

## **Chair's Report for 2015-2016**

### **1. Summary**

It is with great pleasure that I present the fourth Chair's Report on behalf of the Committee and the Trust. It has been a busy and productive year in which the Trust has engaged in a number of activities.

- We have reflected on the purpose of the Trust: why do we need a Supporters Trust and what is its purpose? We consulted with members on this and organised a major meeting with stakeholders in the city to discuss the future of the Mystery Plays and the role of the Trust within it. I will return to this topic later in the report;
- We have participated in the Minster Mystery Plays, both onstage, backstage and front of house, engaged in research at the University of York and facilitated a University seminar at Kings Manor;
- We fundraised at St Crux's and used some of our funds to sponsor the Mystery Plays wrap party;
- We revised our administration, introducing a single date for membership renewals and changing our membership fee to £10 per adult member, with free membership for under-18s where an adult is a member;
- We have regularly produced our newsletter for members and interested subscribers, placed an advertisement for the Trust in the Minster programme and produced a new leaflet – please take a few! – in time for the Minster production.

### **2. Record of thanks**

I'd like to record my thanks to my fellow Committee members – Chris, Gary, Phil, Simon, Sharon and Shelagh – for all their hard work and support over the last twelve months. Sharon is stepping down from the Committee but assures me she will still be around to help at events – so thank you, Sharon, for your contribution to the Trust. I'd also like to add thanks to Stewart Hildred, a Trust member in Milton Keynes, who works so hard on producing our newsletters and designed and produced our advert and the new leaflet. It's been a pleasure for me to work with Stewart via Skype and the technology at our disposal these days. We are grateful to James Eaglescliff who continues to provide help with our website and has kindly volunteered to train some of the Committee in the wonders of web technology over the next few months. A big thank you goes to Bernard Lyne for once again auditing our accounts. Thanks also to Steve Barker who worked so enthusiastically with Gary, organising our fundraising day at St Crux, and to our wonderful team of helpers who turned up and worked throughout the day to make it such a success. We have applied for a date for next year – so do look out for this in one of our newsletters. We will need you!

### **3. Reflection of the role of the Trust**

When we developed our business plan for the year, we recognised that one of the key issues was to look at membership and why people wanted a Trust. Membership numbers had declined in the previous year and we had to ask ourselves why this might be the case. The Trust's formation in 2012 was in recognition of the tremendous experience of community involvement in the Museum Garden Mystery Plays and people's wish that this should continue. So the question was: were people passionate about the Mystery Plays or about community drama? The answer is of course mixed: for many people, it is the experience of taking part in community theatre, be that the Mystery Plays or Blood and Chocolate, which is the driving force.; for others it is about supporting the continuation of the Mystery Play tradition in York; for some it is about meeting with likeminded people; for others it is about receiving information about the Plays and related activities. The Committee decided then to spend time this year consulting on the purpose of the Trust and aiming to revive membership with a strategy synchronised with the Minster production: a membership push supported by a new leaflet and an advertisement. We recruited 22 new members as a result and our membership numbers currently stand at 85. Although this is encouraging, the number of members has declined from our first year when we had 129 members, of whom 51 are still members.

In October we met with key figures in the city to discuss the future of the Plays and the role of the Trust. Represented at that meeting were York Theatre Royal and Riding Lights Theatre, the Festival Trust responsible for the Waggon Plays, the Minster, Make it York, Media Arts and the National Centre for Early Music (as holders of the Mystery Plays archive). The result of that meeting forms the presentation which follows later in this meeting but, in summary, the future of the Plays in York was warmly endorsed, together with recognition of the challenges faced in staging productions. Within that, the role of the Trust was seen as critical in providing the voice of the community in ensuring the future of the Plays. I am grateful for the support received from those representatives in a variety of ways and for their endorsement of our activities.

#### **4. Social events**

We have not organised many events this year. We had a successful Bloody Tour of York recently – great fun for those who attended and our thanks to Alicia Stabler for offering us this. But it is true to say that there were only 7 Trust members present. Our plans to run a trip to Lincoln Mysteries were cancelled due to lack of interest and we were unable to offer a trip to Beamish as planned, due to other commitments of those involved. Our Christmas party last year was poorly attended – which is partly why we have linked the Christmas Social to the AGM this year. We will look at this again – but we have to ask the question: how much do members value events and, if they do, what form should these take?

#### **5. Our web site**

Maintaining our website is currently an area of difficulty due to lack of expertise and time. It is currently out of date and needs some significant work to improve its content. We believe it is important to maintain a website as this is often the place people go to when they look for information on the Mystery Plays. We direct overseas or national enquiries to the right source for information on the Plays or current

productions. However, its currency is a problem and that, and the expertise to address it, will need to be resolved next year, particularly if the role of the Trust is to develop.

## **6. Conclusion:**

The Trust exists to maintain and develop awareness, interest and support in the Plays and, in so doing, provides a network between interested members and supporters. I feel the Trust has fulfilled that role this year but I also think that the Trust is at a crossroads in its development. I sincerely hope we are in a position to take it forward over the next year. For that it will need, not only the energy and commitment of the Committee, but the continuing support, commitment and involvement of its members.

**Linda Terry**

**Chair YMPST**

**November 2016**