

A photograph of the South Mill Arts building. The building has a reddish-brown upper section and a yellow brick lower section. The words "South Mill Arts" are mounted on the upper section in blue, three-dimensional letters. To the left is a glass entrance with a blue frame. A sign above the door says "ENTRY" and "Please exit on your mail before entering the house". Large palm trees are in the foreground on the right. The bottom of the image has a teal background with a pattern of small white and gold dots.

**South
Mill Arts**

Annual Town Report

for the year

April 22 - Jan 23

**Bishop's Stortford Museum
& Arts CIO trading as**

South Mill Arts

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the South Mill Arts April 2022 - January 2023 Annual Town Report. Due to the local elections in May, we are presenting our report a little earlier than usual so our figures are only able to include 10 months of data.

If last year's report was celebrating our return as the effects of the pandemic started to recede, this year's report is all about consolidation and future growth. There have been plenty of challenges along the way – weather extremes, issues from ageing infrastructure and eye-watering six figure energy bills, but this hasn't stopped the "green shoots of growth" we saw emerging last year continue to grow and develop.

Our packed programme delivers fabulous events, ranging from heritage walks, holiday activities through to live music and drama, and we are moving forward with new partners enabling us to host even more inclusive, community focused services and activities. In spite of a very challenging financial environment, we have been able to invest in our museum, carrying out essential repairs and increasing our storage capacity in anticipation of receiving exciting new archaeological archives (as seen on TV!) over the next few years.

It is very important for us to be here for all members of our local community. We were proud to work with Stort Pride to deliver PRIDE 2022 and are now working together on PRIDE 2023. We welcome any other suggestions you may have for improving our inclusion and accessibility.

As we move into 2023 we celebrate 60 years since we first opened our doors. We will be bringing you some special events to help mark this momentous occasion, so keep an eye on our website or look out for our seasonal brochures.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our fabulous staff, Trustees and volunteers for their continued support and dedication. I would also like to express my gratitude to Bishop's Stortford Town Council, our partner organisations, customers and supporters. Each and everyone of you are part of the South Mill Arts team playing an enormous part in our success.



YEAR IN BRIEF

April

We had a great start to our year with *Dear Zoo* and *Horrible Histories* both achieving fabulous sales and tickets went on sale for our 2022 panto; *Jack and the Beanstalk* – oh yes they did! The museum team continued work on our Space to Be project which has been entered for *the Herts Association for Museums' Wellbeing Award*. We offered free holiday activities for local children themed around Victorian Houses and Homes, and Story Time for smaller children. Schools were kept firmly in the frame when we hosted Windhill21's poetry recital and our technical team provided workshops for Herts and Essex School students.

May

We started young this month with the Museum Story time – this month, our pre-schoolers heard about *Kipper's Toy Box*, before having a sing-along and some crafts. Things got even more cultured with live streamed performances of NTs *Henry V*, and *RoH' Swan Lake*. In mid-May, Herts Musical Memories performed in the Maltings Bar to mark the start of Herts Dementia Awareness week and we finished the month with a fabulous evening of East End fun, with *F. Cooke's Pie and Mash Spectacular*.

June



The big event for us in June was marking HRH the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Bank Holiday celebrations started when we screened *The Trooping of The Colour* in the Maltings Bar with tea, coffee and biscuits provided free to all who attended. The party continued with afternoon tea over two sittings served with a medley of songs from Bishop's Stortford Musical Theatre Group. The event was supported by East Herts District Council and we were able to offer 100 free teas to elderly and vulnerable patrons. The frivolity was topped off with a live stage adaptation of Nicholas Allen's children's classic, *The Queen's Knickers*. Although not on quite the same scale, we were able to continue the celebrations at the end of June when we held our friends and volunteers summer tea party. June wasn't just about parties and bunting, we still had time to host seven work experience students and a Schools Music Festival involving nine primary schools held over three days. Strictly Stortford and Hearts and Soul Choir celebrating their 10th Anniversary finally went ahead following the delay due to COVID.

July

Rarely has the phrase “*Phew what a scorcher*” been more appropriate. As the temperature soared, we kept things cool with great performances from *The Stones* and *The Elton John Show*. We hosted Summercroft, Richard Whittington, Windhill21 and Northgate Primary School’s end of term shows in air-conditioned comfort, had an evening of laughter with the return of *Stand Up Stortford* comedy night and relaxed with another great evening of live original performers courtesy of *Retune*.

Historically, August used to be a quiet month for us but with a packed holiday programme, including crafts with the museum, and a sellout family show *Dinosaur Adventure Live* things were anything but quiet this year. August also saw the launch of our new SMARt Supporters package and the door to door distribution of our autumn brochure. With panto just around the corner we held the children’s auditions and adult castings for *Jack and the Beanstalk 2022*.

August

The month was brought to a triumphant close with two days of PRIDE 2022; sponsored by East Herts District Council and co-produced with Stort Pride. PRIDE 2022 featured a riotous performance by Drag King extraordinaire Louis Cyfer followed by karaoke on the Friday evening. Saturday we held an all-day community event, with local musicians, free entertainments and activities and an information fair featuring local organisations providing free information and advice to visitors. Free activities available included crafts and dance.



Councillor Jonathan Kaye and Chelle Peppiatt - Stort PRIDE

September

The passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth II on the 8th September was a huge event for us all to absorb and one that was for many, marked with deep sadness and a sense of loss. As a mark of respect all performances scheduled between the passing of the Queen and her state funeral on the 19th September were preceded by 2 minutes’ silence and events scheduled for the 19th were cancelled and the building closed to the public.

Highlights later in the month included our first dance performance of the season, *Tango Passions* and the auditorium was packed to enjoy music from the *Ultimate Boy Band*.

October

Our local community took centre stage this month when we hosted Bishop's Stortford Breath Easy Group's fundraising cake and coffee morning. Hummingbird Cancer Support achieved charitable status this month and on the 19th we were joined by 60 local businesses for the *Bishop's Stortford Means Business* networking event. The museum also had a busy month with a guided Halloween walk around Stortford's spookier side, three days of craft activities and a double sell-out talk on prolific artist Eric Revilious. We also launched our first Young Curators programme which was entered for *the Inclusion Award*. The programme is a block of eight weekly sessions sponsored by the Art Society Bishop's Stortford, that seeks to help young adults with an interest in Arts and Heritage find out how we care for the town's heritage.



Edwin Osei from CoverMy, BSMB

November



Nativity - BSAPA

This month was just bursting with local talent; BSAPA's performance of Nativity virtually sold out five performances and BSMT Seniors production of Kipps ran to six performances. The talent didn't stop there as we hosted *The Indie Awards*, a night of celebration marking the contribution made by members of the local community to the town and its' inhabitants.



Child of Courage winner Arthur Bowie - Indie Awards

December



Jack and The Beanstalk - Christmas 2022

This was our first full Christmas programme since before the pandemic and you could see the excitement written in people faces - and that was just the staff! The season opened on the 3rd of December when Santa made his first appearance in the museum's Grotto and the Pantomime, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, raised its curtain on the first public show. The reception was fantastic to both, with the Panto receiving a 5-star review and fabulous feedback from those who enjoyed the Grotto experience - from children and adults!! We had a right old knees-up with noted Chas "n" Dave tribute act *Gertcha* for a Pie and Mash evening in the bar

and a slightly less boisterous, though no less festive screening of the Royal Opera House' production of *The Nutcracker*, but it has to be said that one of the season highlights was the Panto cast joining us to sing carols at the Friends and Volunteers Christmas social.

We are sure that the school children and families who joined us for 50 performances of the Panto and 63 appearances of Santa in the Grotto would join us in thanking White Trees who sponsored this year's Christmas programme and helped to make it such a great success.

January

As soon as the curtain closed on the final show of our Christmas programme, the adult *Panto Cinderella and her naughty Buttons*, we leapt headlong into the New Year with a major programme of technical maintenance to make sure that everything was safe and ready to go for the new season. Tickets for our 2023 Panto, *Cinderella* went on sale on the 16th January with some early birds snapping up seats straight

away and giving us a really positive start to the new year. The museum got in on the fun by creating a new on-site archaeology store in anticipation of receiving some large archives of finds coming from recent excavations at Grange Paddocks, Whittington Way and Stortford North. They also installed new racks in their existing store to hold large framed items in the fine art collection.

DASHBOARD



HEADLINE FIGURES

FOOTFALL

86,786

SOCIAL VALUE

We generate £3.28 of social value for every £1 of the grant given to us by Bishop's Stortford Town Council



LIVE EVENTS, SCREENINGS & SHOWS

232

Touring shows & live music events

66

Live streamed performances

11

Cinema screenings

42

Panto performances

50

Santa's Grotto sessions

63

**TICKETS FOR ALL
SHOWS & EVENTS**

32,104

CLASSES HELD

1,665

**FREE COMMUNITY
GROUP MEETINGS**

325

that we know about!

VOLUNTEER HOURS

2,880

the equivalent of 384
full working days!



**MUSEUM
EVENTS**

63

Story time
sessions

10

Holiday crafts
sessions

20

Guided
tours

13

Talks

16

Walks

4



BUSINESS PROFILE

Maltings Bar

The Maltings Bar is constantly changing. By day a place where you can drop in for a coffee, where local groups can meet or you can have a friendly coffee and cake after attending a class. By night, a thriving bar, perfect for pre-show and interval drinks, a friendly safe and warm place to meet friends and socialise and a destination venue in its own right, hosting a programme of music and comedy shows.

Auditorium

With a total seating capacity of over 300, the auditorium is where we host our larger shows, conferences and meetings. Our retractable seating system, coupled with high-spec audio, light and projection functionality enables us to handle everything from cinema, standing rock gigs and theatre shows through to conferences and formal functions.

Dance Studio & meeting Rooms

Our Dance Studio and meeting rooms account for the majority of our community spaces. Popular with classes and groups, and available for hire at competitive rates, our rooms underpin many of the social events and activities that take place in our venue.

Museum

Split across two floors of a grade II listed building, the museum presents information and objects that explore the fascinating local history of Bishop's Stortford and surrounding areas. The museum is family friendly and, through a combination of trails, holiday crafts sessions and activities, we encourage our younger visitors to have fun while they explore the past. In addition to the displays, the museum provides curriculum support and topic loans for local schools and is the designated repository for archaeological archives for the local area.



OUR PARTNERS

South Mill Arts is all about providing the best services we can for our local community, and we welcome the opportunity to work with other organisations in delivering a broad and inclusive range of events and activities.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council

This is our primary sponsor, without them we would not be able to operate. We value their partnership and by joining together are able to bring a vast range of cultural activities to the local community.

East Hertfordshire District Council

Our staff are part of the team working together with East Herts Cultural Strategy Group.

Retune



Retune is a local organisation which inspires young people to improve their mental health through a creative outlet i.e. music. Performance sessions are held at South Mill Arts monthly.

Hummingbird Cancer Support Group

We are pleased to work with this Stortford based registered charity to help offer physical, mental, and social support to individuals and their families who receive a diagnosis of different types of cancer. The group are based here weekly from 2023 and are also looking to host a Wellbeing Event in April.

Simply Sosa

Simply Sosa secured funding from National Lottery and Sport England to provide a fully inclusive dance programme based in our Dance Studio and incorporating chair based exercise and a falls prevention technique for people with long-term health conditions. After classes participants are provided with refreshments and a chance to socialise in the Maltings Bar. A free SOSA Showcase is being held on 27th February inviting all members of the local community to join in. Please see their website for further details.

Stort Pride & East Herts District Council

We have spent most of the last year working with Stort Pride, first on the successful delivery of PRIDE 2022, a fun and inclusive event celebrating our local LGBTQ+ community and more recently, planning for PRIDE 2023. We would like to express our gratitude to East Herts District Council for working with us over the last year on PRIDE 2022 and PRIDE 2023 and for their generous financial support that has made both events possible.

Herts and Essex School

Herts and Essex School use the downtime in our dance studio and auditorium for teaching their Year 10/11/12/13 students. We have also incorporated technical workshops in to the programme for their students.

Grove Cottage



Grove Cottage is the home of Mencap in Bishop's Stortford, providing social and education activities for people of all ages and learning disabilities. South Mill Arts hosts their regular weekly Games afternoon. Many of the attendees also come along to enjoy our Unique Discos held monthly.

Unique Disco

This is a fun and exciting event offering an exclusive disco evening for adults with learning/physical difficulties and disabilities in a welcoming and supportive environment.

The Art Society Bishop's Stortford

Formerly BSDFAS, the Art Society Bishop's Stortford hold monthly meetings and lectures at South Mill Arts held with regular study days throughout the year. New memberships are always welcomed.

Visual Arts Group

A recently formed group of volunteers who have experience and expertise in visual arts have joined with the South Mill team to deliver a visual arts experience within the venue. We kick off in February 25th/26th when we are holding our first Makers Fair which is available to the local community to either exhibit or visit. Please see our website for further information.

White Trees

White Trees, a local company who provide specialist care and education for vulnerable young people, sponsored our Christmas offer this year, including the pantomime and Santa's Grotto, and for whom we are providing facilities for their team building and training. They are also our main sponsors for 2023.

STATS

Shows & Live Music

North Star Academy
presents SUPERNOVA

Absolute Certainty

Stand-up Stortford April

Herman's Hermits 55th
Anniversary Tour

Dear Zoo Live

Twistin' the Night Away

BSA Performing Arts
Showcase and Awards

Magical Bones

Horrible Histories:
Terrible Tudors

Animals & Friends
Farewell Tour with Special
Guest Maggie Bell

Graham School of Dance
and Theatre Arts Middle
School Showcase 2022

Shape of You: The
Music of Ed Sheeran

The Christians

Livewire Rock Academy

F. Cooke's Pie & Mash

Spectacular

The George Harrison

Project

The Queen's Knickers

Total 80's

Housewives on Holiday

Herts & Soul Community
Choir 10th (+2) Anniversary
Concert

Rock For Heroes

Strictly Stortford

Schools Music Festival

Searchers & Hollies
Experience

Northgate Primary School
presents Olivia!

The Stones

KBD Dance Summer
Show 2022

Summercroft presents

Star Warts - The Umpire
Strikes Back

Windhill21 presents
Porridge

The Elton John Show

Graham School of Dance
Senior Showcase

Richard Whittington
presents What A Knight!

Stand-up Stortford

Twinkle's Dream

Retunesday: July 2022

Sarah and Duck's
Big Top Birthday

Dinosaur Adventure Live

LoUis CYfer

The British Carpenters

Upbeat Beatles

Uncle Funk's Disco Inferno

Opera Boys - A Night
at the Musicals

Henry Blofeld - My
Dear Old Things

Through The Rain:
A Celebration of
Barry Manilow

Midweek Music:
Cleansneak

Vincent Simone -
Tango Passions

Ultimate Boy Band
Party Show

Women In Rock

Midweek Music:
Charlie Turner

Terry Deary's Twisted Tales

Both Sides of Phil Collins

Down for the Count
presents A Century
of Swing

Art & Soul

Livewire Rock Academy

The Ronnie Scott's All Stars

The Neil Diamond Story
The Amazing Bubble Man
Miss Disco
The Unravelling Wilburys
BSA Performing Arts
presents Nativity!
The Musical

BSMTC presents
Kipps - The New Half
a Sixpence Musical
Forte Dance & Performing
Arts Studio Presents The
Journey Continues
Santa's Grotto
Jack and the Beanstalk
Festive Gertcha

The Adult Panto - Cinderella
and her Naughty Buttons
KBD Dance Showcase
and Choreography
Competition

Live Screened Performances

ROH: La Traviata
NT Live: Henry V
ROH: Swan Lake
Straight Line Crazy

ROH: Madama Butterfly
NT Live: Prima Facie
ROH: Mayerling
ROH: La Boheme

ROH: The Nutcracker
ROH: Like Water For
Chocolate
NT Live: The Seagull

Regular Hirers

National Blood
Graham School of Dance
KDB Dance School
Art Society Bishops
Stortford
Kung Fu
Basking Babes
Little Dance Academy
Zumba Gold
New Man Yoga
Adult Art Classes

Weight Watchers
Tappy Toes
Bodyworks
Ashtanga Yoga
Kumon Education
(young students)
Future Bilinguals
Lords Vine Church
Stort Performers
Grove Cottage
Sosa

Bedazzle
Flexifit
Bounce
Water Lane Theatre
Co. rehearsals
BSMT Seniors rehearsals
Compass Fostering
White Trees Education
Bishop's Stortford
Performing Arts

