

# Isles of Darkness Annual Report

## 2015–2016

This report covers the period from the last AGM (21<sup>st</sup> June 2015) until August 2016. The reporting period is longer than the usual 12 months, due to the timings of the AGMs.

### **Board Membership 2015–2016**

Robert Faulkner (Elected Board member and Chair (May-Aug))

Fran Bleach (Selected Board Member)

Boyd Evans (Selected Board Member)

Adam Ottaway (Selected Board Member)

Caroline Feltham (Selected Board Member)

Dan Trodden (Elected Board Member and Chair (Stepped down))

Amy Partridge-Hicks (Elected Board Member and Deputy Chair) (Stepped down)

Neill Cram (Elected Board member) (Stepped down)

The 2015 Board election elected four new board members. Three of the elected members stepped down in May - Dan Trodden, Amy Partridge-Hicks and Neill Cram. Fran Bleach, Adam Ottaway and Caroline Feltham were invited to join the board to fill casual vacancies ahead of the AGM.

The Board have met seven times in the period this report covers (July 2015, Aug 2015, Oct 2015, Dec 2015, Jan 2016, May 2016 and July 2016)

Three new Board members will be elected in August. These new Board members will take office at the 2016 AGM.

### **Foreword**

This year has seen the Society settling into the new Chronicle. A general focus has been on confidentiality and improving the society's attitude towards risk management, and finding new ways to reward the volunteers in the society.

We are pleased to see Kent return as a Domain to the Isles of Darkness games, but sadly York has chosen not to continue with the society.

## NC Report

It should be noted that we believe the following figures to be misleading, as we think many who continue to play have not renewed.

The following table shows a breakdown of how many members are subscribed to each domain; how many of these members are on trial memberships; and how many members each domain has lost in 2016 due to expiry of membership.

It is important to note that this is the first year since the reboot of the chronicle, and that Kent has only recently been regained as a venue.

Domain	Current members in 2016	Of which trial memberships	Expired in 2016
Cambridge	8	1	6
Hertfordshire	7	0	7
Kent	12	7	0
London	15	3	16
Manchester	12	6	7
Norwich	7	1	14
Online	5	1	4
Scotland	12	0	28
Wiltshire	10	1	2

This shows that there has unfortunately been a dramatic drop in member numbers since the chronicle was restarted, with Scotland, Norwich, and Hertfordshire being especially hard hit.

This is also impacting on the number of volunteers available to fulfil essential posts in some venues, with Hertfordshire, for example, under threat of closure if a new DC isn't found. Many volunteers cover multiple positions, and are unable to take on any more.

However, we have finally appointed a volunteer ANC Recruitment and Retention, and the NC advised DCs of each domain to actively seek out new members. All except Scotland and Hertfordshire have at least one trial membership in place. We have also been approached independently by a person in Portsmouth about setting up a domain there, which is excellent news.

It must be seen as a high priority for the Society to recruit new members to each domain. Having an ANC Recruitment and Retention, who has experience recruiting people to similar societies at University SocFests, is an excellent start. There is also the yearly DragonMeet in London approaching soon, which is a valuable opportunity to spread the word about the Society for people in the South of England.

We must also ask what domains, and indeed interested individual members, can do to attempt to recruit new members. For example, the NC is featured in an article about larping in her employer's bi-monthly newsletter, in which the IoD features prominently.

In terms of the C Chain, we have an excellent ANC team in place, and we are in the process of setting up regular meetings to ensure excellent communication and support amongst the ANCs and the NC.

Consistent communication and teamwork will also be key to the Society's successful future; this applies across every team.

A volunteer report written by the NC was issued, which met with positive feedback and helped to inspire a culture of appreciation in the Society. An equality and diversity questionnaire was also issued with the intent of providing a similar report; however, this has been less successful, for which the NC takes full responsibility, and will be redesigned in the near future.

On that subject, we have an active ad hoc equality and diversity panel, which has dealt with some interesting questions and issues for the benefit of the Society as a whole, including cultural appropriation and the sensitive handling of NPCs from protected groups.

The ANC C&C and the NC will soon begin developing a "what to expect" document for members, outlining what they can expect from volunteers and what is expected from them in return. This will help to clarify expectations, and hopefully lead to increased sympathy and understanding in the Society. This document will also cover harassment and bullying, and online abuse; we will be advising, rather than setting rules, as we cannot and should not police people's social media, but it will outline what we consider to be advisable behaviour.

Finally, we are in urgent need of a new Treasurer, as the current Treasurer is stepping down. It may be worth considering having a team in charge, to reduce the pressure on one member.

## Website progress in 2015/2016

All in all, the website has settled in on the new server over the last year, with lots of small improvements being made.

Some features were put onto the back burner, in order to focus our time and energy on parts of the website that were necessary to everyday operation of the society, such as reporting, events and other administrative functions.

We did however move quite a lot of the bigger projects closer to completion

Our next focus is on events, an xp-based character builder for hunter, a usable approvals database and rebuilding the game information page, which is currently a little unwieldy to use. Part of that will be allowing you to add your own content to support your games, which is especially useful for the online groups.

STs will have a Plot management system in the next few months as well.

The website is not one and done, and we still have a long journey to take. We have been improving our knowledge and tools, and we're both satisfied that if 2015/16 disappointed a little, it has left us in a far better position to deliver on an exciting 2016/17.

## Events Report

The following document is my event report and response to the event motions lodged to be considered at the 2016 AGM

There is no doubt considering this Summer National that a new approach to events is required. It is likely following the memberships decreasing interest in attending events and their requests to reduce costs that event styles and locations shall change, and further changes such as maximum attendance numbers will be implemented.

It is likely we shall have fewer events in the future.

That said I do not think that placing regulations on these changes in the handbook is the best way to stay flexible and adaptable to changes in economy, player base and location, genre size and interest. Once it is in the handbook it's hard to change it.

The motion regarding location of the national featuring the AGM in a central location has its merits and this report is neither supportive nor negative to this one being implemented. It is up to you to vote in or not.

The motion regarding venue location I would strongly suggest we do not implement and that this is not added to the handbook.

This will require all events unless a "special case" is within the confines of roughly between York and Nottingham. No longer would we have northern or southern events. They would all be central.

This immediately means that those members at the periphery (Kent, Scotland) have the longest journeys to attend every single event. It also places an extreme limitation on sourcing venues.

Coupled with the drive to reduce costs (the next motion) sourcing venues will be a far harder (if not impossible task) and this will immediately limit the number of events we can run. If I can't find the venue, the event won't happen.

Venues within this location do not automatically have good transport links. Many venues have been disregarded, in the Peak District in particular (which rests firmly within this band) as not having suitable transport links. But coupled with the reduced cost motion, we shall need to consider these venues as they are in the right location and they are cheaper...at least to hire.

I would strongly request that you do not vote for this motion, and that this does not enter the handbook.

The third motion is to cap national costs at £100 per national. Our current national costs are not far over this, but reducing to this will immediately mean that the IOD will run large events

at a loss. To avoid this happening a different type of venue will need to be sourced which will not have the rooms, space, exclusivity, and privacy that our members request. It would change the flavour of events and up till now we have tried to be different to other LARPs. I am aware that a large number of our members don't mind camping in a field or sharing a bunkhouse with 20 others, but a large number of our members do. We simply couldn't offer privacy or smaller rooms for this cost price. The alternative will be to hire a venue with no or almost zero accommodation and leave you all to fend for yourselves regarding sleeping arrangements.

The long-term solution to making events cheaper is to reduce the services we offer. It's as simple as that.

There are very few places you can get a mansion house to yourselves, private rooms, full board and entertainment for four days for £129. An evening at the cinema is nearly £20 for 2 hours, our LARP events are roughly £3.60 an hour.

So I would ask that you do not vote this £100 cap into the handbook.

So AGM yes, no to the other two please.

I have already planned next year.

Two venues are booked.

The other two are sourced but I've had to stop from booking them while we sort this out.

### **Event 1 Winter National (Not booked) Planned 1st weekend of March**

#### **Malham Tarn Field Centre**

Settle

North Yorkshire

BD24 9PU

Cost players - £110

Cost ST's - £90

### **Event 2 Awakening Weekender (Booked) 2nd Weekend of May**

#### **CEES Stibbington Centre**

Church Lane

Stibbington

Peterborough

PE8 6LP

Cost players - £60

Cost ST's - £40

### **Event 3 Lost weekender (not booked) 4 th weekend of July**

#### **Cliffe House**

140 Lane Head Road,  
Shepley,  
Huddersfield  
HD8 8DB

Cost players - £60

Cost ST's - £40

### **Event 4 Summer National (Booked) 1 st weekend of September**

#### **YHA Ironbridge Coalbrookdale**

Telford, Shropshire, TF8 7NR

Cost players - £110

Cost ST's - £90

I heard you say you wanted cheaper events so I went looking and sourced some cheaper venues. This plan is the result of hours scouring the internet for venues. The problem I have (and the benefit for you) is I work 8-12 months in advance. It means I get cheaper booking costs and save you money. But it also means when you make a request, it takes 8-12 months for me to be able to implement it, because that is how far I have usually planned. I don't ignore feedback. I implement it into the cycle as quickly as I can.

As you can see I almost match the requirements of the motions, but I do not wish future years to be restricted by such a motion. It will make this role tougher and events harder to achieve in the future. Please help me by not making the role harder. It is my intention to continue this role indefinitely, but should the role become more challenging I would have to review this.

# Report from the GM

Current positions

**GM:** Dan Trodden & Amy Partridge-Hicks

**UST:** Mark Quennell

Assitant: Jodika Ripley (Inferno)

**Lost:** Bob Faulkner

**Awakening:** Vacant (currently in recruitment)

Legacy: Jodika Ripley

**Forsaken:** Jamie Smith

**Requiem:** Roderick Easton, Rick MacLennan

Assistant: James Holloway

## Introduction

Hello Everybody!

We've been looking after the ST chain since April 2016 and so far everything hasn't fallen apart (YAY!). We are still getting to grips with the day to day running of things but over the next two months will be looking at setting up projects for the improvement of the IOD. So, for a quick rundown of what's being going on for the past year, please have a look at the following Blogs.

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/nc-blog/uncategorized/may-2016-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/nc-blog/uncategorized/april-2016-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/march-2016-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/february-2016-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/january-2016-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/december-2015-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/november-2015-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/october-2015-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/september-2015-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/august-2015-state-of-the-society>

<http://blogs.islesofdarkness.com/universal/july-2015-state-of-the-society>

## Kent Reopens

We are pleased to announce that the Kent Domain reopened from February 2016. Currently, this domain is run by Laura Mason as DST and hosts the Requiem and Lost venues.

Requiem is now open for participation by other domains with Lost expected to become open as of November 2016.

## **Norwich**

We are currently speaking to the DST and LST of Norwich regarding their current vote to leave. We both prefer the IOD with Norwich as part of us. We are speaking to the DST and LSTs about this.

Whilst we both hope that you stay we would also like to say that you are all welcome at the other national and online games either way.

## **Volunteers**

The society relies on the dedication of volunteers who give their time to create the worlds and manage the society we all interact with.

We wish to thank all past volunteers for all their efforts, which we truly appreciate.

Below lists the positions that are currently vacant at this time:

- Genre Storyteller: Awakening GST

At this point there has been no show on interest in this post. The elections will be restarted on the 10th August 2016 and closed on the 24th August 2016. If there are no applications at this point the national game for Awakening will be closed. The local games will continue, but without an overarching plot. We do rely on Volunteers and if we're unable to fill a post it will, unfortunately, have to be closed until there is interest in it.

There are also some upcoming elections for positions, so our thanks in advance for applications!

## **Projects**

We are currently looking at the issues regarding people not running for national positions. We understand that the national game has changed since the reset, and then benefits for being part of the national game have largely reduced since the end of the MC system.

In the next few months we will be speaking to national officers and the membership about trying to create a better incentives to take up this roles. We welcome any feedback anyone wishes to send to us regarding this.

# Financial Report

this will be my final report as IOD Treasurer. In the past year the finances have remained healthy and balances have been rebuilt after some events and nationals that were run that did not manage to break even. This has been for a variety of reasons, not least individuals deciding to attend because they had other commitments. The costs of venues are paid months in advance, as is required, and therefore cash balances do need, in my opinion, to remain in a healthy surplus to cater for event expenses sometimes paid more than 12 months in advance.

Additionally to explain the surplus held, as some may be concerned at why we retain so much, is to cover costs such as insurances, and the potential for these premiums to increase. Additionally while we hope there is never a call for it, if the society ever needed legal expenses, which could be for a variety of reasons, the healthy surplus could cover such an eventuality. There may also be other unexpected expenses limited perhaps only by ones' imagination. Ensuring the society stays solvent and has reserves is prudent and right in my opinion.

The society runs 2 bank accounts, the National Account and the National Domain account. The former is to pay for the running of the society and includes national events, insurances etc. The National Domain account is intended as the pooled reserve account for the Domains to pay into, retaining cash for only when required as a 'reasonable' amount. This is to prevent Domain officers having the security risk to them of retaining too much cash.

Events more recently have been run with a small surplus, allowing a little rebuilding of the National account. The Balances (as at July 2016)

- National Account: £10,823.30
- National Domain Account: £3,109.09

Andrew Porter  
National Treasurer July 2016

## **Strategic Plans**

The board have been focusing on a variety of volunteer and player based issues as the Strategic Plan for 2015-16, these revolved around player culture, safe spaces, accessible events and making sure that where we could that recruitment was supported.

The documentation rewrite was finally completed late in 2015 and we are pleased with the results, and have identified further areas where the documentation can be modernised and made to fit actual practice.

The focus for 2016-2017 will have to be on volunteering in the society, as we have a variety of skill gaps and lack of recruits for top positions in the society, which is causing us to stretch, as can be seen from the related motions put forward to the AGM.

In addition to a coordinated approach to recruitment, it is important that we support newer members of the society to take on more responsibility.