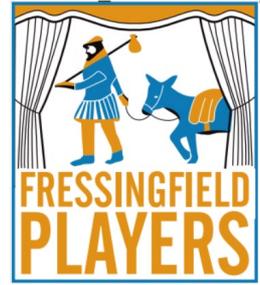


Report to Fressingfield Parish Meeting

Tuesday 20th April 2021



Did you know that pantomime was being performed in Fressingfield in the 1950s? Despite that troupe stopping in 1959, twenty-one years later it was revived by another large group of keen residents, who kicked off with a performance of Ali Baba in 1980.

There then followed a panto each year including Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, The Grand Old Duke of York, Goody Two Shoes, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Babes in the Wood, Aladdin, Robinson Crusoe, Puss in Boots, Dick Whittington and finally, in 1991, Sinbad the Sailor. The group unfortunately then disbanded and there was another gap of 20 years.

Then in 2011, history repeated itself, and the old theatrical magic returned to Sancroft Hall. A new group of villagers reformed the Fressingfield Players and we staged our first pantomime, again Cinderella (2011). Props were makeshift, scenery was minimal but impressive and costumes were borrowed from Onward Enterprises in Harleston. There was one performance – and tickets were hot property.

Largely the same troupe then performed Aladdin in 2012 at which point the then Director, Denise Clark hung up her players clip board to concentrate on the junior talent of Little Stars.

The Players continued though with many self-written panto's including Jack & the Beanstalk (2013), Robin Hood & his Meddling Mum (2014), and Robinson Crusoe & some Pesky Pirates (2015) and in 2016 the team took on the challenge of 2 shows in a year by performing Snow White (January 2016) and then Christmas with the Players (December 2016). The success of this led to another Panto Wizard of Oz (2017) followed by "Another Christmas with The Players" (2017). The lure of some warmer weather led to Alice in Wonderland (2018) and a spectacular mid-summer End of the pier show in the July of 2018. By this time the average age of the players, combined with pressures of work and University studies meant that the team decided to take a break from the Panto whilst we embarked on a campaign to swell our numbers in the same way audience numbers have swelled over the last 9 years with many shows now being a sell out over 3 and even 4 performances!

The team delivered a unique Christmas show in December 2019 despite having sadly suddenly lost one of our pivotal members in the November with a comedic play entitled "Who Killed the Director" which was followed by a variety show returning to Christmas with the Players (2019).

Then in 2020 COVID-19 stopped our planned "Cruising with the players" a comedy romp set on a glamorous cruise ship with romance, singing, dancing and some mystery...

We tried to keep the team together with some Zoom video nights watching recordings of previous shows and virtual social events but like many organisations it has been largely a case of “Covid stopped play”.

But we are undeterred and plan to come back stronger than ever and hope to be entertaining the village again this Christmas 2020. Our next show may well contain the Ugly Virus Sisters, Nora and Crona but the show will go on.

However, for the Players to continue we NEED to strengthen our troops and this year more than ever your am dram needs you!! Fressingfield Players are so much more than a Panto Group – we are an eclectic mix of amateur players – many very talented, many not so much 😊 – but EVERYONE is welcome (Over 16’s unless accompanied by a parent) and we need you on and off stage.

There are so many things to organise for a show to go ahead – staging, scenery, costumes, makeup, lighting, music, refreshments, box office, administration & finance, marketing to name just a few – and that’s before the thespians even think about the singing, dancing, acting and general misbehaving!

What Covid has taught all of us in the players is that we are above all a “Social Group” where people who simply like the theatre, in all its forms, come together to talk about it, drink tea (and sometimes stronger), eat biscuits, make friends and then sometimes a great show comes out the other end.

We meet weekly usually between September and February for a Winter show and then April – July for a Summer show (so basically, we have March and August off in usual years) – in Sancroft Hall, previously on a Thursday but that day remains to be confirmed post pandemic.

Contact us on 01379 588013 or bemewsed@yahoo.co.uk and come and see what we are all about, you will be very welcome!

Nicola Mewse
Fressingfield Players - Chair