

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2025-26

THE 45th SEASON

I crave Members' indulgence in providing a rather brief overview of the season.

Whilst I have (again) attended fewer screenings than intended, I have been encouraged at each by the continued popularity of the club and the films we are showing. The numbers of members attending have remained consistent and guest attendances have been pleasingly high this year – even after what has become known as “our Christmas turkey”!

Can I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to the following who have helped Sheila Coles with the cake rota – Freda Bishop, Maggie Randall, Maureen Ward, Diana James, Debs Sheehan and Sheila herself.

The reason for such a brief comment is that this is my final Chairman's report after 32 years as club chairman.

In that time, we have reflected changing viewing habits, moving from 16mm film presentations to DVD discs, then Blu ray and this year our first downloaded online presentation.

We also changed venue, moving from our regular home at Goldwater Lodge, had a couple of nights into the local school, then spending a very expensive (and consequently short!) period in the Kemp Room, before settling here at Mayford Village Hall in September 1998, aside from a very brief hiatus post the arson attack which led to a few films being shown in the church on Saunders Lane. Our relationship with the trustees of the Hall has been extremely good (thanks in no small part to the efforts of John Myall) and the local residents should be proud of having such an excellent facility.

The same period has also seen a significant cultural change: it would appear that young people are now more used to viewing a film on their own on a laptop or phone, and our Club is not alone in having found it difficult to attract young members.

Each year the Committee has attempted to select a variety of titles, including wherever possible foreign language films; this has resulted in the Club providing one of the few opportunities for residents in the catchment area to see titles produced in non-English speaking countries, reflecting a wide range of cultures and experiences. We have noted that over the years that the number of foreign language films shown on television has fallen, with most now shown in the early hours.

Ours is a “Club” and I do want to record my thanks to all members and guests for making our screenings always an enjoyable experience (even when the film may not have been as impressive as we'd hoped!).

The Committee who “manage” the club on members behalf has been a very stable group in my time with the club.

I therefore wish to pay thanks to everyone who has been a Committee Member over my time as Chairman – there are too many to mention but I cannot fail to express my deep thank in particular to the following who have all been Committee members for the bulk of my term in office - John Myall, Steve Lock, Steve Willson and Ishret Mirza, along with Barbara Millington, who was our Secretary for over 20 years

John and Steve are not the only members from the days when the club met at the Woking Centre Halls Committee Rooms or the Cotteridge Hotel and I'm keen to express thanks to all those long-standing members who have been so strongly committed to the club.

The club has always been fortunate in having members willing to offer assistance without holding a formal role in the club. I have over many years commented upon how integral the interval period is to our screenings with the cakes prepared by members occasionally more enjoyable than the film!

Sheila Coles has voluntarily undertaken the task of organising the rota and her willingness to assist the club without fanfare is something I have greatly appreciated.

In recent years the Committee has seen new members join, Jon Millington, Michael Hipkins, Eugene Smith, Suzanne Lawrence and Debbie Sheehan. Marion Royer joined this year, willing to become our new Membership Secretary.

I have always appreciated since I was persuaded by my predecessor, Tony Rozelaar, to succeed him that I, and indeed the Committee, are “custodians” and that the club should continue without our involvement. It has become clear that has happened when I have been unable to attend.

Acknowledging that, allied to the fact that I am retiring from my job, has led me to decide that now is the correct time to step down from the Committee and hand over the reins.

My wife, Gill, and I met at the club, joined the Committee at the same time and next year marks our 25th wedding anniversary. Having been employed the last 7 years in Plymouth, she has supported me in being based there weekdays, returning either for our films or the weekend. Having herself retired last autumn, it is time I repaid her by being home 24 / 7 (it'll be interesting to see how that dynamic works!). We both have an interest in travelling and experiencing different cultures and would like the freedom to be able to do that as and when the opportunity/inclination takes us.

I suppose I should conform to the usual cliché and list my top moments:

- 1) Sat in an audience in a dark room, when someone laughs at a funny moment in a film, with that laughter spreading amongst the audience as the film progresses
- 2) Winning the Film Society of the Year award from the British Federation of Film Societies
- 3) *El secreto de sus ojos* (The Secret in Their Eyes) – a foreign language film very few had heard of which got a wonderful reaction
- 4) Getting a full spectrum of votes (1-10) for *Once Were Warriors* – I have always dreaded a film where every score was 7 and the comment from everyone was “nice”! We also had some criticism for screening the film given its portrayal of domestic violence, which at the time was something of a “taboo” topic.
- 5) Presenting a widescreen beautiful copy of *West Side Story* to a large audience
- 6) Showing *Shawshank Redemption* when it was an unknown film and it gained a terrific reaction (it still sits in the top 10 of our highest reaction scores) – I had seen it on a Sunday morning preview screening in Guildford and was keen for the club to present it
- 7) Seeing *Il Postino* at the club having first seen it during the London Film Festival
- 8) Screening *The Wicker Man* in Goldwater Lodge School, who had a ribboned Maypole in the hall, which given the nature of the feature film, I thought was a remarkably appropriate coincidence
- 9) The range of foreign language films shown
- 10) Restarting after covid and seeing attendances slowly grow as people gained confidence in being able to sit in the same room as other people

Diversity of films was one of the aspects that first attracted me to the club and looking at the titles in the next season, rest assured we intend to attend as often as possible.

In a post Covid era which resulted in Chertsey Film Society not restarting, I am delighted to report that your Club is looking strongly towards its 50th anniversary, with new technical equipment to ensure we give the best possible presentation of image and sound.

Please do tell your friends, neighbours and colleagues about our new season.

Enjoy the summer and I look forward to sitting amongst you on 10 September.

IAIN McGLASHAN