

# Ealing Arts & Leisure

## **Minutes from 60th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1 October 2025 at St Mary's Perivale**

### **1 Attendees and apologies for absence**

Present:

Gill Rowley (Chair)

Colin Easton (Hon. Treasurer/Pisces)

Dorrie Baker (Hon. Secretary)

Richard Partridge (committee member/Ealing Symphony Orchestra)

Anne Neville (committee member/Questors Theatre)

Richard Norris (committee member/West London Sinfonia)

Margaret Partridge (HEOS); Hugh Mather (Friends of St Mary's Perivale); Sue Lyons; Annie Harnes; Rosie Allen (Drama Studio Ealing); Jennie Stuart, Aileen Stuart (U3A); Ludmilla Morris (Greenford Scottish Dance Society); William Wolfenden (Pisces); Karen Squire (West London Sinfonia); Hilary Phillips (Friends of Marcq-en-Baroeul); Roger Green (Friends of the Victoria Hall); Angela Arratoon (Ealing Over-60 Network); Ealing Flower Club (several members)

Apologies:

John Hummerston (former EA&L Chair); Suzanne Gribble (ECS); Roger Nellist (Friends of St Mary's Perivale); Ealing Choral Society; Janet McPhail (Greenford & District Caledonian Association)

### **1 Welcome**

Gill Rowley, Chair of EA&L, welcomed all attending.

### **2 Minutes of previous AGM (16 October 2024)/matters arising**

These were accepted and there were no matters arising.

### **3 Chair's report**

GR briefly outlined the year's activities, which as ever focused on the production of *What's On*, our events diary, and the website, which carries the same information.

She summarised the distribution, which covers three supermarkets where we pay for space and one where we do not, plus some 30–40 outlets around the borough of Ealing which committee members and other member-volunteers cover. She asked for suggestions of other outlets we might add, and also said we would be glad of more volunteers, in both cases especially to cover areas beyond central Ealing.

*What's On* helps to bring in new members for our organisations, audiences for local productions, exhibitions and concerts, and, for new groups, is a way to get known in the local area which matters most to them.

GR also provided a brief update about the still ongoing campaign to save the Victoria Hall (part of the Town Hall) for the community that built it. Several EA&L organisations used to use its facilities, but the deal the Council is striking would effectively prevent community use of the Victoria Hall – and the Prince's Hall below it. Both were included in the Council's disposal of the Town Hall to a developer in 2016, but this theft of charity property was challenged by a group which became The Friends of the Victoria Hall (FoVH, which itself became a charity).

EA&L was a founder member of FoVH, which eventually took the Charity Commission and Council to a tribunal, in 2023. As a result, the Council – which had appointed itself sole trustee of the charitable trust some decades ago – was ordered to relinquish control of the trust property.

It has not done so. It continues to treat the Victoria Hall as part of its own fiefdom and has set up what was required to be an independent committee in the most duplicitous manner, inviting its own affiliates to join the panel. One of the people who has done so was instrumental in the deal made in 2016 to dispose of the Victoria Hall. It's a strange interpretation of 'independent'.

Moreover, the Trust committee has to refer all decisions to the Council. Hence, no change whatsoever from the way in which the Hall has been run for the last six decades.

This has recently been verified by a local councillor who has been involved with the Hall's governance for some years and will be explaining to the next Tribunal exactly what has been going on, and how no decision not in the interests of the Council has ever – and could ever – be made by the Hall's charity board.

The same councillor will also draw attention to the Council's habit of charging a disproportionate amount of the Town Hall's management expenses to the charity-owned Victoria Hall, without any independent scrutiny of the accounts.

The upcoming Tribunal appeal, on 19 November, is costing a further £30,000 in legal fees on top of the £125,000 already spent. Meanwhile, this large central Ealing venue, the only one that can be accessed easily from all parts of the borough by public transport, has been closed since July 2023 – for reasons never divulged.

#### **4 Membership/supporters/*What's On* report**

RP reported that EA&L has 50 full member organisations, 29 of whom have now rejoined for this year, one is not renewing and the remaining 20 are being reminded. There are five Honorary Members, plus 21 supporters who pay to have *What's On* mailed to them.

RP also mentioned that in order to produce *What's On* without having to enter all the data twice, while avoiding the cost of the current InDesign software, which is available only for rental, he is using an elderly computer, and hopes it will continue to work.

#### **5 Treasurer's report**

CE had prepared a Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March 2025, distributed at the meeting. Receipts were up on last year while payments were down, following a change of printer, which gave us a healthy bank balance at year-end of £6,739.

The accounts were accepted.

#### **6 Election of officers and Executive Committee members**

Retiring officers:

Chairman: Gill Rowley

Hon. Treasurer: Colin Easton

Hon. Secretary: Dorrie Baker

Retiring ordinary committee members:

Richard Norris

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

Anne Neville

All officers and committee members were happy to stand for re-election and all were duly re-elected.

As ever, there was a call for 'new blood' on the committee. It was observed that although we have representatives for music and drama we have no one for art or for the leisure activities encompassed by our membership.

## **7 Speaker: Torin Douglas MBE**

Torin Douglas wrote regularly for *The Times*, *The Independent*, *The Economist*, and *Campaign*, presented a media show for LBC, then, for 24 years, was the BBC's media correspondent. He is a speaker, a writer and an events chair for a range of media, arts and academic organisations, a professor of media, a partnerships co-ordinator for the Bedford Park Festival and director of the Chiswick Book Festival.

Having reminded the meeting that much of Chiswick is in the London Borough of Ealing (local tube station Turnham Green, on the District Line), Mr Douglas talked about the success of the now long-established Chiswick Book Festival and the existence of the more recently established Ealing Book Festival, which is not widely known about. He is keen to break down 'silos' and encourage organisations to work together for their mutual benefit.

## **8 Vote of thanks**

GR thanked our guest speaker for his talk, which had provided much food for thought and would, she hoped, spark some ideas for collaboration between organisations. She then asked if there was any other business (there was none) and concluded the meeting by inviting the audience to stay for drinks.