

Minutes of Cowton Arts & Theatre Society Meeting held in the Beeswing Inn at 7:30pm on Monday 7th July 2026

Committee Members Present: Nick Smith (Chairman), John Shields (Secretary), Susan Shields (Treasurer), Elaine Simpson, Geoff Green, Jane Green, Paul Bramley, Tracey Cramond

Apologies: Margaret Walton,

Agenda Items:

1. **New Village Website:** JS explained the new Parish Council website which contained links to a range of community organisations and local businesses, was well underway and it was hoped it would go live in the near future. Once complete, the old CATS website will be permanently switched off.

ACTION: JS to keep CATS updated on progress.

2. **Panto 2027:** The suggestions from the last CATS meeting regarding the 2027 panto production were discussed. It was agreed that the script closest to completion was Dick Whittington and for this reason it was decided by all present to use this one. NS stated he would send a copy of the script to JS who will forward it to committee members. It was agreed that the final script must be ready by late November/early December (at the very latest) to allow time for an early preliminary meeting of all those wanting to take part. This is to allow time to allocate roles so that cast know what part they are playing ready for rehearsals to begin at the beginning of the New Year. The performance dates were set for Friday/Saturday 19th/20th March - TBC. JS explained that Ollie Rose had expressed an interest in directing/co-directing this year. This offer was gratefully welcomed by all committee members.

JS stated a number of cast members from last year had already put their names forward for the next panto. NS explained that sadly, due to other commitments, he and Amanda would be unable to take part this year. JG offered to check to see if members who had not taken part in 2026, would be interested in being part of the 2027 performance. This was gratefully accepted by the committee.

ACTION: NS to forward script to JS. JG to speak to past cast members to see if they would be interested in participating in the 2027 performance.

3. **Murder Mystery:** JS stated the script was now written including short back stories for each of the characters. It was agreed that the script be kept to NS, JS and PB in case other committee members wanted to attend as part of the audience. It is hoped to hold this event on Saturday 14th November (TBC). Final details are still to be agreed but the general format will be:

- Team tables of 6-8 +1 seat for cast members to be questioned in the interval;
- An envelope, sheet of paper and pen will be put on each table for the team to name the murderer in the interval;
- A bar will be run by CATS with 'nibbles' placed on each table;
- A small prize (or prizes) will be awarded for the team correctly naming the murderer;
- Only the murderer will be permitted to lie during interviews by the teams;
- NS/JS to direct;
- Those attending will be invited to dress in 'country manor' clothes for the event.

Once the script is finalised, CATS volunteers will be approached regarding parts. As this is a first attempt, cast roles will be limited adults only on this occasion although younger CATS members will be welcome to attend as part of the audience.

ACTION: JS to forward script to PB and NS then meet to finalise before approaching individuals ref. roles.

4. Stage Lighting: PB explained the need for some additional lighting for scenes starting in the middle of the hall. The lights identified are likely to cost i.r.o. £100 including cabling. After discussion it was agreed these be purchased and installed. JS informed the committee this would have to be cleared through the Village Hall Committee and that he would discuss it with Jim Crabbe before proceeding.

5. Head worn Mics: JS stated that he had followed up the request made by cast members for the purchase of head worn microphones. He explained the cost of purchasing a set 4 would be approximately £350; these being at the upper end of the amateur sets. As such, each mic had its own frequency so only 4 of these could be used together. JS also explained that more professional sets had 6 or 8 mics which could be used together but were more expensive - i.r.o. £1000-£1500. ES asked if we could get a grant but JS stated he had looked at this and small grants for this type of equipment was limited and, once advertised, were very quickly closed to applications. JS stated there were more schemes with applications for larger sums but these had requirements that CATS, as a small community run organisation, would be unable to meet. TC enquired whether CATS had considered seeking sponsorship, something that had not been looked at before. After discussion, TC agreed to look into this and report back to the committee.

ACTION: JS/PB to continue to look into cost etc of microphones. TC to investigate sources of funding through sponsorship and report back.

6. AOB: PB suggested a leaflet drop describing CATS and the type of events we hold be considered once the houses on the new estate are occupied. ES informed the meeting that the Parish Council had also considered this especially once the new PC website was up and running. It was agreed to consider this again at a future meeting.

Cowtonfest 2027 was discussed and suggestions included asking cast members to 'parade' around the various Cowtonfest events in costumes from previous productions, putting together a looped video of scenes from past productions and/or staging another murder mystery containing a mix of characters from past productions. It was agreed to keep this under review so that CATS could stage some sort of input next year to help raise our profile in the community.

PB informed the committee that he had looked into the idea of bringing a theatre group to the VH as discussed at the previous CATS meeting but unfortunately costs proved to be prohibitive. PB was thanked for looking into this idea.

PB informed the meeting that Will H has offered to write and compose music for the next production. This would help Will in his chosen field of work and there would be no charge to CATS. This was gratefully received by the committee. PB explained he would work with Will and JS once the script was available.

ES requested that a few of the CATS committee get together in the village hall to sort through costumes and try to catalogue them, by type/use rather than individual item. SS/JS confirmed they were happy to help. This will be co-ordinated through the CATS WhatsApp page.

8. Next Meeting: The date of the next meeting to be agreed.

No other business was raised and the meeting closed at 8:30pm.