



**AGM - 20th July 2022
Meeting Minutes**

1. Welcome and Apologies

Barry Robbins welcomed all the attendees and explained that tonight's AGM is a look back on 2021, but it would also cover some of 2020, as the last AGM was held during the Covid pandemic on Zoom.

Attendees:

Colin Burt, Iain Savage, Debbie Millard, Cindy Clissold, Kim Formhalls, Celia Hodgson.

Sue Ruth – cinema book-keeper

Bridget Mulrooney – cinema management

Barry Robbins – cinema management

Emma Goddard – FRCC committee member

Apologies:

Judith Chapman.

Brian Currie, the Club Chairman sent a message via Barry saying he was sorry not to be with everyone tonight, at his favourite cinema, and to please thank everyone for their continued support and commitment to the Club.

2. Minutes of Previous AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 21st October 2020, are already available on the Regal website. Emma Goddard proposed that these are a true record of the meeting. Sue Ruth seconded this motion.

3. Operations & Management Report from Barry Robbins

Barry commented that we've all learned a lot living with Covid, and we've all experienced affects. As the cinema is a not-for-profit business, it has almost put us back to square one. In March 2020 just before Covid lockdown, sales and revenue figures were excellent – probably the best we'd ever seen. We were able to reopen in May 2021 – but with lots of additional measures, however the killer for us was only being able to have 50% capacity screenings. We kept going and the small business and hospitality support from the New Forest council meant we received £16,000 in support grants over two years to encourage us to open and to help make the venue covid secure. The national furlough scheme helped Bridget and Sue. Barry noted that the Club was grateful to them both for sticking with the cinema as it meant we were able to retain these valued employees. FRCC members with advance tickets donated approximately £2,000 by not requesting refunds. Barry wanted to officially thank all the members who supported the cinema in this way – some were even day members. Several members also helped a lot, especially with planning the re-openings (Covid screens, risk assessments etc), as Bridget and Sue couldn't work at these times due to furlough rules.

Barry said that Covid had a big impact on the whole industry. Films were pulled or delayed, online streaming became even more competitive and that there is still a lack of new titles. This has made it difficult to fill the programme with good quality films. The new James Bond was a big help and he's hoping that 2023 will be a bumper box office year. He noted that Regal customer habits have

changed, especially with the current economic 'cost-of-living' crisis. The Club used to get a lot of advance bookings but it now sees fewer forward bookings. Many people are cutting back on spending, even regulars. He believes some customers are still not comfortable sharing space in the auditorium despite the good air quality and electro cleaning.

Barry noted that we currently have 307 members. At the Club's peak it was 430. Some members don't renew and pay extra for day membership tickets instead. We ended 2021 with healthy finances but there are concerns for 2022 and beyond – mainly due to the rising cost of electricity and stock in the bar. He noted that the Club would have lost £8k last year if we hadn't received government loans. Barry said the Club may need to look at other revenue, like extending sponsorship schemes, and said the Club was very grateful to the current corporate sponsors. We could put up ticket prices, but this is a delicate balance, so we will try to hold off on that for as long as possible.

Barry said that post Covid the committee agreed to amend the programming to try and incur fewer loss-making screenings, whilst still providing the community with screening options. The Saturday family screening is now £5 for adults and children. It was previously £5 for adults, and free for children, but we'd lose money on these screenings as we wanted to subsidise future generation of film goers and help families with costs. However, we're no longer in a position to plan on having screenings that are loss making and seats that were booked were often not taken/were no shows. The Saturday shows are again selling out, as it's still a good deal, and it's obviously made a difference to our income.

Silver screenings have also been reintroduced post Covid. Previously the ticket included a free drink, but this has been withdrawn and there are now some sales at bar. Private screenings are still very popular. There were 17 in 2021, and there are already 26 booked for 2022. A new Covid rate was introduced due to the capacity restrictions and it not being possible to have the bar/social element to a private hire. This reduced the length of a hire from 4 hrs to just a little more than the length of the film. This is also popular for things like children's parties where you don't need the bar for very long. These shorter hires are much easier to manage.

Barry wanted to thank Bridget and Sue for all their work, which includes updating the website, programming, sourcing trailers, book-keeping, stock control and Sue, who is part-time, is very flexible and helps with extra tasks. Barry also gave a huge thank you to the merry band of Regal volunteers and reiterated how important they are to the Club and that we simply couldn't operate without them. We really appreciate their dedication and support.

Barry also thanked all the FRCC members. He noted that on August 13th 2022, the cinema will be 5 years old. To celebrate we will be screening the classic film 'Casablanca' as it's the 80th anniversary of this film and it's the film that was screened on the Regal opening weekend in 2017.

4. Programming & Marketing Report from Bridget Mulrooney

Bridget explained that 2021 wasn't a normal year for programming for various reasons, but it did have the normal dip in attendance in the Summer, and this is usual for all cinemas. In 2021 the cinema re-opened in May so this wasn't typical either. Bridget said that the overall target for occupancy at the Regal is 80%. It isn't higher than that so that we can show a range of films, not just blockbusters and it's possible to balance books at 80%. The Club likes to program quality over quantity. She tries not to have 'fluff' (films that aren't especially good but could be used to increase screening options). In 2021 there was a slow trickle of good films and generally fewer people were going to cinemas.

Bridget said in previous years the Regal would hope to have up to five screenings per week, but we are currently only having two screenings. She is still finding it really hard to find 3-4 really good titles a week. If we put on 'fluff', it's not worth opening and paying the licence fee. She said we'd like to be open at the same levels as pre-covid but it's not quite possible yet.

Bridget said that musical Mondays have not returned to the screening schedule. However, the monthly Wild West Wednesdays and Silver Screenings have returned, and the Saturday screenings are also back again and still popular as mentioned above by Barry. She said foreign films would also be coming back on a monthly basis. Bridget explained a little more about family screenings, she said they only do one when there is a good big film, rather than every weekend regardless of whether there was a popular film available or not. Some action films aimed at slightly older children, like Marvel, are also now screened in this slot as they don't perform well in the evening. This has helped to attract some slightly older kids/teenagers, rather than just under 10s.

Bridget spoke about the 2021 Film Festival and how we trialled a new concession (cheaper) ticket for under 25 year olds. This is the lowest attendance age group in cinemas in the UK, so something that is encouraged by film boards and funders. It went really well and was easy to track how many tickets were sold.

Over all the Regal has done very well, and survived extremely difficult conditions, especially in comparison to other cinemas, thanks in part to loyal supporters. She said that pre-Covid, the Regal had grown to sell approximately 6,000 tickets per calendar year but that this has completely dropped down and in 2021 we only sold 1637 tickets.

Bridget commented on customer behaviours changing. She has noticed that the age ranges and titles watched have changed. In her opinion younger people are coming to classics, and she is seeing some at our regular western film nights. She also thinks if a film doesn't have a big 'star' name it is less likely to sell tickets than pre-Covid. She said we still show films without major stars because we're not Odeon, but we're trying different things to see what works. Downton Abbey and the original Top Gun both had better than expected attendance.

Bridget then spoke about marketing. She said that they are no longer doing some of the more expensive print advertising. Some of the print advertising was aimed at an older audience, who don't use the web, but online marketing is cheaper and can target different demographics. We have now stopped advertising in the Salisbury Journal as this was very expensive. Bridget sees direct sales from online targeting. She said the annual Film Festival and special events might have one-off advertising in print media. She currently only uses Instagram and Facebook. She has thought about using TikTok, especially as she should be able to use some of the same content.

Bridget briefly mentioned advertising via and links with schools. She has tried contacting them and the Club did have a link with Burgate as their 6th form had a film club and trips to the cinema were part of their enrichment programme pre-Covid, but this hasn't established itself again yet. She does outreach for certain events. Bridget said she has limited hours for building relationships like this, and that a lot of her hours are often used up with the screenings.

Bridget spoke about day members. She said 50% of the ticket income comes from day membership tickets. She does a fortnightly newsletter just for day members which goes out after the member's newsletter and it's in a different format - more pictures, less Club news. Bridget said the FRCC suffers a little from its location (not in the centre of Fordingbridge) and appearing too like a club that doesn't welcome non-members. She said private hires are good for spreading the word. Some independent films are also a good advert for the cinema as some have a limited release - e.g. Lancaster, so it's not available at other venues and some people travel long distances to come to the Regal. Bridget said distributors often help with marketing support for these type of releases.

Bridget informed attendees that the whole season of the National Theatre and Royal Ballet were now on sale. She said if we don't put the whole season up, people look for productions in advance and if they can't see them on the Regal website they book elsewhere so we lose sales to other venues. If this means tickets sell-out a long way in advance, we can always have additional screenings.

5. Financial Report from Sue Ruth

Barry introduced Sue and explained that we don't officially have a treasurer at the moment, since Caroline stepped down, and that Sue would talk us through the 2021 accounts.

Sue pointed out the valuable income from the New Forest District Council grants, the job retention scheme (furlough) and the bursary from Cinema for All. She said that film licence fees are now back to normal, but they were a bit lower for a while in 2021.

Sue highlighted her concern regarding future electricity costs. At the start of 2021 we were on a 19p rate, by December 2021 this was 31p and we were spending approximately £500 per month on electricity. The cinema uses electricity to power all the technical equipment, lighting etc. but the heating is also electric.

Sue said in 2020 we changed telephone contracts to Vodafone, who are much cheaper than the previous supplier. She said the turnover just before the first Covid closure was our best ever. Sue said that the current council tax rate for us is £0 but that this has changed in 2022 so is something that could affect us in the future. She noted that the refuse and recycling is relatively expensive but she's looked at alternatives and they aren't any cheaper.

Sue told attendees that we spent a lot more on cleaning when we re-opened after Covid as surfaces needed to be wiped down and a deep clean was required after every screening. She noted that there is a profit in 2021, but this was only possible thanks to the grants.

Sue noted that the VAT threshold probably won't be reached in 2022 and that in the future we might try to deliberately stay under the threshold .

6. Election of the Committee

Kim proposed that the current committee members remain the same, except for the treasurer. This was seconded by Iain.

It was agreed that Bridget would put a note about the Club looking for a new Treasurer in the member's newsletter.

Debbie said she was interested in the role of Treasurer in the future, but couldn't take it on right now.

7. AOB Raised by Members

Colin asked about screening opportunities, like live sports. Bridget replied saying we could get a licence for these events, but they are extremely expensive and we wouldn't be able to justify or recoup this expense.

Iain noted that he thinks the live theatre screenings are good value. He thought they were currently £18 or £22. He suggested increasing the price of these tickets a little as it is so much cheaper than going to the West End (London). Barry replied saying we need to remain competitive with other local venues. Sue said she thought a small rise would be good and that people may be less likely to travel to other venues with increased petrol prices and additional parking charges.

Iain asked if we're able to get other West End shows. Bridget replied that yes some are available, and when we get offered good ones, we snap them up.

Debbie asked about links with schools, particularly in reference to what books/plays are on the curriculum. Bridget replied explaining that as a venue we have to take the whole NT and Royal Opera House season, we can't pick and choose which plays we want to show. Bridget said some young adults do come to some of the plays, often with parents. We did show RSC productions but they weren't as well supported so we don't do them any more. Debbie thought there could be some crossover with local schools and other local organisations who might be interested in using the cinema.

Celia asked if we could show plays of other productions. Barry said there are only a small number of film versions of plays available on a good standard/quality DVD.

Iain enquired about foreign films. Bridget said they are generally well supported and that subtitles are good for people with hearing difficulties. It was noted that they're often rather serious and not often comedy. Kim said showing these films helps to set us apart from other cinemas and that some are very moving and exceptionally good. It was also noted that screening these titles often helps with funding.

Bridget and Barry spoke about volunteers and said they had had a good intake recently, which was lucky, and necessary, as we lost a lot over Covid. The number of active volunteers affect the number of screenings we can do on a weekly basis so we could do with more as we look to increase screenings again. Tech volunteers in particular are in demand. Celia volunteered to learn tech. Barry confirmed that there is always a duty manager in addition to the tech volunteer and there is always lots of support in person and on the phone. There is also a tech log if any issues arise so management can fix issues quickly. It was noted that feedback about volunteers is excellent. There are often comments about how friendly the Regal staff are.

Iain asked about corporate sponsorship and if we have different levels. Bridget replied - yes we do and we can be flexible if they want advertising rather than sponsorship. There are already different levels that require a monthly payment but we could do a limited run of advertising if someone wanted this.

Emma thanked Barry for all his hard work and support, especially during covid, as he didn't go on furlough at any time and was constantly assessing and reassessing all the Covid restrictions.

Iain said it would be helpful for volunteers to have their names on the Regal badges. Bridget said this would be quite expensive but next time she's getting some done she'll enquire about this.

8. Conclusion of Business

The End