

## Officers' Reports for 2022-23

### Chairman's Report

Let me begin this report by acknowledging the contributions of two Society stalwarts whom we lost last year. Bob Bratley was our projectionist for many years in the days prior to digital projection, having worked at at least two of Lincoln's old cinemas, including The Radion (now home to Radio Lincolnshire). Bob, who was 86, ran screenings with an experienced hand and enlivened many a Friday evening with a running commentary from the projection room as he tried to sort out the occasional breakdown. He became a life member when he eventually stopped his projection activities and continued to support us as an audience member - though he didn't think much of modern films.

Rob Sargent, who was 84, had served on the committee first as an ordinary member and then as treasurer. He stayed active on the committee when he stood down as treasurer and his experience proved invaluable as the Society expanded its activities and acquired charitable status. Like Bob, he will be sorely missed.

When I last wrote a Chairman's Report in December 2020, it was against a backdrop of Covid and huge uncertainty over whether the Society had any future. In that 2020 report, I said that officers of the committee would try to keep lines of dialogue open with The Venue while exploring whether we had any viable alternatives if it became clear The Venue was no longer a suitable base for us to continue showing films.

Our initial plan was to report to the Society in 2021. By the time the Government eased restrictions on who could gather where and when in the summer of that year, it was clear to us that no return to any sort of film activity would be possible before 2022. However, as 2022 unfolded, we felt increasingly confident some sort of comeback was possible.

The first step was the sequence of four films we showed that summer at The Collection. We were very aware of the shortcomings of that theatre's screening system, but felt that any sort of season was better than none and it would at least help ascertain whether we would get an audience. The result was positive enough to allow us to embark on the programme of eight films we're now running at the Terry O'Toole theatre.

At the same time, we had continued a dialogue with The Venue. After several unsatisfactory meetings, we finally made contact with the Director of External Engagement, Allison Webb. We found her very sympathetic to the idea that The Venue should reopen as a community asset and that Lincoln Film Society, with its long and successful presence there, should be a core feature of the community programme they wished to encourage. Just before Christmas, we learned that progress had been made on assessing the condition and viability of the equipment and that a business plan for the theatre was in development.

While this is very encouraging, we are not out of the woods. We need to know a number of things: what changes are proposed to the rental agreement we used to have (which will affect membership fees); whether the equipment is in a condition good enough to present films at their best; how screenings will be organised and managed, with responsibilities clearly set out; whether the bar and other facilities will be available and how they will operate; whether enough members will want to return; and not least, how we integrate the Terry O'Toole Theatre into forthcoming seasons.

This last point is especially important. Moving there has not deterred a healthy number from rejoining and this includes more than a dozen new members, some of whom are from south of the city and the Hykeham area. Equally, we are aware many former members did not rejoin for the current programme because The Venue is more convenient for them or they could not travel to North Hykeham. This points to the possibility of a two-theatre base in future.

We believe this can be good for the Society. It broadens our reach. It allows us to rethink what we programme. It provides an opportunity to reach a new audience. We have been here before of course, when we moved to The Venue in 1987. Then, membership was 230 (the capacity of the theatre) with a waiting list of 70. We ended the waiting list which gave us opportunities to grow both the number of members and the number of films we could show, which resulted in the Society we all recall - 300 plus members, healthy audiences & finances and 26 films per season. While it will be some time before we reach that level of achievement again - if we ever do - the committee believes we have to see our future in the same way. In effect we have to reinvent ourselves. This meeting will decide how.

Richard Hall

### **Treasurer's Report**

The interim balance sheet (attached) shows the Society was in a healthy financial state at the end of 2022. With the estimated screening costs for the second half of the season at the Terry O'Toole Theatre already taken into account, the net assets of the Society are currently £19,232.

John Rossington

### **Secretaries' Report**

After a two-year break from screenings the Society arranged a four-film season at The Collection in central Lincoln during June and July which was free to all members from the 2019/20 season. There were a total of 251 attendances by 120 different members.

Following this experiment a members' survey was conducted to gauge the appetite for a resumption of screenings, focusing on the possible locations and pricing structure. 141 responses were received which indicated the majority were willing to pay at least £5 per film and that, while most would prefer screenings to take place in Lincoln, 60% would be willing to travel to North Hykeham.

A number of options for screenings were explored and, with the continued unavailability of The Venue at BGU, the best option in terms of price, size and quality proved to be the Terry O'Toole Theatre in North Hykeham. An eight-film season in the autumn of 2022 and the spring of 2023 at a cost of £35 per head was arranged and has been partially completed. 143 people signed up for the season, which includes 12 people who had not previously been members of the Society. The average attendance for the four films screened to date is 90 people per film.

Sue Firth & Tony Butcher

### **Trustees Report**

Change. It may creep up behind or hit you face on, but it's inevitable and frequently painful. For LFS, Covid was an emergency stop, which ruined our season of film and made the charitable part of our remit – communication and education - an impossibility. Recovery has been slow because so many other things changed while we were hanging in limbo.

Gradually, things are thawing out again. The Terry O'Toole Theatre has made some screenings possible. Dialogue is underway with other providers. Activity in the wings continues (thank you Committee). This too shall pass. Spring is coming and, who knows, a 2023 season?

Jonathan Killin