

# **Under the Edge Arts 2018/19**

## **Chair's report for Wotton Arts Project AGM December 2019**

### **Introduction**

I report on the year to March 31st 2019 and, as I am retiring as Chair, I have also written an update and a few words on the future of UTEA. Copies of the Annual Report – both the accounts and commentary - are available today and I am pleased to recommend approval. As usual the Annual Report is filed with both the Charities Commission and Companies House. A copy of the Annual Report and this Chairman's report can be found at [www.utea.org.uk](http://www.utea.org.uk)

2018/19 was a challenging year financially with a posted loss of £7k. Such a loss is not sustainable however our reserves remain reasonably healthy and prospects for the current year to March 2020 are better. We may even break-even. Future actions to improve the position are discussed later. My thanks to Gill Sinkinson and Neil Brent for their great support for the UTEA accounts function throughout the year.

### **Thanks**

I would like to thank the Board along with our two part-time staff Sam Carlton and Ali Lidbetter for their brilliant support during the year and since. I think our Board structure is now very strong. It has been a great pleasure acting as Co-Chair with Norman Dadd for two years and as Chair this last year. I intended two years which morphed into three. The great news for UTEA is that Louise Hale has stepped forward to be Chair as we start a new decade. I am very grateful and wish Louise well; she will receive full support from me as a Trustee. Louise brings a youthful vitality and lots of ideas plus, importantly, stronger links with the youth of the Town. This next year we will be merging with the 50 year old Wotton Arts Association and assuming responsibility for the ongoing Wotton Arts Festival, the New Years Eve concert and the St.George's celebrations. I would like to thank WAA chair Gordon Phillips and all his committee colleagues for their friendship and cooperation in reaching this agreement – long live the Wotton Arts Festival for the next 50 years.

Equally important to UTEA are the army of volunteers, teachers, students, performers and customers plus our small pool of members. To each and every one of them thank you. I would like to single out Mo and Mike at Fish Out Of Water for praise. They are our box-office and are brilliant. Also B.Walker & Co for the £1 per annum window on Church Street giving us a great promotional place in the Town. Thanks to Norman and Jenny Dadd for their window dressing. Thanks to Roger Gunning for 15 years of recycling. Thanks to Michael Badrick and the waterers for looking after the garden this year. Thanks to Rorys Well for the tree. Thanks to the Town Council for fixing the leaking roof. Thanks to the McMurtrys for allowing us to hold a record-breaking Shakespeare at Swinhay once again. Thanks to Pete Lidbetter for fixing up our Wifi system. Thanks to Moira Buist and her successor at Wotton Directory Jan Baber. Jan is now the owner of the Wotton Times and we work closely with Jan and her team Ben Norris and Jason Titley. Thanks to Matty Prior at the Gazette for her continuing support. Above all thanks to Lynne Clarke for her patience and support.

I would also thank Brenda Cary and her crafting colleagues for working with us on the Arts Trail taking on the legacy of the Wotton Arts & Craft Trail – much of the two days was successful thanks to the artists and crafters; lessons learned as well and we look forward to the next.

## **Activities**

Many people remark on the range and quality of events at Under the Edge Arts, coupled with friendly reception given by our volunteers and the pleasant atmosphere for teaching and performing. We are constantly looking for new acts and innovation. I will leave a review to my successor. For me it has been a privilege to meet and see some brilliant musicians and artists. Some have become friends and have taken me into new interests for which many thanks.

There really haven't been many negatives. Losing the New Generation dance groups with no notice given, was one. We still haven't filled the dance gap although hopefully belly-dancing will be a regular class after next months taster session. We also say good bye to our regular tea-dance sessions after the final one on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. We welcome approaches from teachers of all forms of dance.

## **The Future**

We have become aware that UTEA is right at the bottom of the table of arts centres measured by financial assistance from local authorities and public bodies. A recommendation from a sub-committee that Stroud DC should double its grant to UTEA from £2.5 to 5 [taking us on a par with Prema and SVA] was ignored. We get no funding from Wotton Town Council and face an escalating rent bill from Wotton Town Trust. Steps need to be taken to remedy this both with these Councils and by focusing on Arts Council support. Our donations have fallen significantly in recent years and we also badly need a strengthened membership scheme.

Apart from this weak external funding platform I think UTEA is in a good place. We have a great programme, some innovative vinyl, blues and jazz nights, a strong Fred Talks feature and lots of scope for more. For myself I would like to maintain the six monthly Wotton Arts Hub sessions and build the Wotton Sculpture Group either inside UTEA or independently. I Look forward to my big three projects coming up - Wotton Window Wanderland in February, Spring into Summer in March and the Spring Gardens and Open Studios weekend on May 2/3

Good luck Louise and thank you all

Martin Clarke  
Chairman  
14 December 2019