

Dear Member

This year our Annual General Meeting, on **Sat 21 November at 11 am**, will be held virtually and I do hope you will be able to join us from your own homes. Details on how to access the meeting will be sent separately. You can find the relevant documents at [farnhammaltings.com/agm](https://farnhammaltings.com/agm) including proxy forms so that you can register your vote even if you are unable to join the meeting.

In my letter to you last year I said I would be standing down as Chair, but at the time no-one anticipated the extraordinary events which were to come. In order to provide continuity and stability during an unprecedented period I agreed to continue as Chair until the Chair-Elect, Michael Maher, could take over. Michael was co-opted to the board early in the year (and is standing for election as a trustee at the AGM). Together with Gavin, we have been working closely for several months and I am sure Michael will be welcomed by you all.

Inevitably it is hard to look back over a period that has been dominated by Covid-19, but as a cultural organisation we have always been committed to providing a safe and welcoming space for everyone and this was never truer than in the last eight months. The Maltings became a central hub from which we could support our community in ways we have not done before. It has helped us to focus on who we are and what we can be in the future.

One of the key achievements of the year came through our partnership with the Town Council to secure **World Craft City status** for Farnham, the first town in England and only the third place in Europe to receive this award. Farnham Maltings has played a prominent part in promoting craft, particularly through thread, unravel and festival of crafts, as well as regular workshops and fairs. All of which have continued, not always in the same format as previously but the appetite for craft remains undiminished, in fact it has flourished.

We are excited to have commissioned, with Lottery funding, a **contemporary textile piece called 'Stitching Together'** to celebrate the contribution the Farnham Maltings makes to the town. The artist, Alice Kettle, has working with local schools to produce a work that reflects all aspects of their lives in the town. The results of this ambitious project will be hung in the Great Hall.

**The theatre team** continues to produce work of real relevance and meaning. The last production I saw before lockdown was *The Man Who Left Is Not the Man Who Came Home*. Created in collaboration with the British Army, it packed a real emotional punch, reaching new audiences, prompting thoughtful and heartfelt discussion afterwards. Long may the Maltings be instrumental in producing work of this calibre.

At the **Museum of Farnham** the last room to be updated on the ground floor was opened. Titled *God Save The Queens* the displays take you from the Victorian period through to the 1950s, focusing on national and local events. The Museum continues to attract young people through a range of activities and is now offering digital school sessions due to COVID restrictions. The team is currently engaged on a new project to enhance the museum's digital offer, creating a display that helps people share stories of their experiences during lockdown and creating a new oral history collection.

Whilst sadly access to the building has been limited, **maintenance** work has continued unabated, particularly the smaller jobs that get pushed to the bottom of the list in busier times. We are fortunate, not only in occupying a characterful building but in having outside spaces to utilise, so our ambitions are not confined to the indoors. We already trialled outdoor cinema and music last year and have held our monthly market in the car park. We will continue to explore ways of using the whole building in new and imaginative way.

This has been a turbulent time for the arts and community sector and sadly some may not survive. Over the years we have been able to build some resilience into our finances which has put us in a better position than some, although hard decisions have had to be made. The reputation of Farnham Maltings, and the scope of the work it does, attracts support in grants and funding. As well as our ongoing relationship with Farnham Town, Waverley Borough and Surrey County Councils we are also supported by the Arts Council of England and the British Council. For particular projects, we are also funded by two charitable foundations: Rothschilds and Esmée Fairbairn. We are grateful to all our supporters, including members and patrons. Our treasurer, Andrew McWhirter, will again provide a commentary on the accounts at the AGM.

Whilst writing this letter the building has opened up offering a varied programme of events and of course, the café. I do hope you will continue to support and take part in many of the activities on offer. There is always something new to learn, see or try.

Thank you to everyone involved in making Farnham Maltings such a special place and in particular to Gavin and the team, our volunteers and all the creative people who enrich our lives with their expertise, energy and enthusiasm.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the forthcoming AGM, at which Gavin will offer an update on how we are managing in these times. Do bring your comments and suggestions if you have them.

Yours sincerely

**Lisa Hennessey**  
**Chair**