

Programme Report for 2020

Lindsay MacDonald, Programme Secretary



The monthly meetings were planned to be held at the traditional venue at the Shakespeare Centre in Henley Street, on the third Monday of each month. The first two meetings were:

January *What's the use of the Town Council?* The Mayoress, Kate Rolfe, reflected on how the Town Council has changed over the years and its relevance to present-day affairs of the town.

February *Shakespeare: 'the god of my idolatry'* Greg Doran, Artistic Director of the RSC, gave a talk to a packed audience in the Queen Elizabeth Hall at SBT. He mused about the remarkable stained glass window behind the Shakespeare memorial in Holy Trinity Church, commemorating the controversial James Orchard Halliwell-Phillipps. This was a joint meeting with the Shakespeare Club.

At this point, unfortunately, corona virus overtook the country, and from the beginning of March all public gatherings were abandoned in the general lockdown. The final four events planned for the season were cancelled:

March *Making Stratford a better place for cyclists* The meeting was planned in the Traditional Cycle Shop, by the causeway of Clopton Bridge, with a three-way debate by Fran Martin, Jenny Fradgley and Dr Robert Bearman of the Stratford Cycle Forum.

April *Perspectives on the history of the Guild Chapel* Two talks were to be given in the Guild Chapel, one by Sandra MacDonald on insights from the medieval accounts, and the other by Dr Rodger Palmer on the major renovation in the 1960s.

May *Stratford Town Trust – at the heart of our community* Sara Aspley (Chief Executive) would have explained the dual role of the Trust as place maker and grant giver, and how it is responding to the changing needs of the community. The AGM of the Society was also to have been held on this date.

June The Summer Garden Party was to have been held in the Great Garden, New Place, in association with the Shakespeare Club. The plan was to form a living perimeter around the site of the 19th century Chapel Lane Theatre, in which to perform some scenes from Shakespeare.

Over the summer there was a lot of soul-searching over whether and when to resume normal meetings, but it became clear that it would be a long time. In October we conducted a survey of all members for guidance on how to proceed. The respondents were almost entirely retired people, who indicated an interest mainly in civic matters and the history of the town. Although there was a strong desire to resume physical meetings and events once the covid pandemic is over, members were definitely interested in having online events in the meanwhile. This was confirmed in an online General Meeting of members.

We therefore purchased a license to host online meetings via the Zoom video conference utility. The first two of these were:

November *Better Cycling in Stratford* Jenny Fradgley and Bob Bearman, two of the leading exponents of cycling in Stratford, talked about their personal commitment to cycling as a means of getting about town, and their experiences in trying to get things done in Stratford in the interests of the environment and improving the town centre for everyone's benefit.

December *The Riverside Green Corridor* Sara Aspley (Town Trust) and Tony Perks (SDC) presented the concept of the Stratford Riverside Corridor project, a joint partnership between Stratford District Council and Stratford Town Trust. The corridor is the land between the River Avon and the Warwick Road, from the Fisherman's car park at the north end, past the bridges, through to Seven Meadows Road at the south.