.
- Total net assets £426,748. £384,030 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2013

- St John’s plans change and they decide to sell their part of the land for residential use. Liaison established with Alfred Homes, property developers and St John’s preferred purchasers, and with their architects, Huw Thomas Associates. Positive pre-application meeting with Planning Department. Solicitors in touch.
- Grant from Hampshire County Council as part of Cllr Phryn Dickens’ devolved budget on her retirement as a councillor.

- Fashion Show with costume presentation and celebrity auction. Items donated include a script from Dame Judi Dench and tie from Sir Ian McKellen. Capacity audience of nearly 100.
- Preparation for submission of planning application for amended scheme to suit new arrangements.
- Total net assets £496,656. £443,407 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2014

- Planning consent granted (latest Chesil Theatre scheme only)
- Total project costs estimated at £990,000 excluding VAT but including an allowance of £190,000 for inflation and contingencies
- 1999 to 2014 estimated £98,000 spent on improvements to the theatre: video links, lighting and sound equipment, security cameras, air conditioning
- Total net assets £576,887. £505,922 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2015

- Fundraising includes: *Drinking with Dorothy* performances, recital by Nicky Pink and *10x10 – Take 10 More* play readings.
- St John's announce a delay and thorough review of their facilities in view of the increasing age of their residents. This includes further revised plans to build new almshouses on their section of the Chesil Street site rather than sell to Alfred Homes and consequently requires a third design for our scheme.
- A total of £39,065 spent on professional fees since 1999. These include architects, quantity surveyors, planning expenses, solicitors, environmental surveys.
- *Bond is Back* theme evening with quizmaster Paul Riddell and auctioneer Charlie Seligman raises over £4,000.
- Total net assets £640,795. £573,037 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2016

- WDS/Chesil Theatre appoints architects Pick Everard to produce an impact statement. Liaison continues with St John's and their architects (Rockliffe Williams). Pre-application meetings held regarding St John's revised plans.
- New energy-efficient central heating boiler installed.
- Hot Rabbit perform a Beatles Night, raising £1,000.
- Talks on WDS history given to local groups by Flavia Bateson result in donations.
- Total net assets £688,902. £622,661 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2017

- Grant application to Theatres Trust unsuccessful in view of heavy demand
- Discussions continue with St John's, their architects and WCC planning department
- Anonymous donation received to enable tertiary glazing to auditorium
- St John's decide against a joint planning application and look to submitting their plans in November. As a result WDS prepares a separate application to coincide in timing.
- Pre-app process well advanced. Pro Vision instructed as architects and planning consultants.
- Discussions held with Theatres Trust planning advisor.
- Public consultation carried out with favourable feedback.
- Total net assets £736,163. £661,734 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2018

- Revised plans submitted to St John's. WCC planners ask that the two schemes should be considered together.
- In view of their revised plans, St John's would offer a smaller parcel of land at 325 sqm. It is felt our needs could be incorporated in this area but some spaces would be smaller.
- Tertiary glazing installed.

- Itchen Folk Band, including Chesil Theatre member David Woodward, perform a benefit to a crowded auditorium.
- A total £71,973 spent since 1999 on professional fees.
- Sound-proof doors fitted to auditorium.
- Total net assets £760,903. £700,807 in the bank plus. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2019

- Regular meetings with St John's continue.
- Bar refurbished.
- Historic England respond favourably.
- Planning consent granted for St John's alms houses project.
- Itchen Folk Band return for another sell-out benefit.
- St John's decide that their scheme must be completed before the theatre annexe is built.
- "Egghead" Kevin Ashman presents a quiz night.
- Total net assets £786,319. £700,942 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

2020

- Possible variations under discussion with St John's may give WDS a somewhat larger site and improved floor space. This would be our fourth scheme!
- Total £103,123 spent on professional fees since 1999.
- Auditorium seating refurbished.
- Total net assets approx. £802,000 and £728,000 in the bank. £90,000 pledged in addition.

fmb: updated May 2020
wappeal Overview – the story so far