

**THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB OF STRATFORD UPON AVON  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2023**

Held on Zoom on Tuesday 3 October at 7.20 pm. Voting was by a show of hands.

**MINUTES**

1. **Election of Chair for the AGM.** Susan Brock was nominated by Sylvia Morris and Seconded by Sandra MacDonald.
2. **Apologies for absence.** Dwayne Dawson, Pauline Pearson, Nick Fogg, Jane and Roger Taylor, and Stephen and Sally Sharp sent their apologies.
3. **Minutes of the last AGM on 11 October 2022** These were proposed by Susan Brock, Seconded by Sylvia Morris and accepted unanimously.
4. **Matters arising from the minutes.** There were no matters arising.
5. **Treasurer's report** This was distributed in advance and is attached. Chris Walsh noted that the Club currently had a surplus of £4000 and this put it in a good position to hold the planned celebrations of its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. It also allows the Club to pay the fees, travel expenses and occasional overnight stay of speakers. The Club currently has 75 members.. Acceptance was proposed by Susan Brock, Seconded by Sylvia Morris, and passed unanimously.
6. **Elections of Officers and Committee.** Susan Brock explained that the Club's Constitution rules that Committee members are in post for no more than five years. This was suspended in 2022 and she suggested that this suspension remains in force for another year. This allows for the smooth running of the Club during this important year. The proposal to suspend the constitution was proposed by Susan Brock, seconded by Jenny Whybrow and agreed with one abstention.
7. **Election of Honorary Treasurer.** Christine Walsh (first elected to the post in 2017) was willing to stand again. She was proposed by Sylvia Morris, Seconded by Ros Haigh, and elected unanimously.
8. **Appointment of Honorary Accountant.** It was proposed that H A L Barnes again be invited to audit the Club's Accounts. The appointment was proposed by Chris Walsh, Seconded by Susan Brock and passed unanimously.
9. **Ratification of the Election of President 2023-4.** Professor Emma Smith of Hertford College, University of Oxford has accepted our invitation to be President. Much of her recent work has been on the reception of Shakespeare in performance, print and criticism. Her book on the First Folio combined a number of approaches to this volume, and her recent book *This is Shakespeare* was a Sunday Times bestseller. She is often called on by the media to discuss Shakespearean news and events. She was proposed by Susan Brock, seconded by Sylvia Morris and accepted unanimously.
10. **Election of Administrative Secretary.** Mrs Sylvia Morris (first elected to the post in 2018) is willing to stand again. She was proposed by Susan Brock, Seconded by Maureen Bourniquel and the proposal was passed unanimously.
11. **Election of the Committee.** It was agreed in point 6 to suspend the rules regarding committee members and officers. Susan Brock explained that the Club still needs more committee members. Last year's Committee comprising of five members was as follows: Janet Anslow, Lindsay MacDonald, Susan Brock, Karolyn Brookes, Amanda Wood. Melissa Mailer-Yates had agreed to come back onto the committee in 2022 but had to withdraw because of pressure of work. Lindsay MacDonald is standing down because as a new member of the Town Council he is unable to continue. Susan Brock thanked him for his contribution. Dwayne Dawson has volunteered to come onto the committee and has been proposed by Susan Brock, seconded by Sylvia Morris. He was elected unanimously. He has recently moved to Stratford and is involved in a number of activities including the Bear Pit Theatre.

12. **Reports on programme for the forthcoming 2023-4 season.** Programme Secretary Amanda Wood spoke about the lecture programme for 2023-4, which is attached. During the season there are three major anniversaries: the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Folio, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Shakespeare Club, and the hundredth anniversary of the death of Marie Corelli. All of these will be marked during the season. Following a question by Richard Taylor she noted that the talks by Nick Birch and Kathryn Harkup will be recorded and made available online for members. Susan Brock thanked Amanda Wood for the work she has put in to create such an interesting and relevant programme in her first year as Programme Secretary.
- She outlined the Club's celebrations for its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the annual Birthday Celebrations it has been agreed in principle that the procession should be led by all the members of the Club, wearing rosettes, marching behind new banners. The intention is to demonstrate to those attending the procession the existence and activity of the Club, the oldest Shakespeare organisation in the world. Secondly there is to be an exhibition relating to the history of the club in the Public library during April 2024. Thirdly on 13 April there is to be a celebratory event held in the Town Hall at which a seminar on the early years of the club and of the town at the time of its foundation, followed by tea and toasts. It is hoped that many members will attend with their guests, and all past presidents of the Club will be invited to attend. A souvenir pamphlet is to be published containing the talks given on the day. It is expected this will cost £5 and member Sandra MacDonald is to assist in its preparation. Sandra MacDonald pointed out that the Club should also be involved in the Shakespeare Service and Susan Brock will follow this up with the Vicar. Emma Smith has already agreed to join in the celebrations on Saturday as our President. Richard Morris asked a question about other Shakespeare Clubs there are in the UK and volunteered to do an internet search for them. It was agreed that other Clubs could be invited to take part in the Shakespeare Celebrations.
13. **Report on Club activities 2022-3.** Sylvia Morris noted there have been eight meetings during the year, one held in collaboration with the Stratford Society at the Town Hall. The Club's regular meeting place was, and will be for 2023-4, the New Room at the Methodist Centre. The Club took part in the Birthday Celebrations and held its own luncheon at the White Swan Hotel. This was its first purely social event since lockdown, but 2023-4 will include several more. She welcomed Amanda Wood as Programme Secretary and thanked Lindsay MacDonald for his contributions during the year, especially the work he had done on the potential sound system. After a couple of years lapse, the Club's Education Grant is being revived in collaboration with the British Shakespeare Association and it is hoped that a grant or grants will be made within the next academic year. The report is attached.
14. **Report on Website and Communications.** Sylvia Morris reported that the website continues to be updated with information about the Club's past and future events. Two mailing lists are maintained: one for members, one for friends who now number 260. In February a Facebook page was created which also has 100 friends. She thanked the "Chair gang" for assisting with preparing the room for each lecture and tidying up afterwards and requested than anyone interested in assisting at meetings, or with publicity, should speak to a member of the committee.
15. **Any other Business** – Sylvia Morris explained that an email will be sent to members with information about upcoming events in the next couple of days. Sandra MacDonald expressed her thanks to Susan Brock, Sylvia Morris and Chris Walsh for their work on keeping the Club active during the last few years.

The meeting closed at 20.16. There were 20 participants but after the meeting it was discovered that several members had been unable to join the Zoom meeting.

## Shakespeare Club 2022-3 Accounts prepared for AGM

THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
23 APRIL 2023

**H. L. BARNES**  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS  
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

THE SHAKESPEARE CLUB  
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 23 APRIL 2023

RECEIPTS		PAYMENTS	
Balance on hand at 23 April 2022	4,312.24	Lecturers' fees, travel, entertainment and accommodation	1,123.14
Subscriptions	2,083.00	Hire of rooms	732.40
Vistors' fees	180.00	Insurance	121.80
Club lunch	928.54	Book	38.00
Book	38.00	Club lunch	1,033.40
		Flowers	60.00
		President's dinner	144.45
		Refreshments	44.90
		Balance on hand at 23 April 2023	4,243.69
	<u>£ 7,541.78</u>		<u>£ 7,541.78</u>

## Programme Secretary's report



SPEAKERS-SEASON 2023/2024 Season

### **10<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

#### **The Great Variety of Readers: 400 years of the First Folio**

Dr Paul Edmondson head of Research and Professor Charlotte Scott Director of Knowledge and Engagement from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in conversation about Stratford's connection to the First folio and the first reader of it.

### **14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 PRESIDENTIAL EVENING**

#### **Shakespeare's First Folio: the first 400 years**

Professor Emma Smith Professor of Shakespeare Studies University of Oxford and Fellow of Hertford College will speak to The Club about her work and publications on the First Folio and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary and future of the First Folio

### **12 December 2023**

#### **What was Shakespeare Really Like?**

Professor Sir Stanley Wells honorary president of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and two time president of The Shakespeare Club in conversation with Dr Paul Edmondson.

Professor Sir Stanley Wells will be discussing his new book, a revised and augmented version of four lectures he gave to mark his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday: 'What manner of a man' was he? How did he write a play? What do the sonnets tell us about him? What made him laugh?

### **9<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

#### **The Background Musician Characters in Shakespeare's Plays**

Dr Jennifer Waghorn, Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies (Digital Education) Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has advised on music history for the Royal Shakespeare Company since 2018 and has worked with the Historical Dance Society.

### **13<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

#### **Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I**

Dr Tracy Borman is a Tudor historian, writer, broadcaster and joint Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces. She will be speaking on her latest publication Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I, two of the most famous women in British History.

Piecing together evidence from original documents Dr Borman reveals Anne Boleyn's relationship with and influence over her daughter Elizabeth I. In doing so she sheds light on an extraordinary mother and daughter who changed the course of British history forever.

### **12<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

#### **Stratford upon Avon's 'Great Little Lady'**

#### **The Life, Literature and Legacy of Marie Corelli**

In 1858 at the age of 30, frustrated by her past and despairing for the future, Minnie Mackay reinvented herself as the mysterious Miss Marie Corelli, forging a new career and acquiring wealth and position. 2024 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death and Nick Birch from the Marie Corelli Society will speak to us about this indomitable woman.

### **April 2024 Date and venue to be announced**

#### **200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Shakespeare Club of Stratford upon Avon**

The Clubs birthday celebrations will be led by Sylvia Morris, researcher and writer of the Shakespeare blog and former head of the Shakespeare Centre library and Dr Susan Brock Honorary Fellow of the Shakespeare Institute.

### **14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

#### **Death By Shakespeare: snakebites, stabbings and broken hearts**

Dr Kathryn Harkup is a chemist and author who is also a science communicator giving regular public talks on the disgusting and dangerous side of science. William Shakespeare found dozens of different ways to kill off his characters but how realistic are these deaths and did Shakespeare have the knowledge to back them up? Dr Harkup turns her discerning eye to the Bard and the varied and creative ways his characters die. Dr Harkup has written a number of books, A is for Arsenic The Poisons of Agatha Christie was shortlisted for both the International Macavity Award and the BMA book award.

## Secretary's report

### *Shakespeare Club of Stratford-upon-Avon Secretary's report October 2023*

#### **a) Meetings**

Eight meetings were held during the season, seven at the Methodist Centre in Old Town, one at the Town Hall in collaboration with the Stratford Society. The Club now meets regularly at the New Room. The number of attendees at meetings has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, usually averaging about 40. Online versions of three of the meetings were made available for members: full viewing statistics are not available but the number of views has dropped since they were not circulated to non-members.

#### **b) Celebrating Shakespeare's Birthday in Stratford-upon-Avon**

The Club once again took part in the Birthday Celebrations in April. Members and guests enjoyed a very successful luncheon, including a Shakespeare quiz, at the White Swan Hotel, the first indoor social event since lockdown.

#### **c) 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The Club celebrates this in April 2024 and the Committee have put much energy into plans for this event.

#### **d) Programme Secretary**

The Committee has welcomed Amanda Wood into this role. She has successfully recruited a number of high-profile, interesting speakers for the new season. Online versions of two of the talks will be created.

#### **e) Potential sound system**

Dr Lindsay MacDonald investigated a potential sound system for the Club with the aim of replacing the current inadequate speaker. As the costs quoted were high, and the New Room small enough not to need amplification, this project has been temporarily shelved.

#### **f) Education Grant**

The Committee aims to revive the Club's Educational Grant and is working with the British Shakespeare Association to establish a process and select suitable candidates.

#### **Website and communications**

**g) Mailing list** The mailing list now stands at 260, not including members. Communications are sent out to members before each meeting and whenever items of interest to members and friends occur.

**h) Web** The website continues to be kept up to date and remains a valuable communication tool though the inability to update it quickly is noted. It is hoped that it can be improved to make the content easier to navigate and more visual.

**i) Facebook** A Facebook page was launched in January which includes posts about upcoming meetings and information about Shakespeare-related news. Many of its 100 friends are new to the Club.

Finally, special thanks are offered to the "chair gang" who prepare the room by putting out chairs and tables, serve refreshments, and tidy up at the end of each meeting. Members are also encouraged to take an active role in the Club by joining the Committee.

Sylvia Morris, Secretary  
September 2023