

### **Chairman's report to Whitchurch Town Assembly -- 20 April 2011**

Whitchurch Arts is now in its third successful year, having celebrated its second birthday back in September. We are very grateful to the town's residents, volunteer organisations and the town council for their continuing support, both creatively and financially.

Our monthly meetings are always lively, and now we often have artists playing songs at them too!

#### **WORKING TOGETHER**

Whitchurch Arts is proud to be working with Beth Wright, one of this year's Community Award recipients, and her "groups together" which brings together local organizations to foster sharing of ideas and planning of events on particular themes.

For example, the theme for March was "Mother Earth". Whitchurch Arts picked up on this for the theme of its most recent **art show**, held here in the Gill Nethercott Centre. We reached out to the local primary school and Testbourne school to include artistic works brought back by students who had visited the twinned schools in **Mityana**, Uganda. Students also displayed their art and stories. The show featured many creative works made by the **Whitchurch Youth Project**, too. My thanks to Jude Price who heads up the team putting on these twice-yearly shows, and our ever popular 'Off the Walls' scheme, which turns venues around town into public art galleries.

Whitchurch Arts also works closely with the **Festival** committee. Our pumpkin decoration competition, for instance, which was held in collaboration with the White Hart, saw many creative pumpkins carved and later displayed at the fireworks event at the end of October on the Meadow. My thanks go to the Festival chairman Rob Dunlop, for all his group's efforts.

Speaking of the **Meadow**, many of our members get their inspiration from attending events there, or just relaxing amongst the abundant nature - a wonderful retreat everyone in town can benefit from. My thanks go to Graham Burgess, the chairman of the Meadow trustees, and our Director of Arts, for all the good things he does.

Most recently, Whitchurch Arts met with The Whitchurch **History Society** to find ways of working together - with the goal of producing a combined show, penciled in for March 2012.

Whitchurch Arts also takes this moment to give a plug to the fine folks who are organising Whitchurch's annual music festival. Once known as Twangfest, it has been renamed to **ROCKUS** and will take place on Saturday, 4th June at Testbourne. Profits are reinvested into the festival, and if possible to local good causes.

## **AWARD GIVEN**

At our last monthly meeting, we were very pleased to announce the second winner in our annual WHITCHURCH ARTS AWARD, which is supported by the Town Council. The Award is given to an individual, or a group, in recognition of their creative contribution to society. Winners of the award are an inspiration to artists in Whitchurch and further afield.

This year, our award is bestowed upon **Peter Honri**, who has lived in Whitchurch since the late 1990s. Peter is an actor, writer and former council member of Equity. His first film appearance was in the film 'Young and Innocent' at age 8 in 1937 and his professional career started in 1948 at Collins Music Hall – following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Percy Honri. An award ceremony will take place in the White Hart on May 17 (booking is essential).

## **COLOURFUL SURVEY**

At last year's Town Assembly, I conducted an impromptu crowd survey. Let's do it again! Everyone stand up. Now, anyone wearing black tops, sit down. How many colourfully dressed people do we have here tonight?

Whitchurch has seen many of its bollards change their black toppings into colourfully painted coverings over the past year. Several of us joined the Bollard Art Project's manager, and Whitchurch Arts member, John Buckley, for an official launch and walk-about party back in July. Since then, several more bollards have been painted, including one that tracked our town's progress in BT's "Race to Infinity" for faster Internet broadband; and another which depicts the mayor - albeit a bit shorter!

## **CREATIVE SHOPS**

Our congratulations go out to the two new creative shops that opened in the town centre this past year - Velvet Rose, which is run by a Whitchurch Arts member, and Daisydown Crafts. Other businesses like "Art at the Barn" and "Creative Conundrums" are also flourishing. I encourage you to support them all!

## **ART FORUM**

To finish, it's worth repeating some of what was stated at our AGM: To express oneself is to put your thoughts and feelings into concrete form for others to judge and debate. Sometimes a judge of art may decide a piece is offensive, or a waste of money, even if the bill is low. Sometimes a judge may try to put you off doing more by making false claims, vilification and seeming unrelenting harassment.

Having a friendly forum where your concrete, or even wet cement, can be revealed and admired is a safe harbour. Having a friendly forum where the community can celebrate the good that is in your art, makes for a stronger community. Whether that art be in the form of music, poetry, writing, paintings, sculpture, typography, pavement drawings, games, software, photography, dance, clothes, jewellery, handbags and even bollards!

In all those forms, and others, art entertains us and encourages us to reshape our view of each other, and of the world around us. We become more colourful, more vibrant, more understanding, more feeling. More progressive. More creative. We become, in the end, more caring.

Whitchurch Arts is a forum to further the progression of all creative art forms in the community of Whitchurch, Hampshire. Thank you.

Andrew Reeves-Hall,  
Chair, Whitchurch Arts