

Stogursey Arts Trust AGM Chair Report 2025-26

Following the last AGM, Mike Bradshaw, Helga Staddon and Tim Kaye stepped back from their trustee roles within the Trust. We would like to thank them sincerely for their many years of dedication and hard work. John James, Graham McLeod and Jill Newton also stood down at various points during the year and we also thank them for their contributions as trustees. The year began with a degree of uncertainty, but it has ultimately proved positive and productive. For the trustees, it has also been something of a learning curve as we have deepened our understanding of what it means to operate as a charitable trust and to fulfil our responsibilities effectively.

Several encouraging developments stand out from the past year.

Events Group

The Events Group has worked hard to raise funds for the Trust and also organised an open-air performance by the touring Rude Mechanical Theatre Company in the grounds of Fairfield House. Our thanks go to John James for driving this forward, and to John Ackland-Hood for generously hosting and supporting the event. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and very well supported by the community.

Grants

Vice-Chair Sukey Elstob successfully secured funding from Hinkley Point's grant-making body, enabling both the theatre performance and the Festival to take place. The Rude Mechanicals attracted an audience of over 180 people and was reported to be among the best-attended events on their tour. The application process also provided valuable experience for both trustees and the Events Group.

The Festival

A particular highlight was the wicker lantern parade that opened the Festival. The school played a central role in creating the lanterns, and as dusk fell, a striking procession made its way from the school along the High Street to the church. BBC Points West filmed the event and broadcast it that evening, giving the Festival welcome publicity and helping to attract visitors throughout the week.

The ten-day Festival began on 10 October, with the church once again serving as the main exhibition space — our sincere thanks to the church community for their continued support. Displays included floral mannequins, a Bayeux-style tapestry, work from local artisans, artwork by schoolchildren, and the lanterns lining the pews. Many people contributed to making the Festival such a success; while it is impossible to name everyone, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all involved, particularly Jenny, John (Chair), and Liz for coordinating with the school.

Music featured more prominently this year, with performances across the Jubilee Rooms, the church and the Victory Hall, spanning classical to popular styles. Workshops ran alongside the performances, including floral design, clay, ukulele, shanty singing and live craft demonstrations. Altogether, the Festival felt lively, welcoming and well supported by both residents and visitors. Festival Chair John James report can be found on the web site.

Website Launch

Another important step forward was the launch of the Trust's website: www.stogurseyarts.co.uk. For the first time, the Trust has a clear online presence, providing a central hub for information about events, activities and future plans.

A Growing Network

It has been wonderful to see the arts continuing to thrive naturally across the village. Several initiatives have settled into new homes: the SAPS exhibition is now held at the Victory Hall, alongside the Open Mic, Crafternoon club and singing group, while the Sunday Jam has moved to the Jubilee Rooms. Festival taster sessions for ukulele and shanty singing brought in new faces and now meet regularly at the newly revitalised pub.

The church continues to host Organ and Choir concerts, and the Victory Hall is broadening its programme with events such as comedy evenings. Meanwhile, artisan and floral groups are already developing new ideas, and we are especially pleased that the Rude Mechanical Theatre Company plans to return.

Together, these activities reflect the impressive creativity within our village. Alongside helping to deliver the festival, the Trust aims to support, connect and encourage affiliated groups, and where possible help them access the resources they need. We are very grateful to everyone who gives their time, energy and talent to sustain this shared cultural life.

All in all, it has been a positive and heartening year for the Trust.

Colin Pye