

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY**

**16th NOVEMBER 2022 AT 8:00pm**

**ST JOHN’S YARD, 66 ST JOHN’S ROAD TUNBRIDGE WELLS TN4 9PE**

Present:  Chris Howland, Jean Erxleben, Fiona Young, Chris Moreton, Nicky Moreton, Marc Evans, Rebecca Clow, Andrew Richards, Rebecca Justins, Kirrie Wratten, Adele Ebbage, Bridget Collins, James Klech, Paul Rowlandson, Adrienne Fitzwilliam, Kirrie Wratten, Carol Smith, Phil Hardy-Bishop, Peter Emanuel (19)

The chairman, Chris Howland, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies:  Di Byers, Helen Thorpe, Christine Blaney, Lester Young, Karen Woodward, Nick Stafford, Kris Robertson (7)

1. Minutes of 2021 Annual General Meeting

Proposed by Fiona Young and seconded by Carol Smith

1. Matters Arising from Chairman’s Report 2022

No queries were raised from these

1. Presentation and Adoption of Treasurer’s Report for the year ending August 2021.

Chris Moreton presented the Treasurer’s report, as circulated. He highlighted the key problem is that we made a big loss and consequently we need to change the way we go about our productions. The market for amdram shows has changed and audiences are not at the level they used to be so we are not achieving the ticket sales to get the income. We are staging shows in the same way we have always staged them. Maybe look at the quality of the stage design, quality of lighting and so on and put on shows for a while that attract bigger audiences. CM said he knew that this had been considered in play choices but it hasn’t really been attracting more. We’ve been kept afloat by the generosity of £6,100 donated by Helen Thorpe. We had a very low amount ,only a few hundred before Trinity had transferred our £7K.

The pandemic has had an effect and this is a result of this and the audience not returning.

CM suggests to the committee that there is an EGM in order to thrash out how we proceed from here because if we carry on as we are we will not be here!

EGM will be for the whole club to attend because of the importance and need for action. Committee to arrange this.

CM has had a discussion with Adele Ebbage (LAMPS) and how we might work with them because they have the same issues (storage, they don’t pay as much as us) suggests there should be a mutual meeting between them, Liam Clarke (chairman LAMPS) to figure out how we would work together to save costs, this would include marketing and clashing of dates. CH said he had sent over booking slots into 2024. He also advised the members that we have secured cheaper premises, container storage at Bells Yew Green (end of November) and a garage at Pembury. He said it was worth looking at  as he’d rather pay another group and not a business, so maybe a collaboration could be considered.

CH referred to the ticket price average falling short of £14 and doesn’t see a problem with sticking another pound on all. Our ticket sales are not that far out from before (70 – 80% coming back) it’s the costs making the difference which are not making the profit to put us in a better position.

We are not planning big sets in the productions ahead so that should be a saving. Macbeth will give us a saving because no license required. Using money on lighting.

New rehearsal space at Cripps is free so using that as much as possible would be ideal.

CM said we usually rely on November show to give us a profit to help with other productions. Our last one is a loss of £611 on 1,020 seats comps included, set and technical costs totally £4,700.

Proposed by Marc Evans and seconded by Paul Rowlandson. Thanks was given to Mike Stubbs for auditing.

5 Chairman’s Annual Report 2022

*In October we put on the delayed Hound of the Baskervilles, this had been delayed through the pandemic and it is great that we finally were able to perform it. It was a first for us with a back projection running through the play, so was a learning curve for quite a few of us! Congratulations to all involved; thank you to Helen and her patient cast!*

*February we were planning The Ladykillers, but with a sudden death in Helen’s family with 7 weeks to go it was decided and agreed that the play should be postponed, for obvious reasons. I too was having ( and still am) family health problems, so had to step away from the club for a few months. It was decided that we should at least try and put something on in its place, and so Kirrie stepped forward and directed The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged. With just 6 weeks rehearsing and 5 weeks marketing, the play was an artistic success – thank you Kirrie for stepping in and to the cast and crew for the sharp turnaround. Ladykillers was postponed until October 2022.*

*Kirrie directed the summer play Noel Coward’s Private Lives. Once again, we chose a well-known comedy for the summer slot, following on from past experience. This was a great production, well done to Kirrie, cast and crew for a great Coward play. Just a shame that we did not have the audiences that we would have expected.*

*Whilst we are seeing audiences are coming back, they are not coming back as quickly or in the volume we need them to! Our play choices are deliberately being chosen with a view to be commercially viable as we struggle to manage our bank account following the loses due to being shut down for 15 months. We are trying to reduce our outgoings with regard to storage costs and rehearsal space. Our play choices for 2023 will have minimal physical sets so hopefully this will see a saving in expenditure against the relevant budgets. Financially, we are barely keeping our head above water, as prices are increasing faster than we can manage costs, and so, we will have to try and look at other savings going forward.*

*With regard to play choices … I understand that there are / have been murmurings amongst some members about the plays we are looking to perform, always remember it is easier to criticize than it is to offer to help. To this end I must point out that we have struggled to have a full committee for the past 3 – 4 years, meaning that all the work for the club is being done by a handful of people. That handful of people have their own real life issues and are doing their very best for the club on top of other things, so negative comments real do not help.*

*To this end, the negativity juxtaposed with my own workload really does make me vacillate in my own commitment to the chair, the committee, and ultimately the club! I would like to stay as chair for another 2 or 3 years - but who knows!*

*As well as having reducing number of committee members, we are also seeing a reducing number of people willing to help in the production teams. So, organising each production is becoming increasingly problematic.*

*I would like to thank the production and marketing teams for their incredibly hard work in getting our productions on over the past year and I would like to especially thank the committee for tirelessly committing to keeping the club going. I will miss Jean, Rebecca, and Marc on the committee and hopefully they may return in the future.*

*I would also like to thank the donors to the club (especially one), without whom, we could be having a very different meeting! Also, James Klech for a sponsored run & raising money for the club*

Proposed by Fiona Young and seconded by Nicki Moreton.

Peter Emanuel said thanks should be given to Chris Howland for the undertaking of the Chairman role in these difficult times which was reciprocated by those present.

6. Election of Officers & Committee Members

The members were notified of the committee members wishing to remain which was only 5. Chairman Chris Howland. Fiona Young, Helen Thorpe, Andrew Richards, and Lester Young as ordinary committee members. They were voted on block. Marc Evans, Rebecca Clow and Jean Erxleben are stepping down. There is therefore no Honorary secretary now, this officer position remains vacant as no one came forward for this, so will need to be filled. Also Fiona Young is no longer membership secretary so this position is vacant. Rebecca Justins joins as an ordinary committee member, Proposed by Chris Howland and seconded by Carol Smith.

7. Consideration of any motions of which due notice has been given

No matters given for consideration

8. AOB

Kirrie Wratten asked about the marketing teams. Fiona Young advised these would be for props, costumes and marketing to spread the workload. People needed to step up and others not to step back. There has been too much on certain people. More people doing less against few doing more. Marc Evans advised that marketing was in a good shape before lockdown so now the club is looking at ways to secure the knowledge within the group that is known by others.

Chris Howland said that the theatre controls the marketing side. At the moment we don’t have the leading time coming out of the pandemic. 2024 programme to be looked at over the next 4 – 6 months. Rebecca Justins said she believes there is more impact with social media. We could build up the shows using media, rehearsal photographs, reaching younger people with Instagram. Rebecca Clow did point out that the age of the audience are not all in to social media but aware it is part of a bigger programme. It was reiterated by several that uploading on Instagram gives those little nudges that make a difference.

Andrew Richards questioned whether the 6 sheet boards, banners were worth having due to the expense. Members expressed that there definitely is a place for them. Several members clarified that they certainly thought people had booked from seeing these and that it again reinforces what they are seeing on social media. Rebecca Clow raised the current marketing approach by TWODS and where they have been focusing this and Chris Howland said that whilst very good they have different realms of budget to us. Radio coverage can be a bit last minute by the stations which makes it difficult to find someone last minute to be interviewed.

Nicky Moreton asked why the change in printing. Fiona Young clairified this with Chris Howland confirming it was down to costings which have gone through the roof.

Nicky Moreton recommended that members do a standing order of £5 a month and not the annual membership fee. Trying to stop people who don’t renew their membership even on reminders. Adrianne Fitzwillliam asked was there a show fee and Chris Howland confirmed that this was dropped and the membership fee increased.

Marc Evans agreed there was a lot of money used for boards and recommended metal ties for the banners, which he has. Phil Hardy-Bishop identified some really good new sites we are using now. North Farm, Tonbridge Police Station, Tesco at Pembury. Using a trailer and not a van with recognition for the company in the programme. He reiterated web providers with programmed uploads was worthwhile.

Kirrie Wratten asked about who would be in charge of costumes and Chris Howland clarified that this would be a team set up as Fiona mentioned. There was a discussion on cast taking responsibility on costumes where possible which has been happening recently.

Rebecca Clow mentioned the fundraiser was now March 25th 2023. Only one ticket was sold on the original date when it was later cancelled due to the Queen’s funeral. Rebecca asked for people to respond when prompted and notified and sell and buy tickets for it.

Chris Moreton and Chris Howland promoted the Christmas Social which is at Pitcher and Piano Wednesday 7th December 7:30 pm, book as instructed by the email that went out to the membership.

Chris Howland thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting closed at 9 pm