

Meeting at Newstead Abbey to discuss Christmas 2021, and looking forward to 2022

2nd February 2022.

Present: Mick Smurthwaite and Jon Brown: Newstead Abbey

Nick Thorpe, Rhoda Brown, Mary Spencer: NAS

We met in the super old kitchen in the Abbey and were served tea!

First thoughts are that this was a very positive and amicable meeting..

We found, as we had thought, that the only issue causing difficulties for the Abbey is finance! They feel that our roots are there and want us to be able to perform there.

We mentioned issues around it having been a Sunday, that the Orangery is not huge so the audience numbers are restricted, that we pay musicians, and during the discussion mentioned that publicity had not been good from their end.

They fully appreciated the issue around room size and that they had not publicised the event well. They agreed that there is an issue about finance, as they need to show that they can make some money from the event, and mentioned a 50:50 share of takings. We explained about paying musicians but that we could change this, so that we did not need as much from the takings, thereby allowing the Abbey more. This would also mean we would not need very much rehearsal time and the concert timing could therefore be more flexible.

They explained that we may have to stick to a Sunday because of the craft fair taking place which earns them a good amount with very little outlay. Also the Great Hall cannot be available as they have themed displays etc as part of their Christmas time event.

Mick then suggested that our concert could be part of an "event" at the Abbey incorporating our concert, pre, mid or post-concert refreshments, and a tour of the Abbey. This is very appealing we think, and felt very positive. That way we would be an official part of the Newstead Abbey "Christmas offering", we would get better promotion as part of an Event etc, etc. We would need to discuss charging for this but they suggested a 50:50 split of takings; also maybe "our" audience could just come for the concert, and charges could be significantly higher than the £10 we charged this time.

Both parties will discuss this further separately, with a view to working on this approach.

We will also look at using the instrumentalists at a second concert at Christmas, rather than at the Abbey... venue to be discussed etc etc.

They also asked if we were interested in performing additionally at another time of year..... eg summer evening/ harvest etc etc. We will discuss this.. maybe autumn?

Jon also mentioned that 2022 is a Japanese themed year for them... and could we use this? Hmmm...

We fixed a provisional date for this year for Christmas event on 18th December