



Just a quick end-of-year message to all our members and a taster of what we have planned for 2018.

Looking back through newsletters and bulletins I can see why this year has seemed so busy: we have organised several talks and concerts, an Open Day, guided walks in May and September, a Members' Lunch, a neighbours' social event, Heritage Open Days and Exhibition, the Craft Fair, Jazz Festival (jointly with MATU) and the Abingdon Beer Festival. These were all very successful and brought many hundreds of new people to the Buildings. In addition, the Buildings hosted 9 weddings, and numerous plays, parties and concerts. But, at least as important, we welcomed well over 2000 people just as visitors to see our beautiful Buildings: thanks to our volunteer team we were open to the public for 65 afternoons during the summer, with over 1000 visitors; 600 or more came to the Open Day and Heritage Weekend and at least 700 came on group visits.

We were delighted to welcome our new Curator Tim Miller and his wife Brandi who joined us in September and are bringing fresh ideas to improve the experience for those who visit or use the Buildings. Special thanks go to the Trustees and volunteers who kept the show on the road during the busy summer period, keeping the buildings and gardens beautiful and looking after the weddings and other users.

The other side of our activity is our Civic role – campaigning to preserve the town's heritage buildings and promote civic pride. It has been a dispiriting time, with 3 buildings in the Town Centre Conservation area remaining boarded up after 2-3 years, serious threats to the fabric of some of them and no apparent prospect of the Abbey Hall re-opening as a venue for community activities. Talks with the relevant authorities are getting nowhere and it is likely that in the New Year we will need to mobilise public opinion on some of these so hope that many of you will support us when that time comes. Like others we are also campaigning to see that appropriate infrastructure is put in place for the planned new developments around the town and are trying to find out more about plans for this end of the much-publicised Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

But I would like to end on a positive note, looking forward to 2018: as you know, earlier this year we were awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £68,000 for feasibility studies for our proposed "Enhancement Project" – to build on the work of the last 70 years and secure the Buildings for future generations. Work on those studies will get under way in January – an important part of it will be to demonstrate that we have strong support from our members and volunteers so we will be in touch!

A very Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year to you and your families.

*Bryan Brown*

## Friends of Abingdon Events 2018

Wednesday 25 April: Talk "Abingdon's Early Transport Links - What Happened to the Railway?" by Caroline Bullock

Monday 28 May: *Abbey Buildings Open Day and Bank Holiday Walks*

Wednesday 13 June: Friends of Abingdon AGM and talk "'Skulduggery in the Shrubbery' by Stefan White

Tuesday 10 July: Talk: "Castles in the Desert; Stonemasons of the American Southwest" by Bobbie Nichols

Saturday 18 August: *Members' Lunch*

Thursday 23 August: *Childrens' Puppet Show*

Friday 7 - Sunday 9 September: *Heritage Open Days*

Friday 2 - Sunday 4 November *Abingdon Traditional Craft Fair*

December: *Beer Festival*

## Membership Subscriptions

Just a quick reminder to those of you who pay your annual subscription by cheque that these are due by 1 January and should be sent to Barbara Beach at **21 Gardiner Close, Abingdon OX14 3YA**. Subscription rates are £10 single, £16 couple.

If you would like to set up a Standing Order or convert to Life Membership please contact Barbara on 01235 888091 or by email to [barbara@mjbk.uk](mailto:barbara@mjbk.uk). **PS** if you already pay by Standing Order but did not amend it to the new rates last year, please can you do so asap.

## Other Abbey Buildings Events (January - June 2018)

(see organisers websites for details)

Friday 12 - Saturday 20 January: Abingdon Drama Club Pantomime - *Aladdin*

Thursday 25 January: MATU - *Iota*

Thursday 15 February: MATU - *Gerry Colvin*

Thursday 8 March: MATU - *Moonrakers/Three Pressed Men*

Wednesday 14 - Saturday 17 March: Studio Theatre Club - *Quality Street* by JM Barrie

Wednesday 21 - Saturday 24 March: Breakaleg Productions

Thursday 5 April: MATU - *TradArr*

April: Abingdon Drama Club - "*A More Perfect World*" by Tony Green

Thursday 3 May: MATU - *Gilmore and Roberts*

Friday 11 - Saturday 12 May MATU and Friends of Abingdon - *Jazz Festival*

Monday 4 - Saturday 9 June: *ODN Drama Festival of one-act plays*

Thursday 14 June: MATU - *Anna Ryder*

## Cinema screenings

Watch this space.....we now have our cinema licence and Regal are putting final touches to their planned winter season at the Unicorn. Dates, films and ticket arrangements will be announced shortly.