Registered Charity

 293095

**Minutes of the 58th Annual General Meeting of Riverside Players**

**held on 14th June 2020 via Zoom at 17:15pm**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Members in attendance: 36

Apologies were received from:

Sharron and Dave Burley, Dave Byrne, Celia Littlefield, Shirley Warren.

**2. Minutes of the 58th Annual General Meeting held on Sunday 9th June 2019 and matters arising**

The minutes were accepted by the membership and signed as a true record of the meeting.

Members in agreement: Clive Cheer, Bruce Hanson

Matters arising: membership during COVID-19 paused. If paid already, and no change in Sep, they will be refunded.

1. **Treasurer's report**

Matt Frieacre gave their report on the 2019/20 accounts, which is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

1. **Membership secretary’s report**

Sarah Hill gave her membership report, which is attached as appendix 2 to these minutes.

**5. Chairman's report**

Benjamin Newton presented his report, which is attached in Appendix 3 to these minutes.

6. **Riverside Players Youth Group Report**

A youth group report from Naomi Morgan is attached as Appendix 4 to these minutes.

1. **Subscription rates for 2020/2021**

The current subscription rates are:

Family of three or more £40

Family of two £35

Individual £23

Senior (aged over 60) £8.50

Student £8

Junior (under the age of 18) £8

Friend £5

Youth Group £2

The current subscription rates were presented and discussed, it was agreed that the current rates seemed acceptable and that they did not need to be changed at the moment.

Seconded by Geof Hillier and Sarah Hill

1. **Election of new members to the committee in accordance with Rule 6**

Peter Nicholson is obliged to stand down.

Clive Cheer, Jen Armstrong, Sarah Hill and Matthew Frieace have to stand down after 3 years of service, but are eligible to stand again, and have agreed to do so.

The remaining committee members are: Katie Aitchison, Naomi Morgan, Sarah Hill, Clive Cheer, Matt Frieacre, Benjamin Newton, Shari Newton and Jen Armstrong.

We have one vacancy, and one nomination was received by the deadline date from Heidi Philpott.

Heidi Philpott is the only one to volunteer and is to join the committee.

**8. Election of an honorary auditor in accordance with Rule 10**

It was suggested that the auditor used last year is kept on for this year.

Lorraine Slipper and Jen Armstrong

**9. Any other business**

* Jason Down – Q on FB adds, how much?
	+ Matt Frieacre: about £5 a week per boost. About £15 per show. Cheaper than printed.
* COVID Social Distance concert by the castle – Catherine Barritte
	+ Geof H willing to help
	+ Lorraine – waiting for godot. Outside or film
	+ Queen quiz – film if not possible

**10. Presentation of the Caroline Frost Creativity Award**

The nominees were:

|  |
| --- |
| Kirstie McMillan |
| Matt FrieacrePeter NicholsonJacob Friett and Geof HillierKatie AitchisonLorraine SlipperCatherine BarritteGeof HillierHeidi Philpott |

The Caroline Frost Creativity Award for 2020 was presented to Katie Aitchison.

**11. Presentation of the Suzie Fenlon Spoken Word Award**

The nominees were:

Lorraine Slipper

Lily Deal

Finn Prior

Jack Barker

Jason Down

Lee Bentley

Matt Frieacre

Geof Hillier

The Cast of Blackadder

The Suzie Fenlon Spoken Word Award for 2020 was presented to Geof Hillier and Lily Deal.

**12. Presentation of the Ian Slipper Award for Musicality**

The nominees were:

Finn Prior

Karen Friett

Kirstie McMillan – Peter Nicholson – Matt Wintour

Peter Nicholson

Robert Nicholson

Lynda Newtno

Jacob Friett and Geof Hillier

The Ian Slipper Award for Musicality for 2020 was presented to Lynda Newton.

There being no further business, the meeting duly closed at 18:05pm

This year, there were two separate Riversider of the Year winners:

2020 – Matthew Frieacre

2020 – Katie Aitchison

**Appendix 1- Accounts**

****

**Appendix 2 – Membership Report**

****

**Appendix 3 – Chairman’s Report**

Riverside Players AGM 2020: Chairman’s Report

## Introduction

It’s certainly been an unusual year for Riverside Players – certainly not the year that we had planned! COVID-19 has made us change our plans, cancel some shows and added a lot of uncertainty to our future. As it stands today, it is not 100% clear when theatre groups such as ours will be able to perform again as we used to. Nor is it clear what precautions or changes we will have to make in order to keep everyone safe. However, I can assure you that our current committee have been working hard to ensure that we will be ready when the time comes, and that over the next year we will continue to do so. As a group, Riverside Players will continue to operate as best we can. So far, I’m pleased to say we’ve branched out into Radio theatre and music videos. We’ll always be willing to explore other, new avenues of theatre if that’s what it takes. If any member has any ideas of things we can do: interactive zoom theatre perhaps? Then please do let the committee know. After all, we are only here to support you: our members.

## Committee

Despite the variation that 2020 has thrown at us, the committee certainly kept busy. The committee has met 11 times this year, continuing with scheduling most meetings on the first Sunday morning of the month. After the lockdown was imposed, we moved to Zoom – and I have to say it has actually made the meetings overall a little more efficient, as well as making it much easier for Clive to attend. Sadly, this year marks the departure of Peter Nicholson from the committee. Peter has been a valuable contributor over the last 6 years, especially covering the “tech without plugs” role as well as Chairman and Vice Chair. He’s always been tireless and volunteered to help in countless areas. I’d like to formally thank him for his service. Other members are due to re-stand – and I’m pleased to see they are willing to do so. Working on a committee is never the most glorious of tasks, but it’s good to see people taking the time to help us all out. Again, I thank you.

## Eynsford Village Hall

Moving on to the Hall – our spiritual home and the store for a lot of our kit. At present it remains locked for the foreseeable future until the trustees receive guidance from the Government such facilities are safe to re-open. We have been promised a rebate of any payments made over the course of lockdown due to bookings missed. Fortunately, though the hall is not making money right now, neither is it incurring a great deal of expenditure. Their funds are sufficient for the moment to maintain the insurance etc. and since Sarah isn’t turning on the lighting rig, the utility costs should remain low.

At present, the lack of monthly management meetings on behalf of the Hall trustees (due to COVID-19) means that there has been little news from them of late. The Hall trustees have formally applied for planning permission for the new site near the recreation ground. The latest information I have is that this is still going through the usual process with the council but that it has neither been confirmed nor denied. If anyone has a newer update than this and is willing to provide a short summary, please raise your hand in the chat.

Regardless, even if planning permission is granted, the Hall will be with us for a while yet. There would need to be significant fund-raising efforts on behalf of the hall in order to reach the amount of money required. Riverside Players have already pledged a sum of money towards the hall rebuild efforts, and I am sure we will be willing to help out in raising the money if called upon.

## Alice in Wonderland Jr/RSPYG

On to the Shows! The first show of the 2019/2020 season was Alice in Wonderland Jr – performed by the Riverside Players Youth Group, directed by Naomi Morgan and assisted by Kirstie Atkinson. The script and score was provided by Disney, which means that it broadly tracked the story told in the animated classic from 1951. The audience this year were invited to join the Mad Hatters Tea Party before the show – a wonderful excuse for an outdoor picnic with cake and fizz. There was also some extra street theatre, allowing some of the cast to get some extra time in the limelight! As you’d expect, the feedback from this was very positive, so well done to all the Front of House team for going above and beyond the call of duty in providing an immersive experience.

As for the show itself, it was lovely to see the Youth Group in action once again. There were some stand-out performances, most notably the glorious caterpillar portrayed by James Brodie but as an ensemble, the whole the cast did a brilliant job of bringing the absurdities of the piece to life. From the Cheshire Cat to the Queen of Hearts, we had a brilliant range of characters. It’s always nice to see the future performers of tomorrow getting their practice in today! Combined with great lighting and superb choreography, all told it stood as an excellent piece of theatre.

The Youth Group also performed a small piece at Christmas for the parents – I’ll leave their report to cover that in more detail.

Sadly, the Youth Group were unable to perform their piece this year, due to the lockdown restrictions. However, we hope that once the situation changes, we’ll be able to see some more from them: watch this space!

## Blackadder II

In the autumn of 2019, we had Blackadder II, the Ben Elton classic – which was directed by Kirstie McMillan. Her vision included a brand new method of staging – encompassing the stage and half the floor, with the audience on 2 sides. This allowed for a much larger number of locations without a scene change, as well as putting the bar in the middle of the action – which I must applaud as a very Riverside idea! After much fiddling, measuring and sweating, the end result was very impressive, and it certainly gave the play a different spin – well done Kirstie for pushing the boundaries in all areas of the Production.

Of course, the danger of producing a piece of television is that everyone is going to focus in on your main characters – will it be as good as Rowan and Tony? I’m pleased to say that Geof Hillier and Jason Down did a splendid job as Blackadder and Baldrick respectively. As a piece, it’s largely carried by the central characters, so well done. Of course, there are a fine array of characters, and we had a great cast for all of them, including Lorraine as Queenie and Michael Barker as Lord Percy. The results speak for themselves – all of the audience feedback was fantastic and we made a tidy profit, with everyone impressed at how we kept the original spirit alive, but managed to give it our own twist. Kirstie is keen to put on Blackadder goes Forth in the future, and once we have clarity on where and when we’re allowed to perform, I’m sure you’ll hear more about that.

## Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood

And now of course, it’s time for Panto (oh no it isn’t). This year, we had Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood: directed by Lorraine Slipper. In contrast to last year’s pantomime, no one was strung from the rafters and attached to construction equipment: which made the Health and Safety paperwork a lot easier to complete. Then Peter added a sword fight and it all complex again!

The script rattled along, touching as lightly as possible upon plot and focusing mainly on gags and hilarity. The set was nice and simple thanks to Matt Frieacre, who aimed to make it as easy as possible to work with. This was all the more impressive given his high heels and false chest that he needed as the dame.

The notable change to this year’s Panto was the “silent band” – with Peter Nicholson leading a crew with headphones, and an electric drumkit. The idea was to ensure that we could balance the sound properly from the electronic instruments and ensure that everyone could hear the singers. It took a lot of blood, sweat and tears from Geof Hillier and Jacob Friett to get it working (and we had a couple of tech misfires in the last few rehearsals).

Despite the difficulty however, it did seem to be a very successful experiment. We had a lot of praise from audience members that the band “weren’t too loud” and that they could hear the singing and the music clearly. Of course, hearing Guppy sing clearly might not be the best win for us all? I’ll leave you to be the judge.

Of course, what is a Panto without dancing! Once again, Heidi Philpott did a sterling job, making her dancers do some wonderful things – and giving the rest of us some exercise. There were a lot of great routines, but I feel I should call out “Salute” as being the number that most audience members came back to: it’s great to have a fiery girl power number in there.

Again, audience responses were very positive – and we left them feeling happy and contented for another year. A great job well done for all involved.

## SFaNW/YG/Radio Plays

I should now be talking about the Youth Group Production of Whodunnit and Songs for a New World – which was to have been our spring and summer productions this year. However, the COVID-19 lockdown hit just as the Youth Group were mid-way through preparing their show and before we could audition for the adult piece. Our intention is that both of these pieces will go ahead when possible. Tentatively, the Youth Group is penciled for this autumn and Songs for a New World in the spring of 2021. However, we don’t want to be too firm on dates just yet – as we are resolved to only put on shows when it is practical and safe to do so. As disappointing as it is to cancel something already, it would be worse to have to do so a second time: especially when hard work has already been put in.

What have we been doing during lockdown? Well, we have certainly been very active on the social scene. There have been 8 Zoom Quizzes, which many members have taken part in - even Phil Willis-Holden, one of our lifetime members from the US joined one! These have been primarily lead by Katie Aitchison, our social secretary – and she’s become markedly famous for her Disney rounds.

We’ve also been putting up some radio plays. So far we have recorded 3: Prometheus and the Godfather, Artnet and Brief Encounter. All of these are available on YouTube as well as the Riverside Players website. The recording sessions have been a lot of fun, with people making their own costumes and delivering lines with ham and abandon. Some new members have joined us, and we even got Lord New Dave Byrne to give us his Directorial Debut – it’s a panto next, my friend! A lot of credit is due to Jacob Friett here, since he has taken on the unenviable task of taking the audio and trying to make it sound semi-rational.

We’re looking to do some more in the future, so if you’re interested in joining the fun, email the committee or Katie directly and we’ll get you involved.

## The Future

So, what’s next for The Riverside Players? I can certainly give you an idea of what we’d like to achieve.

Our ideal scenario would be that some form of Production would be permitted in October – in 4 months’ time. We would consider re-staging the Youth Group show in this slot in this slot, as well as a Queen themed quiz/cabaret – similar to the David Bowie one. The rationale being that musicians can rehearse more easily apart than actors, there would be minimal staging required and a socially distant seating might be achievable.

For Pantomime 2021, we have Bruce Hanson directing Dick Whittington and his Cat – a script he has written himself. Then in the Spring/Summer slots we would have Songs for a New World and something from the Riverside Youth Group.

Beyond that, we have several proposals put in, including Not Safe for Work from Steve Fenlon, Blackadder goes Forth from Kirstie McMillan and a 2022 Pantomime from Matt Frieacre.

I must stress however, that the current line-up is very much flexible, given the current situation. Depending on government guidelines, hall availability or other factors, we may change dates depending on what suits everyone best. As I mentioned at the start, we may have to explore new and unknown avenues: outdoor-social-distance theatre perhaps? The two things I can promise you are:

1. Riverside Players will keep doing some form of theatre/arts over the coming year. If you have suggestions, please let us know!
2. If it’s not safe or not practical, we won’t do it.
If nothing else, an audience won’t come if they don’t feel safe.

Overall, it’s been an interesting year. We’ve had some disappointments, but I’ve been really pleased to see the way the group has risen to the challenge. The fact we can get new members to join in even when we can’t bribe them in The Five Bells is proof that we really can do anything. I look forward to seeing what the next 12 months bring us.

**Appendix 4 – Youth Group Report**

Youth Group Report for AGM

Youth Group Report for AGM

What a strange year it has been for everyone, including RSPYG. With Covid-19 hitting us right in the middle of rehearsals and all shows cancelled the children left wondering what is going on and no school for kids! It certainly has been a testing time.

I know I say this each year that the, Youth Group keeps going from strength to strength with the youngsters showing determination, confidence and growing maturity in their own personal development through the medium of acting. But it is true, and to prove this, I would like to tell you about Zoe Giles, who when started at RSPYG, was so quite and very shy. However, during lockdown, Zoe started a podcast broadcasting for 8 weeks, which included lots of her friends from Drama, but also lots of interviews with adults, and even famous people. She recently had David Walliams on her podcast, and they talked about lots of different things including books. She was also interested in TV regarding her podcast. For someone so shy and quiet to be able to produce this, it just shows how much confidence she has gained. Her parents’ credit RSPYG for a lot of that. (if anyone is interested in listen to any of the podcast, please let me know).

Right on to what we managed to do since last AGAM. In July 2019 saw the crazy world production of Alice in Wonderland. Where we provided street theatre for those having afternoon tea before the performance, as well as someone wonderful singing and dancing. Who can forget the enchanting performance of our 2 Alice’s (Eloise & Neve) along with our crazy always late rabbit, who made me tried just watching her, (Elizabeth) to name a few. I could mention all the youth names as they all contributed to a magnificent show, but with 23 children I would be here a very long time.

No band for this show, but I must thank, Kirstie McMillan, who was the MD, who taught the kids to sing some really really hard songs. The set was wild and crazy, and we are grateful to ‘Lord’ New Dave, Sarah and others who crewed and worked so hard behind the scenes. But we won’t mention the Rabbit house to Dave!!

At Christmas the Kids performed the 12 murders of Christmas, for friends and family only. As always at Christmas the children perform on the portable staging with no set design, and only a few props, this year, the children were also the stage crew as they moved their own set. I think it gave them a little idea of what it is like for our crew during shows.

Just be Covid-19 hit the children were in rehearsals for their next show, “Who Dunnit” which is murder mystery (loosely based on Cluedo) which Kirstie Atkinson wrote the show, and ill also be her directing debut. With things still up in the area with Covid-19 we are not sure when the children will be back rehearsing for their show but keep a look out on our social media for more information.