



## Chair's Report, 2021

### AGM, 11/10/21

With a leap of faith the committee very much wanted to put on the Festival in some form this year following the cancellation in 2020 due to covid-19. The situation was so uncertain early in the year that we made the pragmatic decision to postpone from May to August which proved to be a sound move. Again because of uncertainties about any regional lockdowns we booked mainly local acts who were more likely to be able to get to us. Performers were very accommodating and delighted to participate in live events at last. For many it was the first they had undertaken in 18 months.

Restrictions were lifted in mid July and we pressed ahead with no certainty as to whether audiences would want to attend. In order to increase confidence, we limited numbers in all venues and planned for extra staffing to support events. This involved considerably more liaison with the venues as safety advice was changing all the time.

Festival Saturday took its usual format with the Market, entertainment in Mortimor Gardens, and an archive exhibition. Nailsworth School stepped up to take over the Duck Race which as always proved a draw for the families. Unfortunately, the weather deteriorated by lunchtime and the decision was taken to cancel the afternoon sports activities. This also impacted on Market Street with buskers from there being accommodated at The Setting. Discussion is on-going in regard to planning in a more co-ordinated format with those traders for 2022. Despite the weather the event was well attended with audiences showing a true British spirit as they huddled under large umbrellas! Road closures worked well but there were the usual challenges communicating with the bus company.

The programme this year included 8 evening events ranging from Blues to Storytelling and rather to my amazement sold really well with most coming up to the limit of the agreed capacity. Feedback from audiences was very positive and we were able to meet the agreed rates to performers without difficulty. The quality of many events was extraordinary in the circumstances.

In planning the programme we deliberate kept events as straight forward as possible. This meant that we had only one workshop (on line) and one exhibition (visual arts) plus Library activities. Sadly, we were not able to repeat the very successful creative sessions for young children in partnership with Playcircle. They were not confident that they would have enough preparation time as their activities were only just reopening. Hopefully we will be able to revive this link in 2022.

Throughout all of our preparations the Town Council was very supportive and positive about the Festival going ahead. We did have a number of issues with the Banners, especially in the high winds but hope to improve this for next year. We will also be working with the Town Council over the banner brackets as research has shown that these belong to the Chamber of Trade. In particular I am keen to ensure an annual safety check before we use them again.

We did not ask sponsors to give any donations this year in view of the challenging situation but kept in contact and hope to reinstate their active involvement in 2022.

In order to deliver the Festival we are very dependent on the work of the whole team and this was especially true for 2021. I would like to extend my personal thanks to the committee for the way that each and every one stepped up to deal with the extra challenges of 2021. Your resilience was fantastic and meeting all the additional challenges to put on a successful Festival deserves huge congratulations.

Mary Saunders  
Committee Chair