



THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF STRATFORD UPON AVON ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2017

The Annual General Meeting of the Shakespeare Club was held at the Shakespeare Institute, Church St., Stratford upon Avon on Tuesday, 10th October 2017 at 7.15 pm, before the regular meeting.

MINUTES

1. Election of Chair for the AGM.

Susan Brock was nominated by Deb Follett, and elected unanimously.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Irene and David Geldard, Mary Allen, Daphne Ingram, Nick Fogg, Jenny Whybrow.

3. Minutes of the last AGM (11 October 2016)

That the Minutes be accepted as a correct record was proposed by Christine Walsh, and passed unanimously.

4. Matters arising from the minutes.

Playreadings:

Roger Taylor, who had offered to organise these events for members and their friends, announced that the first would probably be in the evening. He was locating a source of texts. The venue was to be arranged but would be in either the Methodist Hall, the Parish, Hall or The Other Place.

The Chair announced that the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was also arranging a series of public readings of Shakespeare plays starting in the spring, on the first Saturday of the month at 11.00am in the Public Library, starting on Saturday 3 March with *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. No booking was required. A notice would be circulated to members.

5. Treasurer's report.

The Treasurer, Lady Deb Follett, presented her report for 2016/7 and circulated the accounts for 2017 and 2016.

She reported that the monies allocated for the publication of the history of the Club had been paid back and the Town Trust grant of £881 for the promotion of the Club had been spent. The cost of lecturers' fees and accommodation had remained stable but public liability insurance premium continued to rise each year. It was likely that room hire at the Shakespeare Institute would rise in 2017/8. The increased use of email had reduced printing, postage and stationery costs. The website would cost more in 2017/8 as the Club had changed its designer. The Club would continue to contribute to student teachers theatre tickets in 2017/8 but thereafter would be considering different ways of introducing young people to the theatre. Membership in 2017/8 at the time of reporting was lower than in 2016/7 (73) but a number of new members had registered.

She proposed an increase in annual membership costs to £20 and visitors' costs to £5 with effect from 2018/19 to cover an expected increase in expenditure. The Club was in possession of a good bank balance with a future plan to increase subscriptions so she was happy to retire from the post of Treasurer, which she had held since 2006/7, with accounts in a reasonable state. The Chair proposed that the report and accounts be accepted. The proposal was passed unanimously.

6. Election of Honorary Treasurer.

The Chair confirmed that Lady Follett had tendered her resignation as Treasurer. She proposed a vote of thanks to Lady Follett for her 10 years of service in the post and for keeping the Club on a strong financial footing.

The Chair announced that the Committee recommended the election of Committee member, Ms Christine Walsh, to the post. This recommendation was accepted unanimously.

7. Appointment of Honorary Accountant.

The Chair recommended that H.L. Barnes be asked to continue in this role, pointing out that this was the fiftieth anniversary of the firm's connection with the Club. The proposal was seconded by Linda Butland and passed unanimously.

8. Election of Administrative Secretary.

The Chair announced that she was willing to stand for another year. Her election was proposed by Paul Prescott and carried unanimously.

9. Election of the Committee.

The Chair announced that last year's Committee, comprising of eight members, was as follows: Janet Anslow, Jean Lawrance, Mary Reardon, Eileen Geldard, Paul Prescott, Margaret Cunningham, John Cunningham, Sylvia Morris, Christine Walsh and Roger Taylor. Jean Lawrance, Margaret Cunningham and John Cunningham had given notice of their wish to retire from the Committee. All others are willing to stand again. Their re-election was approved unanimously *en bloc*.

This left three vacancies. Deb Follett had been nominated as a member of the Committee by Susan Brock, seconded by Sylvia Morris and was elected unanimously. Two further nominations had been received. Melissa Mailer-Yates, Director of Shakespuss and Co. Ltd. has been nominated by Susan Brock and seconded by Christine Walsh. She was elected unanimously. Sandra MacDonald has been nominated by Susan Brock and seconded by Christine Walsh. She was elected unanimously.

The Chair thanked Mr and Mrs Cunningham for their support of the Club, especially in the organisation of the annual raffle and to Mrs Lawrance for her service as Chair of the Committee. Susan Brock had been invited by the Committee to succeed her as Committee Chair.

10. Revision of Club Rules.

The Club rules of September 2011 had been updated and revised after a number of recent amendments, the last being in October 2016. The Chair explained that the current revisions had three objectives: to regularise current practice; to make the Club more outward-looking and flexible in its activities; and to encourage more members to participate as Committee members and Officers.

She went through the revised rules pointing out the major changes:

Objectives: NEW para 5: To foster and encourage an appreciation of Shakespeare within the local, national, and international communities, especially among students and young people.

Management of the Club; para 2.: Officers and Committee members shall be elected at an AGM but may be eligible for re-election for not more than 5 consecutive years from the present date.

Management of the Committee; para 5.: The Committee shall identify an Honorary President, of national or international standing, who will serve for one year, subject to approval by Members of the Club at an Ordinary or General Meeting.

Finance: para 1.: Membership of the Club is open to all.

Dissolution of the Club: Should the Club be dissolved for any reason, all monies remaining in the Club's bank accounts and its assets will be distributed to local charities and organisations as proposed by the Committee and agreed by members of the Club at a General Meeting, either Annual or Extraordinary.

There were no comments from the floor and the revised Rules were accepted unanimously. They would be made available on the Club's website.

11. Report on programme for the 2017/8 season.

The Chair read out the programme and pointed out that there was a change of speaker for the December meeting, as Professor Brotton was unable to be present. He would be replaced by a one-man show presented by Mark Carey titled *Into the Breach*. Michael Wood had accepted the Club's invitation to be President for 2017/8 and would have his Presidential evening in November.

The Chair announced that the Committee was considering a Club lunch in May/June, possibly a picnic with entertainment in the grounds of Mason Croft. Further details would be presented to the members at a monthly meeting in the new year. The Committee were also exploring Shakespeare garden visits.

12. Report on Club activities 2016/7

a. *The Story of the Shakespeare Club*

The Chair reported that 270 copies had been sold. The authors had paid back the Club's loan for printing and design costs in January 2017 and had taken on the remaining costs themselves, expecting to break even in 2018. 230 copies remained in stock. Members were encouraged to spread the word or give them to friends.

b. *Town Trust grant*

The Chair reported that a grant of £881 for one year had been awarded for 'Promoting the Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon'.

- to help the Shakespeare Club to become better known by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the publication of a book on its history in 2016.
- to offer talks and presentations by the authors about the Club to Stratford groups with related interests.
- to pay for publicity, portable display equipment and materials (including photographs and facsimiles of Club archives) for pop-up exhibitions

Presentations had been made to 6 local groups (in total 747 people). Printed leaflets and posters about the Club had been distributed to members of these groups and more widely throughout the Town at local society meetings and events.

c. *Support for trainee Shakespeare teachers*

The Chair reported that two more trainee teachers from the University of West of England, Abbey Kurton and Michelle Smith, had been awarded RSC tickets in summer 2017 and entertained in Stratford by Committee members, John and Margaret Cunnington. [See attached report.]

The Committee proposed to continue this work with a new partnership with local secondary schools. It had been agreed in outline by the Committee that the Club might spend the equivalent sum (£100) on theatre tickets (at under-16 prices) for A-level English or Drama students from up to 4 local schools. These students should be invited to a Club meeting together afterwards and an extra-curricular lecture on a specific play should be provided for these students and all interested members. This was agreed in outline. The final proposal would be presented to members of the Club for their approval in due course.

d. *Web site:*

The Chair reported that the new site went live in April 2017 and has been added to since. The cost of the new design was £200. Costs in future would be for hosting only. The Committee proposed that the site should serve as an information hub for Shakespeare Clubs across the world. If members knew of Clubs in the UK and abroad with which the Club might link, please contact Susan Brock.

e. *Shakespeare's Birthday 2016.*

The Chair reported that Club members had been invited to march en masse in the procession (as they did in 1905 and for many years after) but only about a dozen took part including members of the Committee. Unfortunately the President, Sir Richard Eyre, was unable to attend. However the new Club banner was carried with the help of KES students. 27 Club members attended the official Birthday Lunch in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, seated at 3 tables. The lunch would continue in the same format in 2018.

13. 2017/8 Raffle

The Chair reported that with the retirement of the Cunningtons from the Committee new organisers would be needed. The plan was to continue if members would support it. It was hoped that the raffle would take place in the new year.

14. Any other business.

- a. The Chair reported that Stratford Words, a new radio programme, had been launched by Welcombe Radio. Writers and poets were invited to contribute their work www.welcomberadio.co.uk
- b. The Chair reported on a new course of classes on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* lead by Dr Laurence Green 16 January to 27 March 2018. www.shakespeare4alltime.com.
- c. Sylvia Morris reported that members should be receiving email notifications of meetings, etc. from StratfordShakespeareclub@gmail.com. Members who had signed up for email alerts and were not receiving them should speak to her.

The meeting concluded at 7.50 and was followed by the first talk of the 2017/8 season by Professor Gary Watt.