

TAUNTON BREWHOUSE

Taunton Brewhouse – 2022 Annual Review

We welcomed 2022 with optimism that we were able to move forward from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and we're thrilled to say that audiences gradually felt more confident in visiting and enjoying the creative programme that we have to offer. Our staff, trustees and volunteers continue to work hard to deliver a comfortable, safe and most of all entertaining experience.

2021 left us with financial challenges which the Taunton Brewhouse team hit head on continuing to seek external funding as well as becoming a more sustaining business mode. As the year progressed, audience numbers and visitors continued to grow, and we greet 2023 with a renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Can you help us? Can you support us through becoming a Friend of Taunton Brewhouse? Do you work for or run a local corporate who might be able to sponsor Taunton Brewhouse in 2023? Can you donate your time by joining our volunteer team? There are many ways you may wish to support us – which are listed on our website, or if you would like further information, please contact us and we would be happy to talk to you.

Finally, we'd like to thank every single person who booked a ticket, visited Taunton Brewhouse and supported us in 2022. We very much look forward to welcoming you back in 2023.

Our year in numbers

In 2022 we had:

- 251 performances (watched by a total of 37,897 patrons) - this included 24 comedy, 22 family, 12 community, 50 music shows, and 2 magic shows
- 109 screenings (8,615 viewers)
- 341 individual class sessions or community activities (2718 participants)

Highlights have included a popular outdoor production of 'Twelfth Night' in Castle Gardens and 'The Little Prince', our returning annual winter production, a spectacular acrobatic performance with original music based on the book written in 1943 by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, which played to a grand total of 5,663 people – despite being hit by cast and crew illness. (Photo credit: Alex Brenner)



Our Distillary writers programme that began in 2021 presented two scratch nights in the studio highlighting the work of our writers directed and performed by professionals.

(Photo credit: Craig Fuller)

We were also delighted, after a long break due to COVID-19, to attend a number of in-person events to promote the work of Taunton Brewhouse and our performance programme. These included Taunton Flower Show, Somerset County Show, Taunton Pride and Somerset Cricket Club Family Fun Day. It was a pleasure to greet so many members of our local and regional community and speak to them about our work.

We presented new contemporary work in our studio from Cherwell Theatre Company titled ‘Sam and Zoe v Evermore’, amongst others, and supported the research and development of new work by southwest theatre companies. We were also honoured to play host to Shakespeare’s Globe on Tour with their production of ‘Julius Caesar’.

Our top seller was national treasure, Giles Brandreth with sales of 351, closely followed by Strictly Come Dancing’s Giovanni at 348 tickets. The most popular family show was Tiger Who Came to Tea which had an attendance of 1,193 in all over 4 shows.

The story of 2022

2022 has been a year of change but also of refocus. The staff team at Taunton Brewhouse has had significant changes but through these changes we have reinforced our commitment to the future of the theatre and our community.

Funding has remained an ongoing challenge, but we continue to be grateful to Somerset West and Taunton Council for their continued support both financially and practically.

As we move forward into the new year, we consolidate, refocus and drive the business of the theatre to ensure sustainability, public entertainment and professional development within our creative community.

This report will show you how we have met our aims this year, and our impact in Taunton and the southwest region.

Taunton Brewhouse – 2022: Year in Review

January

January opened with the last performance of Wind in the Willows, our 2021 Christmas production.

We continued the work of our Distillary programme, showcasing new writing work in our Studio.

We also welcomed back Wayfarers Pantomime Society with ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’. It was thrilling to have good, local, supportive audiences back enjoying community theatre once again.

February

The studio played host to Beasthouse Theatre Company performances of 'Wolf' and 'Boar' both of which were skillful and funny pieces of contemporary theatre making.

We also hosted our very own Dance Day which gave participants to learn from six local dance teacher of a variety of genre including flamenco, street dance, contemporary and physical theatre.

March

1st March saw the launch of Taunton Brewhouse new website incorporating our new branding which had been developed in 2021.

Over two days, we worked with Take Art to host 'Barnfest' which brought together a community of local creatives with networking opportunities. It was a great opportunity for theatre makers, venues and audiences from Somerset to gather and celebrate the creativity of the region.

Scummy Mummies was a fantastically successful female-led comedy show. So much so that we have invited them back in 2023 for two performances.

April

South Western was an exciting, formally inventive exploration of cinema and the South-West, made with our financial support through Garfield Weston funding.

During April celebrations for Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee began with the launch of trail which took participants on an exploration of Taunton town centre searching for creatively decorated corgis.

May

Dinosaur World Live was a huge success with our family audiences during May half term.

We continued our relationship with Northern School of Contemporary Dance, one of the most exciting dance schools in the country, by presenting 'Verve' - a really well received trilogy of shows.

We started a new relationship with acclaimed South-West theatre company, Living Spit, presenting their hilarious show 'Elizabeth I – Virgin on the Ridiculous' on our main stage.

June

In June, we were successful in securing a grant from St James Place, which was later matched by CAF, for audio descriptive equipment allowing us to extend our accessible performances to the blind and partially sighted community.

June also was Pride month and Taunton Brewhouse attended the festival in Vivary park. We also ran a series of films celebrating diversity including 'Portrait of a Lady on Fire' and 'Benediction'.



We continued our run of exciting outdoor shows in the picturesque Castle Gardens with 'The Handlebards present Twelfth Night'.

We also welcomed back Shakespeare's Globe with three performances of 'Julius Caesar'.

July

We sadly bid farewell to our Chief Executive Amy Bere for pastures new and a three-person interim leadership team was appointed to continue the management of Taunton Brewhouse pending appointment of a new leader.

A collaboration between author Raynor Winn and the Gigspanner Big Band produced ‘Saltlines’ – a unique and hugely successful celebration of the South-West.

August

The summer holidays welcomed our family programme which this year included ‘The Hungry Caterpillar’, ‘Brainiac Live’, ‘Fireman Sam’ and Michael Morpurgo’s ‘Why the Whales Came’ a production by British Youth Music Theatre.

After a two-year break, we were delighted to attend Taunton Flower Show supported by many of Taunton Brewhouse volunteers. The show attracted over 15,000 visitors over two days and our stand was visited by hundreds of people and we gained over 100 new sign-ups to our mailing list as well as plenty of interest in our future programme.

September

Somerset West and Taunton held the first in-person cultural forum post Covid-19 which brought together venues, performers, artists and councilors to discuss the creative industry in our region.

Taunton Racecourse hosted the annual Somerset County Show and Taunton Brewhouse was delighted to have a stand, particularly promoting our Christmas show ‘The Little Prince’.

October

October brought staff changes with the appointment of Vickie Hobbs as Executive Director and Tom Elliott as our new Marketing Manager.

We received the results of a Somerset West and Taunton decarbonization report which brought to attention issues with the electrical supply in the theatre. As our landlords, the council commissioned extensive re-wiring work which will take place in 2023.

‘Breathless’ saw Taunton Brewhouse present Laura Horton’s award-winning play about hoarding in the Studio.

November

After many, many months of hiding behind hoardings the Coal Orchard development was completed and in conjunction with Somerset West and Taunton council we held a grand re-opening on the 5th November which was a well-attended celebration. On the same day we hosted a fun, colourful celebration of drag culture ‘Queenz’ which was a massive hit with two sold out performances.

We launched our new Corporate Partnership scheme which seeks to engage our local business community with the theatre and creative engagement projects.

We also began renovations of our kitchen and Westward room through funding from Somerset County Council. This work should be completed early Spring 2023.

‘Sound of the Sirens’ was a welcome return from one of the freshest, most charismatic acts in folk today. ‘Sh*tfaced Shakespeare’ brought a chaotic comedic take to one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies, and saw massive audience engagement.

And finally, and by no means least, we were absolutely thrilled to host an Arts Taunton fundraiser presenting Judi Dench in conversation with Lord Julian Fellowes. The event went on pre-sale to Friends of the Brewhouse and it was sold out within one and half hours!

December

As we moved into winter and the weather got colder, Taunton Brewhouse became one of the designated warm spaces organized and funded by Somerset Community Foundation. We extended our opening hours to welcome anyone wishing to come in from the cold and provided free hot drinks and biscuits.

The senior management team presented our 23-24 business plan to both the board and Somerset West and Taunton Council.

In the lead up to Christmas, we launched 'BrewHaHa' a bold and exciting new strand of comedy programming that continues into 2023.

We also invited South-West based company, The Little Things Theatre, to our Studio with their popular early years show 'The Christmas Trolls'

We rounded off our year with Taunton Brewhouse and Metta Theatre's production of 'The Little Prince'. An acrobatic, musical spectacle which was enjoyed by multi-generational audiences.



Taunton Brewhouse's vision is:

We imagine a future where people and communities are liberated through artistic expression, becoming connected and considered equal.

Our mission is:

Since 1977, TAUNTON BREWHOUSE has existed to welcome people locally and globally, to enjoy and participate in a liberating programme of bold and brilliant artistic and creative experiences that inspire and transform our individual and shared experience of the world.

Our organization's values are:

Welcoming

We value open hearts, open minds, and welcome all to Taunton Brewhouse.

Bold

We value bold artists and bold ideas, inspiring locally and globally.

Collaborative

We believe meaningful collaboration can change the world. We work together to create, play, and learn.

Resilient

We are committed to remaining Taunton's enduring centre for creative excellence.

Our themes for 2021-2026 are:

- Environmental sustainability
- Access & Inclusion
- Beyond the Brewhouse
- Learning

Our AIMS are:

- **Artistic programme**

To deliver an artistically authentic programme that showcases the best touring work and contemporary performance using our base in Taunton as a springboard to the wider region.

- **Creative Engagement**

To empower young people and enrich communities of Taunton with creative experiences and meaningful participation that engenders a life-long relationship with arts and culture.

- **Celebrate Taunton & The Southwest**

To champion and platform the creative community of Taunton, Somerset & The South-West, and partner with others to further activate regional artistic excellence

- **Organizational Development**

To seize all opportunities to optimize the revenue potential of our brand, our organizational structure, and our built space as a social enterprise that supports our charitable aims

- **Audience development**

To understand and reach all potential audiences in Taunton, Somerset, the Southwest and beyond, to ensure everyone experiences the value of the Brewhouse in their lives.

Here's how we did it:

We continue to build on our artistic programme and present a broad range of genre aimed to attract different groups within our community. Some of our most popular events continue to be the musical tribute acts and the better known standup comedians but we have developed a new strand of our very own BrewHaHa nights which bring to the stage up and new comedy acts from across the UK. We're also very passionate about providing space for new and innovative work from across the South-West and encouraging our local audiences to experience something new.

Additionally, our cinema audiences continue to grow and we have been able to reconnect with event cinema bringing live West-End theatre, dance and opera to our screen.

Some of our highlights included:

The Man Who Thought He Knew Too Much (Voloz Collective from Bath)

Infinite Ways Home (Richard Chappell Dance from Exeter)

Oi Frog & Friends Live and A Very Hungry Caterpillar (Family shows)

The Little Prince Taunton Brewhouse's Christmas Production

Creative Engagement

Our Creative Engagement strand, otherwise known as LEARN, engaged new facilitators this year to bring fun, appealing and enlightening activities to our community.



In 2022 these included:

Brewhouse Youth Theatre Week – giving the young people of our community the chance to devise and perform a musical theatre piece

Street Dance – With dance practitioner Lucy Hartland-Mann

Christmas Crafts – including Wreath Making with local florists, Macrame and Calligraphy

Celebrating Taunton & the South West

Taunton Brewhouse is thoroughly embedded in our local and regional community and our engagement with many more local events this year has enabled us to meet and speak to many of our current and potential audiences. From live events such as Taunton Pride, Taunton Flower Show, Somerset County show and the re-opening of Coal Orchard with SWT council, it has been a joy to be so publicly visible again whilst away from our own bricks and mortar.

As times become more financially challenging across the UK, it is harder to access external funding for our artistic development strand. Whilst we continue to work with this challenge with a view to building on this strand of our work in the future, we still support our local creatives by providing free space for research and development of new work and give them our in-kind support through mentoring and advice.

We work with local community art groups, such as Somerset Art Gallery Trust and Chandos Artists as well as providing a platform for art from our local homeless community organized by Arc.

We have hosted local community theatre including the Taunton Thespians and the Wayfarers.

Organizational Development

Throughout 2022 we worked on progressing the business plan written during the Covid-19 pandemic. Engaging audiences and inspiring confidence in returning to the theatre was tricky. Safety continued to be paramount and slowly our audiences returned almost to normal levels by the end of the year.

During the year, we outsourced some marketing support to a strategy consultant. This helped form new campaign strategies particularly around our Christmas show. Latterly, we engaged our new Marketing Manager whose experience in digital marketing and data analysis will drive a lot of our campaign planning going forward.

Our staff team changed and evolved during 2022 with some members moving on to pastures new. With the leadership of the team being taken by a triumvirate of senior managers for a period, this has driven a new collaborative and collective approach to much of what Taunton Brewhouse does. The entire staff team now meets weekly to discuss ideas, developments and to give views on the direction on the Brewhouse and its programme.

Our trustee board also went through some changes in 2022 and we said farewell to Ben Phillips and Ben Lee due to change in personal circumstances. We are looking forward to welcoming new trustees in 2023.

We continue to be incredibly grateful to them for all our trustees voluntarily giving their time in support of the organization. We have many other volunteers, from front of house, marketing and technical, and are so thankful that they continue to give their time and support to us. The value of our volunteers cannot be quantified but we recognize that they form the glue behind a lot of what we do.

Audience Development

In 2022, we continued growing our audience development by presenting a wide range of new and innovative work, giving opportunity to up and coming performers and theatre companies. These have been wholly well received and we are encouraged that our local community comes out to support new work.

We have also been building on our family-oriented programming strand and this has shown significant growth during 2022. By reaching out to families via local schools and using family-specific print and social media our family shows have become increasingly popular. Our connection to local schools was also evident in the many group bookings we received from schools for “The Little Prince”.

What are we working towards in 2023?

- **Increasing our Food and Beverage offering to include event catering and pre and post-show meals and interval snack boxes for certain shows**
- **Developing further our folk and comedy programming strands**
- **Broadening our LEARN opportunities including young people and family workshops and classes.**
- **Seeking funding for improvements to facilities**
- **Working collaboratively with other local creatives in development of new work**
- **Christmas 2023 – “A Christmas Carol” – a Taunton Brewhouse production in association with Pleasuredome Theatre Company from Exmoor**

