

Minutes from 57th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 30 September 2022, St Mary's, Perivale

1 Attendees and apologies for absence

Gill Rowley (chair)
Colin Easton (hon. treasurer/Pisces Players)
Dorrie Baker (hon. secretary)
Richard Norris (committee member) (West London Sinfonia)
Richard Partridge (committee member) (Ealing Symphony Orchestra)

Attendees (signed in):

Pauline Pressey, Angela Arratoon, Elni Hans (EON); Carol Wilkes (Ealing Quilters); Tony Miller (CEPAC); Don Kennedy (Rainbow Poetry Group); Margaret Partridge (HEOS); Karen Squires, Vivien Karam (West London Sinfonia); Jane McLeod (Ealing Choral Society), Androulla Kyriacou (EON); Yvonne Little, June Cocking, Sallie Mercer, Hilary Phillips (Friends of Marcq-en-Baroeul); Kim Mughan, Lynda Elson, Janet Biglin, Laura Belmostefaoui (Impact Theatre); Ann Chapman (EMFF).

Apologies:

Anne Neville (committee member) (Questors Theatre)
Colette Wilson (French Cultural courses); Abi Barber (abibiyoga); John Hummerston; Doug King (Questors Theatre); Jean Fitzpatrick; Colin Lomas (EON).

2 Welcome

Gill Rowley, EA&L chair, welcomed all attending. She was particularly pleased that we could at last have a real get-together as opposed to the Zoom meetings of the last two years.

3 Minutes of previous AGM (19 October 2021)

Acceptance of the previous minutes was proposed and accepted.

4 Matters arising

To be covered as necessary during the meeting.

5 Chairman's report

Gill reflected on Ealing Arts and Leisure's work over the last half-century or so, and the fact that its main purpose now is to provide low-cost publicity for its membership, through its website and the printed events diary, *What's On*, which we distribute around the whole borough. The pandemic lockdowns had reminded us all of the importance of communal activity such as that promoted through EA&L, giving us a little structure in our lives, helping to alleviate boredom and loneliness – and sometimes challenging us.

All voluntary organisations, along with EA&L itself, need to be continually renewed and replenished, especially with new members. It's a bit like trying to fill a bath without putting the plug in - we need to keep topping up, or drawing in new people, if we are to survive. Hence the importance of publicity.

So a little under a year ago we were shocked to discover that most supermarket chains had

outsourced their 'bin' space for free papers to a distribution company. This means that to continue using these outlets – from which by far the greatest numbers of diaries are taken, owing to the high footfall – EA&L must pay the distributor. We decided to do this on a trial basis, opting for Morrison's in Acton, Tesco in Ealing Broadway and Sainsbury in West Ealing as our outlets. The cost is just over £1,000 a year. The arrangement, though expensive, works well and we feel we have little choice other than to continue, to help our members can maintain their profile and attract support for their activities.

However, the costs are depleting our reserves, so reluctantly, having requested no increase since 2014, EA&L must now raise member subscriptions in order to help cover the costs of this and other inflationary factors. Members will have had notice of these increases, which we have kept to the absolute minimum.

Of course, we also distribute *What's On* all around the borough, to libraries, churches, community and health centres, cafés, banks and shops, and Gill thanked those members who help us by taking copies to outlets in their own area. She also thanked committee members Colin Easton and Richard Partridge for the immense amount of time and effort they put into distribution.

Gill also provided a brief update about the Victoria Hall. This now 7-year-old saga was due to have been brought to a conclusion next week, but the tribunal date has been cancelled for a second time.

The background, briefly, is that the Victoria Hall and associated space lie within the Town Hall complex but are not owned by the Council. They belong to a charitable trust, but a few years ago the Council conveniently overlooked this and agreed with a property developer that it could take over the space with the rest of the Town Hall to incorporate into a hotel. When this was discovered, a new charity, The Friends of the Victoria Hall, was formed to challenge the takeover of the building, which has for over 125 years hosted community events of every kind – and been used, before the hire rates became unaffordable, by quite a few Ealing Arts members.

Ealing Arts was a founder member of FoVH. Its aim is to set up a completely new trust board to administer the Victoria Hall premises, ensuring that it can be used by the community for which it was built – and which paid for it, in the 1890s, by public subscription. This is the final chance to save this large central Ealing venue for the community: there is literally nowhere else of comparable size that can be accessed easily from all parts of the borough, by public transport.

When a new date is provided for the postponed tribunal, we will send out an update.

5 Membership report

Richard Partridge reported that in principle we have 58 members: 27 have rejoined already this year, and he is hoping the rest will do so in the near future. There are 14 supporters who pay to have *What's On* posted to them.

6 Treasurer's report

Colin Easton, Hon. Treasurer, had prepared a Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2022.

Net payments of £883 include a £1,000 one-off payment made towards the Friends of the Victoria Hall's legal costs.

Income from membership fees increased after the easing of lockdown restrictions.

At year-end our bank balance was just under £6,000.

Acceptance of the Receipts and Payments Account was proposed and accepted.

7 Reports: supporters, *What's On* and website

Richard Partridge mentioned the upcoming increases in charges for 'extra lines' in *What's On* and for display advertisements. He also asked members if they would prefer to have a higher membership subscription increase to cover payment for distribution to more supermarkets. The preference was to stay with the current arrangements.

8 Election of Officers and Executive Committee members

Retiring officers:

Chairman: Gill Rowley

Hon Treasurer: Colin Easton

Hon Secretary: Dorrie Baker

were all proposed, seconded, and re-elected.

Retiring ordinary committee members:

Richard Norris

Richard Partridge (membership, website, *What's On* editor)

Anne Neville (absent)

were all proposed, seconded and re-elected.

9 AOB

Member Angela Arratoon queried the Waitrose distribution (Waitrose has not signed up to the paid-for distribution scheme). [We cover the West Ealing store but there are no other large branches in the borough.]

She also mentioned that the new central Ealing cinema, the Ealing Project, has according to *Around Ealing* been 'supported' by Ealing Council. The Chair said this is very unusual, as the Council has for many years given no support whatever to arts-related activity within the borough. She reminded the meeting that EA&L began life as a Council initiative (called at the time Ealing Arts Council), but Council support, including funding, fell away and as a result what is now EA&L became a registered charity, surviving on its membership income.

10 Guest speaker

Arts documentary filmmaker Tony Palmer was interviewed by musician and local councillor Julian Gallant, and a generous number of film clips from Mr Palmer's lengthy career were shown. The presentation was very much enjoyed by all present.

11 Chairman's vote of thanks

Gill thanked Tony Palmer and Julian Gallant for their presentation. She also thanked the St Mary's Perivale technical team (Simon Shute, George Auckland, Rob Jenkins and Kim Morley) and everyone else who had helped to make the evening so memorable.

Drinks were then served to conclude the meeting.