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Chairman's News

Hi all, welcome to my first Chairman's News section. As you should by now be aware, Dave Sillett stood down from the Chair in December 2019 and being the glutton for punishment that I am, I offered to take over the role. I would first like to take this opportunity to thank Dave for his years of service to the Group in so many capacities, not least the role of Chair. I am sure I will be calling on him for advice often during the next 3 years.

Most of you will know me (or at least know of me!). I have been a part of FAOS since 1997, when I joined FJAOS (FAOS's Junior section). I have

already served on the Committee previously, even taking on the Publicity and Marketing role for a time. I have always and will continue to hold FAOS close to my heart and will endeavour to fulfil my duties to the Group with care, compassion and attention.

Looking back over the last 6 months, I would like to congratulate everyone on an amazing production of *Sister Act*. Standing in the foyer listening to the audiences leave with comments such as "Better than West End" and "Where are they going next on the tour?" perfectly sums up the reaction to this amazing show. I would like to offer my personal thanks and congratulations to Sue Sampson (no relation, honest!) and Steven Bean for their dedication and hard work to pull such an incredible performance together.

Moving forward, in February we hosted presentation and auditions for *HMS Pinafore*, with Heather Legat and Diana Vivian at the helm. With a fantastic cast coming together and rehearsals just beginning, we had to make the difficult decision to suspend rehearsals due to the Covid-19 outbreak, following revised guidance from the government.

The Committee and I have strived to follow the government guidelines to keep the wellbeing of both our membership and their families as the highest priority. Everyone has been affected by this awful disease in some way or another. Whether it be directly or indirectly, we have all had to follow the lockdown guidance. Some have lost loved ones; some have had to close businesses and many have missed seeing loved ones. It is a time for us all to pull together and do what we can to help each other. This was evident in the "*Sing-Along-A-Lock-Down*"; members of FAOS MTG recording themselves singing "Always look on the Brightside of life" from *Spamalot*, which our genius design artist Kevin Wright pulled together to create a brilliant video. This video had two purposes: The first was to try and bring everyone together and give them that entertaining outlet. The second was to raise money for the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, which has seen a significant drop in donations since the beginning of the Pandemic. More on this later in Barlines!

Unfortunately, following government guidance, the Farnham Maltings is unable to open its doors to accommodate us this summer. We have therefore had to make the heart-breaking decision to abandon the June 2020 performance run of *HMS Pinafore*. **Currently, our plan is to move HMS Pinafore to the January 2021 slot, with Sweeney Todd being moved to the January 2022 slot.** This has been given the green light by the relevant rights holders. Obviously, this plan is subject to government advice on when we can recommence rehearsals. When advice dictates that we can begin rehearsing again, the Committee and production team will review the feasibility of continuing with this plan.

In addition to this abandonment, **we have had to postpone the 2020 FAOS Musical Theatre Group AGM.**

As you can imagine, we are currently unable to host an AGM "in person" due to the guidelines. We have also reviewed holding an AGM online via a platform such as Zoom, however it was felt that this may prohibit certain members from "attending" which is not the way we as the FAOS Family do things. The Committee, in communication with the President, have taken this decision in the best interests of the Group. We have issued a statement of the financial accounts to all eligible to receive AGM notification; however, I ask that any comment on these is held back until we can formally call an AGM. As you can imagine, email discussion between scores of correspondents would be impracticable.

I would like to conclude this piece by reiterating an offer I put out by email at the start of the pandemic. **If anyone needs help during this time, whether it be someone to help picking up a bit of shopping, or a lift to an appointment, or just someone to talk to, please do get in touch.** My email address is faoskev@gmail.com and I will ensure it reaches the right people.

Stay safe.

Regards, your Chairman,
Kevin Sampson



Looking back at



Sister Act



HMS Pinafore—another victim of Covid-19

Unfortunately, following government guidance, the Farnham Maltings is unable to open its doors to accommodate us this summer. We have therefore had to make the heart-breaking decision to abandon the June 2020 performance run of HMS Pinafore. Currently, our plan is to move HMS Pinafore to the January 2021 slot, with Sweeney Todd being moved to the January 2022 slot. This has been given the green light by the relevant rights holders. Obviously, this plan is subject to government advice on when we can recommence rehearsals. When advice dictates that we can begin rehearsing again, the Committee and production team will review the feasibility of continuing with this plan. **Watch out for future announcements!**



A thank you letter from the Phyllis Tuckwell

Hospice Care

...because every day is precious



FAOS Musical Theatre Group

03 February 2020

Dear Liz

Thank you so much to FAOS Musical Theatre Group once again for raising a wonderful **£1,676.00** for Phyllis Tuckwell from your Titanic and Fiddler on the Roof performances. We are so grateful for all your ongoing support, please do pass our thanks onto all members.

In context, your donation could help pay for almost two week's care from one of our inpatient nurses, who will be caring for up to 5 patients, providing relief from pain and difficult symptoms in a peaceful environment.

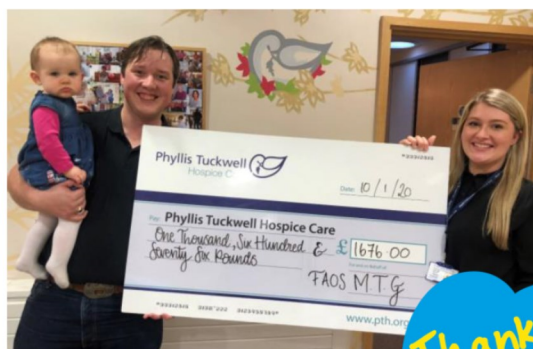
On **26th February 1979**, after five years of planning and extensive fundraising, Phyllis Tuckwell opened the doors of its Hospice in Farnham, ready to support terminally ill adult patients in the local community - and now we are celebrating 40 years of that invaluable compassion and care.

Through the years we have expanded and adapted our services, and now support over 250 patients, relatives and carers a day - in their own homes, in the community, at the Hospice in Farnham and at the Beacon Centre in Guildford. As only 20% of our costs are covered by the NHS/Government, we continue to rely on our community for their support and quite simply without your fantastic fundraising we would not be here.

It was lovely to meet Kevin for the first time and FAOS MTG youngest member – Ruby!

Yours sincerely,

Charli Quay-Barnham
Community Fundraising Manager
01252 729446
charli.quay-barnham@pth.org.uk



Thank you
for your support

Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care

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Community Team Tel: 01252 729421

The Beacon Centre
Gill Avenue, Guildford, Surrey GU2 7WW
Community Team Tel: 01252 913053



FAOS is locked down, but still raises over £2,000 for local charity!

Pedigree value was added by a small dog when FAOS's latest performances took place, not in the Great Hall of the Maltings, but in the limitless arena of cyberspace. **Archie**, the owner of FAOS stalwart **Chrissie White**, is the dog who nearly stole the show when he sang in the group's first ever virtual song. And such was his impact that a return appearance in their second song was demanded by his adoring public.

Archie's debut was a pure accident. Chrissie, when practising, had found that her high notes caused him so much excruciating pleasure that he would improvise his own harmony line. Chrissie captured his performance on camera and his first steps on the path to fame and stardom were taken.



How? Why?

Very soon after the Covid-19 lockdown began, the **FAOS Committee** approved the idea of attempting a virtual choir, comprising people contributing video recordings of themselves singing in their homes. Early experiments revealed that the speed and bandwidth of internet connections ruled out rehearsing or performing live. It was clear that each person would need to sing along to the same recorded accompaniment as everyone else, and that they would have to play it through headphones while they recorded their performance on a smartphone or computer.

The project also presented an opportunity to raise money for a good cause, particularly with the nation's charities suffering so much lost income now that social distancing had cancelled most of their fund-raising events. And, as there was little prospect the FAOS June production going ahead, the group's sponsored charity **Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice Care** was the obvious choice of beneficiary.

A short, easy song was needed for a dry run, so that singers could get used to wrangling with the technical challenges, before recording *The One that Would Go Viral*. So, **Hail Poetry** from *'The Pirates of Penzance'*, was selected because it was known by many who had been in FAOS's 2015 production and would not require a lot of rehearsal.

Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down (continued)

From the hundreds of people who watched the finished video on YouTube (you can find it there by searching for 'FAOS Hail Poetry' or [clicking here](#)) came many requests for Archie to appear in another song. A Frimley Park nurse even made a donation to Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice on the condition that Archie feature again!

Confidence was boosted by Hail Poetry working out well (450 views on YouTube and a storm of compliments via email and Facebook) and so it was decided that the next song should be popular, uplifting, humorous and (this was crucial) very easy to sing. It was not difficult to settle on **Always Look on the Bright Side of Life**, which had featured in FAOS's hugely successful 2018 production of **'Monty Python's Spamalot'** and seems to have a secure place in the nation's hearts.



25 members (and one dog) responded to the invitation to take part. Their joyful performance of the song can be found on YouTube by searching for 'FAOS Always' or [clicking here](#).

The response to Always Look from friends, contacts and the wider public was immediate and strong. The Facebook première was set for 6pm on Saturday 2 May. By 10.30 the following morning, the song had been heard by 260 people on YouTube and over 600 on Facebook. Better still, the fundraising target of £500 had been smashed by donations amounting to £886!

Better was yet to come. The Committee raised the target to £1,500 and, as that was hit only two days later, they raised it again – to £2,000. By the end of the week, there had been 540 views on YouTube, and over three thousand on Facebook. And the £2k target had been passed too. At the time of writing, the total raised by 72 generous donors will be £2,656, once Gift Aid has been added. **That's more than twice as much as has been donated to the hospice from any conventional FAOS production.** Is there something we should be learning from this!?



As such, it was satisfying to see the song raise both the spirits of so many people and a tidy sum of money for the hospice. Donations can still be made until mid June at our [Just Giving](#) page.

Credits for Always Look on the Bright Side:

Producer, **Nigel Morley**; Video editor, **Kevin Wright**; Accompanist, **Diana Vivian**; Original lyrics and music, **Eric Idle**; additional lyrics, **Geoff Vivian**; backing tracks for Hail Poetry, **Diana and Geoff Vivian**; JustGiving liaison, **Yvonne Fuller**; Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down title, **Ellen Wignall** and **Nick Lang**. Archie appears by kind permission of his singing teacher, **Chrissie White**.

Singers: **Alice Thompson, Amanda Buchan, Archie, Burrows Family, Carol Gunner, Caroline Dean, Charlie Magowan, Charlotte Thompson, Chrissie White, Danni Stembridge, Dave Collier, Geoff Vivian, George & Charlie Murray, Helen Davies, Joy Sampson, Julie Perrin, Kevin Sampson, Nick Lang, Nigel Morley, Sarah Goebel, Tony Siddall, Yvonne Fuller.**



The making of: Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down!



Tony Siddall

Having seen the Hail Poetry video and also viewing Nigel's cheerful instruction and conducting videos, I felt I should give the Spamalot number a go. Fortunately, I had recently acquired a device to attach a smartphone to a camera tripod. I found a place in the kitchen with the required white wall background and was able to set up the tripod on a worktop. I printed the words and blutacked them to a cupboard door just behind the camera. Finally, I had to build a structure out of a bread bin and a couple of casserole dishes on which to rest a tablet from which I could view Nigel's conducting. This had to be close to the phone camera and also to me so I could attach

the headphones.

Many 'takes' were done! Often I'd mess up the words, be slightly out with the timing, fail to sing well enough or not look expressive enough! Eventually I produced a version which seemed to pass muster. I very much enjoyed making the video, which whiled away some time during the lockdown.

Sarah Goebel

Recording a second piece of music would be far less stressful than the first one, I figured ... Oh, how wrong could I be! iPad balanced on a small box on my desk, video and words on my computer - Mission Control eat your heart out. Now trying to coordinate everything so I don't appear a complete weirdo, looking from left to right every five seconds. Deep breath and here we go, press Record, and smile, sing and, most important, breathe. Phew. You can put me on a live stage anytime rather than a virtual Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down.



The making of: Sing-Along-a-Lock-Down (continued)



Yvonne Fuller

Getting ready to record was challenging. It felt as though you needed to press about six buttons all at the same time.

The strangest thing, though, for a strictly chorus member of FAOS like me, was to be singing alone - and then hearing myself singing alone on my recording. Ouch!

It was fun though, especially with Bright Side. I've always loved that song!

Chrissie White (and Archie!)

What a strange time we are finding ourselves in. Difficult in so many ways – not being able to go out, working from home, serving on the front line, many juggling work and home-schooling, along with the disappointment of not being able to perform our shows. But with so much heartache in the world I am so thankful that my family and friends are safe.

When Nigel's email came through about recording a Sing-along-Lock-Down, I thought it would be a great opportunity to get together virtually with my friends and have a good sing, with the added bonus of raising money for such an important charity. What a star Nigel was with all the instructions on what we needed to do – me being a bit of technophobe, it was truly brilliant advice. On the day of the recording it was like getting ready for a show: hair, make-up, costumes, warm up, sound check, lighting, choreography etc., etc..

So, with me safely ensconced in our study, door shut, curtains drawn - let the performance begin! Oh goodness me! First, I forgot to start the recording, then the neighbour fired up his lawn mower, then I forgot the words, then Archie popped his head in the door and distracted me. But, after probably 10 attempts, it was 'by George I think she's got it!'

Which takes me back to young Archie. I had discovered when I was practising for 'Titanic' that Archie had a passion for the tenor line – in fact when I played back the recording of the show he yowled in all the right places. So, I pressed Record and sang the song to him, to which he gave the performance of his life. You know what they say about not performing with children or animals... Well, predictably, he stole the show.



Special mention must also go to one **Nigel Morley**, without whom we would not have had either video! His powers of organization, along with his energetic and precise guidance helped us all produce something that not only lifted our spirits, but also much needed cash for a local institution, so from all of us at FAOS MTG, **thank you Patsy!**

Thank you to outgoing Chair, Dave Sillett

At an EGM on the 4th of December 2019 Dave Sillett formally resigned and handed over the reigns of power to Kevin Sampson who was voted in as Chair. We would like to thank Dave for his many years of service to FAOS MTG, not only as Chair for the last 3 years, but for all his many long years as a stalwart of the Group, not least of which as Chair previously! This is certainly not 'goodbye', and we look forward to seeing Dave in and around our productions for many years to come.



Along with our thanks, he was presented with an OSCAR (Opera Singing Chairman Arabesques into Retirement) and also a tumbler inscribed with: "FAOS Musical Theatre Group to DAVE SILLETT

in his 40th year with the group, to mark his retirement from his second term as Chairman. December 2019

"Then give three cheers, and one cheer more, For the former Captain of the FAOS corps!"



Meanwhile, the Committee continues to meet...

Even though we have not had a show to produce over the last 3 months, the Committee has still had a lot to discuss! Fortunately Zoom meetings have proved to be a great success. After our first one had to re-start every 40 minutes, due to the free-Zoom restrictions, we went the whole hog and got the proper license. Now our meetings can go on forever!!

Attendance has also been very good—though sometimes we are competing with online pub-quizzes! As the guidelines are evolving all the time, we will continue to meet, working to ensure we get back to singing ASAP!



Welcome to Robin David Gee-Burch!



Happy 80th to Rosemary Ostime!

We have been informed that it was a certain young lady's very important birthday on the 14th of May and would like to wish Rosemary a very happy 80th birthday from all of us within the FAOS family.

Until we meet again, best wishes,
Kevin and all of us at FAOS MTG

All of us at FAOS MTG would like to say a massive 'Welcome' to Robin, son of Laura Sillett and Dominic Gee-Burch, born on the 4th of March 2020, weighing 8lb7oz.

All three have been making the most of Lockdown and have got to spend plenty of time with each other, but are very much looking forward to more time with grandparents soon! Best wishes, FAOS MTG

Coffee Diem reopening soon!



Coffee Diem

Quality - Service - Community

"People of Farnham. How are you all?"

We hope you have all coped well with the lockdown!!

All of us at *Coffee Diem* are healthy and looking forward, with our local suppliers, to once again serve you delicious coffee, teas, cakes and savouries, in a safe and welcoming space.

Our plan is to reopen with take away only on the 22nd June
and for service on the 4th July, in line with government guidelines.

We would like to thank you all for your kind messages of support and we look forward to seeing you all again.

George, Jacoba and all the *Coffee Diem* Team xx

BARLINES

Thank you Key Workers!



Hello Everyone,

Nothing very exciting to report so I made this lovely rainbow to share.

Hope you are all behaving yourselves and see you all soon,

Lots of love Maureen



New partnership with Grierson Dickens

FAOS is delighted to announce that we have entered a business-arts partnership with a local company. Grierson Dickens is a firm of financial planners in Farnham which has been advertising in our theatre programmes for the past four years.

Employees at Grierson Dickens have attended many FAOS shows. The company approached us as they wanted to expand their links with the local community and saw FAOS as firmly embedded at the centre of Farnham life. They were looking to provide sponsorship of our activities; in return FAOS would display the company's promotional material at our events.

Grierson Dickens describes their approach to investment planning as refreshingly different. On their website they write:

"We act as a 'strategic partner', developing a deep understanding of our clients' current circumstances, helping them to identify their goals and objectives, and building a plan to get them from where they are now to where they want to be."

They stress the importance of building long term relationships with clients, helping them to understand the financial implications of decisions they have to make concerning their job and family circumstances." You can find out more about them at their [website](#).

FAOS is proud to have entered into this partnership and we look forward to the benefits it will bring to both parties.

