



Lincoln Film Society

Registered Charity No. 1156478
2016-17 Annual Report & Finances

Dear members

The Committee is pleased to present its report on the season which finished in May 2017.

Chairman's comments

2016-17 season was our best ever. Audience numbers were well up, average attendance was up, member recruitment was up, while guest numbers rose slightly; so, as we embark on our 65th season, we are in a sound position.

If we look at the numbers in a little more detail, we see: 4333 attendances recorded, an average of 167 people per film (or 73% of theatre capacity). 426 guests - almost 17 per film. Membership numbers reached 375 (5% up on 2015-16) and typically, 40% of the membership were present at each screening. In so many ways, the Society is doing rather impressively.

But, as I observed last year, we cannot rest on our laurels. Research shows that people in the UK only go to the cinema around twice a year (see note ¹), while the national decline in interest in subtitled cinema (mirrored by many people's apparent indifference to the Society's existence) continues. Finding ways to persuade people of the importance and quality of today's film culture, and then to consider joining us, is the challenge: how do we go about the task?

What's happening 'out there'?

Earlier this year, the BFI launched its 5 year strategy to 2022. Its priorities include attracting more people in the 16-30 age group to the cinema through 'a rich cultural programme' with particular focus on British and World film, aiming to keep them returning through 'cultural curiosity and risk-taking.' (see note ²)

Easy to say, less easy to say how that will be achieved. The Independent Cinema Office, with whom we have close links, offer some interesting thoughts on collaboration with others. Starting from the position that the cinema is about 2 things, the film and the people (which we'd agree with), the central point they make is that, with so many other things competing for their time and attention, people need a compelling reason to go to the cinema (see note ³). To continue our development as well as backing the BFI strategy (essential for the different forms of support they offer), the Society therefore needs to think about 2 things - how to provide that compelling reason through programming - especially for the 16-30 group - and how to let them know and get them involved in what's going on.

Programming

Given our attendance figures, it might appear we have little to concern us here. Plenty of films are released that never reach Lincoln, so our focus on world film puts us in a unique position, doesn't it? Why do more?

There's something in that; but while the Committee is certain that our current model serves the interests of members well, we are aware that our programming lacks a certain flexibility, which may work against us when it comes to attracting a new audience.

Choosing the films in April as we currently do, means we miss the opportunity to capitalise on 'in-the-moment' films (for example, God's Own Country). Nor can we take advantage of initiatives from the BFI, for example their India on Film initiative, their FLARE season of LGBT films or their current Thriller strand (all of which were announced after we had committed our season to print), or respond to other initiatives such as reflecting Black History Month in February. Can we be more responsive without dramatically changing the structure of what works so well?

We have some ideas. The current arrangement of having 3 gaps in the Spring for new releases is under review as we consider distributing them more evenly through the year. This would be an easy thing to do and could provide an instant result. We have pondered other ideas, for example, deliberately planning for certain commemorative events (as we did for Magna Carta), celebrating a key director's body of work, even asking members to vote for a film from our archive (subject to its availability of course). We show one classic after all - so why not two?

An idea from our treasurer, John - is that we should invest some of our reserves to buy projection equipment and a screen - is also well worth thinking about. There is a lot of innovative practice going on in film societies around the country, aimed at attracting different groups of people through the door. A lot of this starts with actually finding out what they want to see and empowering them to make it happen. By owning our own equipment, we would have the ability either to take some screenings

to a specific audience (which might be students but could just as easily be for communities who have made Lincoln their home) or make the equipment available on loan to such groups so that they can arrange their own films.

There is also no reason why we should not look at developing links to existing events, such as the Indie-Lincs film festival, currently held at the University of Lincoln each March. Last year, we liaised with Eyes on Screen, a group of University students passionate about film, who ran a blog for their peers, via another Trustee and member Janice Kearns. This was successful for a while, as Janice reports elsewhere, (though sustainability problems have since emerged).

All these offer us a chance to be more imaginative in how we try to reach a new audience. There is one other issue worth mentioning as a way to encourage a new audience for film; and it's one that is a good fit with our core charitable purpose - education.

The BFI's strategy includes developing what they call the 'talent pipeline', aimed at getting the next generation of filmmakers interested in film. Two such approaches exist in the county: the Cinematheque project (which has been going for many years) and the BFI Film Academy.

Lincolnshire schools are regularly involved and last season with The Venue, we helped organise a showcase event for the Cinematheque children (the first time they had been brought together in the county) to show their films to each other and their parents. Trustee & member Ivor Davey comments on this initiative elsewhere in this report, too. Meanwhile the BFI film academy for 16-19 year olds has been running in county schools for some considerable time. There is great potential through both these approaches for introducing more young people to the cinema.

It may be then that, besides adding a measure of flexibility to the Society's core programme, we should also help foster such projects. There are too many ideas for us to take them all on board successfully, so we need to choose. I hope members will be able to share their thoughts on these points at the meeting.

Communication.

Currently, we communicate with members and others via the website, email and social media, supported by printed information. Having a printed programme is the most traditional way for many people to learn about us, but it's clear that some members still expect to receive their copy in the post, something that the Committee does not feel is justified by cost and will not be doing. It's also clear (from conversations we've had on film nights) that some people discover us through the local paper. While this anecdotal feedback is encouraging, we have no significant data that tell us how effective any of these approaches are in reaching an audience.

From the survey we did with members at the end of last season, email appears to be the preferred option (see note ⁴), but as only 27 people bothered to respond to it, this is hardly conclusive and certainly no basis for making informed decisions. To get such a response from the membership was disappointing, to say the least.

Does this mean that members feel content with the status quo and feel no need to provide feedback of any sort? It may indicate that by and large they are uncomfortable with aspects of technology (which certainly appears true in the case of Twitter and Facebook) and distrust or ignore information that is sent to them (which may also explain why so many members claimed at the first film this season they did not know the programme had been released, even though that information was widely circulated at the time.) The limited use made of the website also raises questions about its effectiveness, given that it's now essential for every organisation to have one. Why is this?

Where Next?

It's clear there are many things we do well and we should be proud of the fact. It's also clear that good audiences, positive verbal feedback and lots of voting slips on film nights are helpful in their way but they do not enable us attract newcomers, nor do they tell us what the membership thinks or wants from the Society as it develops.

If we are to continue to thrive therefore, to be part of a dynamic future for film as envisioned by the BFI, then it seems we need new ideas to make the Society a more dynamic, flexible and responsive organisation with programming that can attract and engage audiences, younger ones especially, than it currently does.

While these ideas set out in this report may have some long term benefit, they are likely to take time to formulate, but as Chairman, I hope tonight's meeting marks the start of the next stage of our evolution. It just remains for me to thank everyone on the Committee, especially Jonathan Killin who has recently stepped down as Secretary after a period of some years, and to welcome the new members of the Committee who joined at the end of last season. I'd also like to thank our sponsors, the staff of The Venue and you, our members, for their help, encouragement and support in the last 12 months.

Richard Hall (Chairman)

References

- 1) <https://www.cinemauk.org.uk/the-industry/facts-and-figures/uk-cinema-industry-economics-and-turnover/average-annual-spending/>
- 2) http://www.bfi.org.uk/2022/downloads/bfi2022_EN.pdf
- 3) <http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/blog/>
- 4) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-XHNFN8M>

Secretary's remarks

As the new joint secretaries, we have been concentrating on ensuring we secured as much continuity as possible in the short time we have been undertaking the role. Following the recent membership recruitment run, it's become clear we need to give further consideration, with the committee, about a change to the membership registration windows. The current arrangement of having the main joining window in May was designed to encourage early renewal by existing members, with a second short window in September to allow newcomers to Lincoln an opportunity to join. Some committee members feel this causes confusion and may even be preventing new and returning members from (re)joining. Having the membership window open for the entire summer would increase the opportunity for the Society to sign up members. To encourage existing members to rejoin promptly, the incentive of a lower 'earlybird' price could be offered. These ideas are at an early stage of discussion however; the membership will be notified of any changes in due course.

Sue Firth/Tony Butcher (Joint Secretaries)

Treasurer's remarks

Our accounts for the 2016/17 financial year and season have been independently examined and signed off by Michelle Allen ACA of Yours 4 A Day Ltd.

The 2016/17 season has seen the Society's finances prosper. Our expenditure for the year was in fact slightly less than the previous season, mainly due to lower outgoings on marketing and publicity activities, including the website. Film and theatre hire costs were also slightly less than the previous year. Subscription, sponsorship and other sources of income increased by almost 7% from the previous season, which is a great achievement. We ended the year with a surplus of £2,587 which has been added to our capital reserves for future equipment upgrades or other essential projects.

We look forward to a successful 2017-18 season, with a great programme of films and a healthy membership which stands us in good stead for future seasons.

John Rossington (Treasurer)

Trustees' Report

The Society has been looking at ways to meet its core charitable purpose - helping to raise awareness about the breadth and history of film as an expression of culture - by working specifically with children and young people.

BFI/Cinémathèque Française: In July, in partnership with several Lincolnshire Primary schools, the BFI and the Venue, we helped organise a Showcase event at the Venue to present the work of local school children involved in a film education programme called 'Le Cinéma, cent ans de jeunesse'. This scheme was initiated in France and now involves schools from all over the world with children aged between 6 and 19, studying world cinema through the last 120 years and making their own films to strict guidelines. The scheme culminates in the production of a 10 minute film to a brief linked to the year's theme. This year Lincolnshire schools showed their films in London at the BFI, two schools went to Paris, to the international screenings, and one showed their film at the International Film Festival in Edinburgh.

The films screened in Paris can be seen at :- <https://vimeopro.com/user21775187/le-jeu-films-essais>

Mark Reid, head of Education at the BFI presented some of the exercises leading up to the final films as well as some of the international contributions, before conducting a question and answer session with the children who made the films. Our Patron, Jim Broadbent joined the children on stage to talk about their work.

It is hoped that we will be able to develop the event and repeat it next July, (perhaps as part of a wider event, currently under discussion with Cinema for All, the Film Societies' organisation) and that during the year we will work in partnership with the BFI and the Venue to organise film based workshops for the children.

Ivor Davey (Trustee)

Eyes on Screen: The Society developed a relationship with *Eyes on Screen* (<https://eyesonscreen.wordpress.com/>), a film review blog by students at the University of Lincoln. *Eyes on Screen* sent reviewers to Society screenings with the intention of raising the profile of society screenings with the student body. The blog was successful in the early part of the year but sadly there was little succession planning by the student team and it seems that this initiative has lapsed. The Lincoln School of Film and Media continues to offer a pair of tickets for students to attend each screening and screenings are publicised on social media and through the University's Virtual Learning Environment.

Janice Kearns (Trustee)

LINCOLN FILM SOCIETY
INCOME and EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
PERIOD ENDED 31st MAY 2017

INCOME		2017		2016
		£		£
Members' subscriptions	12,048		11,193	
Temporary members	2,125		2,050	
Raffles	1,139		858	
Sponsorship	1,130		860	
Miscellaneous	21	16,463	541	15,502
EXPENDITURE				
FILM SCREENINGS				
Theatre Hire	6,084		6,174	
Films Hire	3,705	9,789	3,917	10,091
OPERATING				
Programme notes	689		537	
Brochure, Web-site	875		1,463	
Film viewings, Travel	1,382		1,165	
Affiliations, subscriptions	275		265	
Printing, Stationery, Admin	271		533	
Insurances	307		290	
Audit	120		120	
Miscellaneous	0	3,919	0	4,373
OPERATIONS SURPLUS/(SHORTFALL)		2,755		1,038
SPECIAL EVENTS				
Donations, Grants, Ticket Sales	1,336		3,554	
Events expenditure	1,504		2862	
Surplus / (Shortfall)		(168)		682
Projects				
Upgrade of website		0		821
		2,587		899
Less depreciation - Screen & Equipment		0		1,886
Total: Surplus/(Deficit)		2,587		(967)

LINCOLN FILM SOCIETY
BALANCE SHEET 31st MAY 2017

	2017 £	2016 £
ASSETS		
Fixed at cost less depreciation		
Screen, Equipment	0	0
Bank accounts		
Current	16,658	13,676
Deposit	9,944	9,925
Cash	319	353
	26,921	23,954
Prepayments	215	415
	27,136	24,369
LIABILITIES		
Creditors	923	1,020
Advance Subscriptions/Sponsors	10,260	9,984
	11,183	11,004
NET ASSETS	£15,953	£13,365
FINANCED by		
SOCIETY FUNDS		
Films Fund		
Balance from Previous Year	3,477	4,444
In year surplus/deficit	2,587	(967)
Balance 31st May 2017	6,064	(31 May 2016) 3,477
Screen & Equipment Fund	9,889	9,888
	0	13,365
TOTAL FUNDS at 31st May 2017	15,953	13,365