

Presenting award-winning quality drama to Adelaide audiences since 1972

Winter 2020 Contents

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- Looking back at *Wicked Sisters*

Committee

President: Mo Johnson

Vice-President: Lori Nielsen

Secretary: Bronwyn Chapple

Treasurer: Rob Andrewartha

Committee Members:

Georgi Clough, Ellen Demaagd, Brian Donaghy, Glenys Forsyth, John Graham, Maxine Grubel, Tony Knight, John Koch, Sarah Tilley, Lucy Zilm

Find information on all our happenings, present & past at stirlingplayers.sct.org.au

Social Media

Like us on **Facebook**



Message from the President

Welcome to the Winter edition of The Stirling Players' newsletter. I hope this finds you keeping safe and in good health and warm and with the cheering news that The Stirling Players are alive and well ! As this newsletter goes out, we are well into the Covid-19 pandemic but glad to say that the restrictions on the Stirling Community Theatre are being lifted slowly and in accordance with Government Guidelines. We are so lucky in South Australia. Unfortunately, because of the lockdown, and the knock-on effects, our production scheduled for September 2020 won't go ahead. However, I'm delighted that with a bit of good luck we will be back in force to welcome you with a production in March next year which will be one to lift your spirits. You may rest assured that we are planning this already!

In moving forward I wish to thank our outgoing members, Viki Burrett, Heather Jones, Danny Gibbins and Gayle Hammond for their outstanding service over many years, and to welcome our new Stirling Players' Committee. Formed on 23 April this year, the 14 stalwart members each bring their own specialty of the theatre to be put to good use to keep live theatre quite literally "alive and well" !

See you next year !
Mo Johnson

It was a close thing, but the Stirling Players will be back on stage next March!

In February our Annual General Meeting failed to get enough nominations to replace key members who were retiring after years, and in some cases decades, of invaluable work for The Players. Not only did we only have half the minimum number of nominations required, but it looked as though the rump committee left standing would have no president, vice-president or secretary and depleted expertise or experience in many production roles.

An emergency special meeting was called for April 23 as a last ditch attempt to elect new committee members, merge with another drama company, suspend indefinitely or wind up Stirling Players.

Item 5 on the agenda read:

5. *Empowerment of the Public Officer of The Stirling Players to co-opt members to assist with the winding up, if required, in order to complete the process before the end of the financial year on June 30.*

Fortunately it did not come to that. The news of The Players' plight went out on print media, the theatrical grapevine, and social media, and met a heart warming response.

A new committee was duly elected (via email, due to the Covid-19 shutdown). The 14 members bring a wide range of experience, skills and enthusiasm, ranging from John Graham, who attended the first meeting in 1972 and has directed or acted in 21 Stirling Players' productions over the years, to Lucy Zilm, an 18-year old Costume Design student at Flinders University (meet Lucy on p.6).

Actor, director, set painter and front-of-house stalwart, Mo Johnson, has rejoined the committee to take on the role of president, and she has the committee actively engaged!

The coronavirus shut-down has forced the cancellation of our September production of *Heisenberg*, but we are now calling for submissions for our 2021 season, and the committee is already discussing ways of celebrating the 50th anniversary of The Players in 2022!



The new Stirling Players' Committee zooming into the future at their first meeting last month

Meet our Committee



MO JOHNSON- President

In another life in and in another hemisphere, Mo was mostly to be seen on stage in local pantomime in her hometown of Northampton which itself was quite accidental (not the Northampton bit) because living in a family where most of the members sang and belonged to a choir, and finding out that Mo couldn't compete, it wasn't difficult to join a non-singing group such as local repertory on a parish level, and usually played the female "baddie" with names such as Griselda Darth Vadar de Black which could easily have reflected the story of her life ! After arriving down under

in 2006 she joined the wonderful Stirling Players, made friends with everyone there and the rest, they say, is history ! Mo says she is wise in all aspects of production management and how to keep a committee in order ! Biggest regret was nearly being recruited as a Hansard Reporter for the new Canberra Parliament House when it opened in the 80's.



LORI NIELSEN - Vice President

Lori Nielsen has had a life-long love of theatre, but although she devours books on the art of acting and actors, she's never wanted to be one. She much prefers being a wordsmith and organiser than performing. It's kept her busy over the years. As a young teacher she was thrown into the deep end of directing at Minlaton High School with zero experience. That was enough to throw her deeper into directing and managing the venerable Woodville High School Theatre Guild for the next 5 years, before she headed off into

motherhood, and then the wider world. In the 1980's she found herself elected as the first female, and first Australian, President of the Himalayan Amateurs (HAMS) in Kathmandu, where, for 4 years, she handled as much drama off stage as on, scouring the medieval bazaar for *Pygmalion* props, casting to satisfy MI6, co-directing with the head of the CIA, and once, even catering for a demi-god crown prince in the audience. It was an exotic and wonderful time, and when it ended she wondered whether she would ever be involved in theatre again. And then she came to live in Stirling, and, in 1986, saw a Players' poster in a shop window... Over the years she has performed, or dabbled in, most behind the scenes roles except sound and lighting, working on brilliant productions with amazingly talented people, and amassing a wealth of valued skills and great memories. A long-time technophile, she took the Players' ticketing online and upgraded the website which she still runs. As a Life Member, she is thrilled and excited to be moving into the future with the new committee, and to be welcoming directors, actors and patrons back to our beautiful theatre as soon as possible!



ROB ANDREWARTHA - Treasurer

Originally from Port Augusta, Rob has a background in hospitality administration and financial management. He works in the wine industry spending his days studying spreadsheets and budgets while gazing across vines in the Adelaide Hills. This makes him the perfect choice to crunch the numbers as our Treasurer, and to work front of house, offering wine to our audiences. Rob is also at home behind the scenes as a talented milliner and costume maker.

He worked on costumes for our productions, *Variation on a Theme* and *Nell Gwynn*, and, along with Viki Burrett, he won an Adelaide Theatre Guide technical award in 2015 for best costumes for our production of *The Beaux' Stratagem*. Rob's creations have also been seen in the productions of many other companies, including Adelaide Repertory Theatre, Blue Sky Theatre, Mixed Salad Productions and St Jude's Players. He specialises in making period costumes – from Regency dresses and waistcoats to 17th Century army uniforms, from 1920s flapper dresses to fabulous frocks from the 50s!



BRONWYN CHAPPLE - Secretary

My history with the Stirling Players began in 1979 and actively continued until 2001. Unfortunately, from 2002 my consultancy work then started to require me to be interstate or overseas for much of my time and being involved in productions became impossible. But, oh, what pleasant and enjoyable memories I have of shows I was involved in: from Tom Dyster's yearly pantomimes to farces, comedies and dramas - acting, working backstage and directing - under the mentorship of a committed and supportive team. Later also I was offered the opportunity to do some acting and directing with the Hills Musical Company. The comradeship and sense of achievement of working in a production team is something special. My motivation, therefore, in joining the SP committee, now as Secretary, is to be part of a new group that will work to ensure that The Stirling Players remain viable, and continue to offer others the unique opportunity to be involved in theatre.

Much appreciated coverage in The Courier



The Stirling Players is set to come "back with a bang" after a surge of support gifted it with its largest committee in years. Among the committee are vice-president Lori Nielsen, left, new president Mo Johnson and secretary Bronwyn Chapple.

By Elisa Rose

The embattled Stirling Players are set to come "back with a bang", as a new committee takes the reins.

The historic community theatre group was facing potential demise just weeks ago, when it could not fill its key committee positions.

But a last minute surge of support has gifted it with its largest committee in years.

All of the 16 committee nominees who put their hands up since February were elected last week, with an experienced local production manager and actor, Mo Johnson, at the helm.

A hobby farmer who relocated from England to Woodside more than a decade ago, Mrs Johnson has eight

years experience on the Stirling Players Committee, as well as a history with the Top of the Torrens Theatre Group which included a foray into directing.

Adding to her expertise is a new team that she describes as having "so much experience ... it cannot fail".

That pool of experience includes former committee members, directors, actors, sound and lighting technicians, costume designers and marketing professionals.

The Stirling Players was formed 48 years ago and has put on more than 100 productions since then.

But to Mrs Johnson, the group has become more than a creative outlet.

"When my husband and I arrived here in the Adelaide Hills in 2006 straight from the UK where we had left most of our family and friends behind.

"I was delighted that the Stirling Players became my 'adopted family'," she said.

"For me it would have been disappointing if the Players had not been able to continue after this year especially as they have been producing incredible productions for 48 years.

"The disbanding of the Stirling Players would have meant that not only would an acting group have disappeared, but also that an important community arts option would have been lost."

Mrs Johnson said the group's core business of putting on plays would continue – albeit after the pandemic restrictions lifted.

"I think when the Stirling Players come back, we'll come back with a bang," she said. "We've already got one production up our sleeve."



JOHN GRAHAM

My association with The Stirling Players goes back to the first meeting convened by the late Tom Dyster in March 1972, when a small group of people decided to form what was originally called the Hills Drama Group. The name was changed in 1973 to its current name. From very humble beginnings, with a small group of dedicated members, it has grown in its forty-eight years into what critic, John Ovenden, described a few years ago as 'one of the State's top theatrical companies'.

I have previously been President, Vice-President and Committee member, and have directed and/or acted in twenty-one productions for The Stirling Players, including directing *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *All My Sons* in the 1970s, *The Shifting Heart*, *Chase Me Comrade*, *Family Lore*, winner of The Hills Drama Festival, and *Away*, in the 1990s, before returning in 2007 to direct *Daylight Saving*, followed by *It's My Party (And I'll Die If I Want To)*, which won the Adelaide Theatre Guide's Curtain Call Award for Best Show, Comedy (Amateur) and *Hotel Sorrento*. My last production with The Players was *Our Country's Good* in 2016, before I retired from active involvement in theatre in mid-2017.

The prospect of The Players having to close down, due to being unable to form a committee, brought me out of retirement to add my support and experience to enable the company to continue, hopefully for many years to come, to honour the legacy of Tom Dyster and so many others who have contributed to its success.



BRIAN DONAGHY

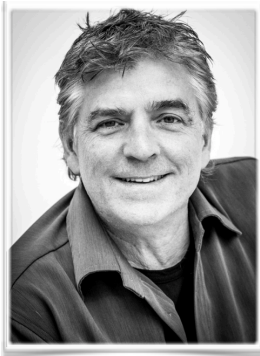
A semi-retired journo I have always had a bit of an interest in theatre. I have seen some truly awful productions in my time, but never at the Stirling Players. I am not sure how I first got roped into helping with building sets, or included in the Front of House rosters and then voted onto the management committee about a year ago (elected nem con - candidates were in short supply). But happy to keep doing all of the above and a bit of publicity if it helps to keep the show on the road.



MAXINE GRUBEL

I first joined The Stirling Players in 1977 at the age of 14, when I did props for *Doctors in Love*, and I was involved in every production, either on stage, or off stage until 1991. I counted and that is 52 shows. Phew! I then took a few years away from Theatre to be a full time mum. I have had the privilege of previously serving on The Players' committee, including 5 years as Secretary. My last production with The Players was in 2006, but since then I have appeared with many other companies down on the flat including Matt Byrne Media, Therry, St Jude's, Galleon, Mixed Salad,

Spotlight and The Adelaide Rep. I am excited to once again be involved with The Stirling Players, my theatre "home", and I look forward to being a part of steering us into the future.



JOHN KOCH

John Koch is an actor who has been involved in the theatre since 1992, and served on The Stirling Players' committee for a while around the turn of the century. Most recently he played Edgar, the long suffering father of the bride in The Players' production of *Celebration* last year.

He has rejoined the committee because he was sad and ashamed at the thought that The Stirling Players might fall through and have to close for lack of committee members.

Now that he is back on board he may use his professional skills to help with set painting, help with set painting, and he has also put his hand up to video productions for social media and "training purposes".

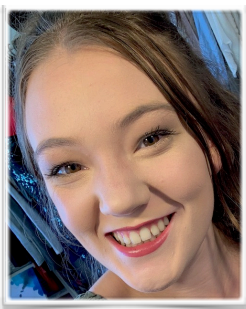


GLENYS FORSYTH

Hello, I am Glenys! I will be the Front Of House co-ordinator for the recently resurrected Stirling Players. I have run FOH for many years and have willingly put my hand up to take up this role again, for, what I hope, will be a highly successful rejuvenated theatre production company. The situation at the Stirling Community Theatre is unique in Adelaide in that it provides a central performance hub where, under the umbrella of the Adelaide Hills Council, three affiliated groups mount a yearly calendar of productions with all profits being channelled back into the maintenance of the theatre building. It is a unique and special situation not to be taken

lightly, and a community facility to be proud of and supported!, so I was devastated to read in *The Courier* about the possible disbanding of one of the host groups, The Stirling Players! Hence my return!

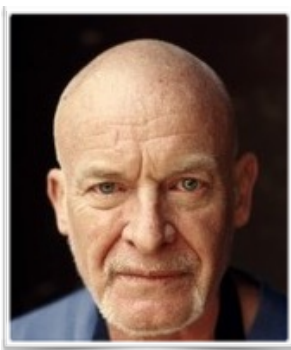
The main thing I love about FOH is the 'vibe' of the theatre foyer full of excited patrons (sherry in hand and fire blazing) just before the show. And of course, our wonderful team of volunteers, who feel it is more like a night out, than work! I have no acting ability whatsoever; I leave that to my twin sons in Sydney who both came through The Stirling Youth Theatre and are carving out very successful careers in the performing arts. I look forward to meeting you all very soon at one of our wonderful upcoming productions!



LUCY ZILM

Hi I'm Lucy. I am an 18-year-old student, currently studying Costume Design at Flinders University. I decided to join The Stirling Players after I heard it was potentially closing. I had been to a couple of their previous performances and didn't want to see it go. When I had been to performances I thought that their actors were incredibly professional, the atmosphere in the theatre was amazing and that the costumes were stunning. I thought it would be the perfect place to help grow my theatre knowledge and skills in costume.

I have previously done a little costume and make-up for theatre performances through High School, but I am excited to learn so much more, and to help with any and every costume need the theatre has. I look forward to seeing The Stirling Players into the future.



TONY KNIGHT

Tony was the Head of Acting at Australia's National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), training some of Australia's most celebrated national and international actors, such as Cate Blanchett, Sam Worthington, Alex O'Loughlin, and Anna Torv, as well as local Adelaide actors, including Elena Carapetis, Adam Tuominen, Sarah Snook, Ben Welford, and Kate Box. Tony has taught, directed and lectured in many parts of the world, including Australia, the USA, Japan, Romania, Singapore and Tonga. He has spoken at numerous

international and national conferences and in January 2018 he delivered three public lectures at the Australian National Portrait Gallery on 'The Identity of the Australian Actor', and 'The Australian Actor in Film'. In 2018 co-founded a new professional theatre company, STARC Productions. He has co-produced and directed several productions for the company which has been nominated for Best Ensemble in the annual Adelaide Critics Circle Awards. Tony is also an accomplished photographer.

Tony explained why he had responded to the Stirling Players' situation. "When I first heard about the difficulties facing The Stirling Players last year, I immediately offered help as an adviser. However, no problem that I am now on the committee. I have been living and working in South Australia for the past 6 years. During that time I have attended and reviewed a number of productions by the company for *Stage Whispers*. This includes recent productions of *Nell Gwynn* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Whilst critical, nonetheless, I have thoroughly enjoyed each production and been impressed with the overall standard.

Another reason why I wish to be involved is because of my passionate belief and commitment to the importance of community theatre throughout Australia. Most of the people whom I have subsequently trained at NIDA, and other drama schools, had their first theatre experience in a community theatre production. Indeed, most professionals had their first experiences in a community theatre production. Consequently, community theatre is a vital source for the professional 'industry'.

Furthermore, I am very keen on supporting regional and rural community theatres; the city groups have enough people to care and support them, while the regional and rural groups are too often overlooked. Nonetheless, based on personal and professional experience, there are a number of professional actors, directors, designers, *et al* who come from rural and regional areas".



ELLEN DEMAAGD

Ellen has been involved with The Stirling Players since 2018, and joined the committee later in the year. She was encouraged to pursue lighting throughout high school, and is excited by the chance to produce plays with like-minded people. Ellen is currently in her first year of study at the University of Adelaide and plays the violin in her spare time.



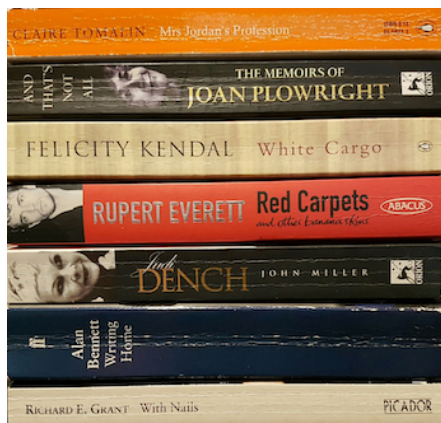
GEORGI CLOUGH

Georgina is thrilled to be a new part of The Stirling Players' Committee. She has grown up in the Adelaide Hills, spending a number of years at the Hills Youth Theatre. Georgina has a passion for theatre and has been involved in various productions and musicals throughout Adelaide. She is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Education and Arts, with the hope of teaching Drama and History. Georgina looks forward to engaging her students with theatre and live arts, and can't wait to bring her passion for theatre to the committee. Having spent a number of years at the Stirling Community Theatre, and attending countless productions there, Georgina was excited to put her hand up to join the committee in the hopes of diversifying her theatre experiences.



SARAH TILLEY

Originally from the UK, Sarah spent a year of travelling around Australia, before settling in Adelaide. She has called the Hills home for more than fifteen years, and now has two girls at Stirling East Primary. An engineer by profession, her career has led to opportunities working in various countries and industry sectors, most recently as a Director at a local university. Sarah's interest in theatre was sparked in her home town of Manchester, where, amongst other venues, she was a regular visitor to the Royal Exchange Theatre, enjoying productions of many genres. Sarah is delighted to be able to play a role in continuing the tradition, and supporting the evolution, of community theatre in the Hills.



MISSING THE THEATRE? TIRED OF LOOKING AT SCREENS? WE HAVE A SOLUTION!

Our resident reader/reviewer has prepared a list of great books on actors, and the art of acting, that will take you into the world of theatre, without you having to leave home.

You'll find the list on our website

www.stirlingplayers.sct.org.au

If you'd like to add to it, send your recommendations to

contactstirlingplayers@gmail.com

and we will be sure to share them.

In the meantime, HAPPY READING!



The Stirling Players invite submissions from potential directors for their 2021 season

The Stirling Players are back in business and looking forward to getting back on stage next year.

Season 1: 12 - 27 March 2021

Rehearsals for this production will start in November/early December 2020 with a break over the Christmas New Year period. Bump-in is on 27 February 2021.

Season 2 : 10-25 September 2021

Rehearsals for this production will start in June/July 2021 with bump-in on 28 August 2021.

ESSENTIALS

- ✦ Applicants should provide details of a maximum of two plays which they would like to be considered for production. We are seeking plays with good audience appeal. Classic comedies and known plays are acceptable.
- ✦ Directors must check the availability of the performance rights for the plays for the production season.
- ✦ All submissions must be accompanied by an electronic copy of the script.
- ✦ Submissions must be received no later than 5pm on Friday 17 July 2020. This closing date is final. Prior to final selection, potential directors may be invited to meet with The Stirling Players Inc. management committee to discuss their submissions.

Submissions should be emailed to the Secretary email: spsecretary@skymesh.com.au
Any enquiries should also be sent to that address.



Stirling Players' Community - We need you!

With our Golden Jubilee fast approaching, and a new Committee firmly in place, it seems like the right time to reflect on past successes and look to the future.

We are seeking insights and feedback from the broader Players' community about anything that will ensure we meet yours, and the wider community's, needs, both now, and into the future.

As a starter, some things we'd be keen to hear about both from your own personal perspective, but also as a means of attracting new audiences include:

- **Whether we're hitting the mark regarding the genre of productions**
- **Whether you're attracted more to well known scripts, or new and emerging plays**
- **Whether our marketing of productions and broader communications are meeting your needs**

Please send any comments to [**stirlingplayerspublicity@gmail.com**](mailto:stirlingplayerspublicity@gmail.com)

**We genuinely care about what you have to say,
so many thanks in advance.**



WICKED SISTERS

We were fortunate to stage 6 out of our 8 scheduled performances for *Wicked Sisters* in March, and this is what the critics said ...

"Petra Schulenburg... deliver(s) a powerhouse performance as Meridee. She commands the stage at all times, and her final climactic moments are a masterclass in authentic character work."

"April Stuart as Judith... soars in the second act"

"Tracey Korsten as Hester is excellent"

"Deborah Walsh as Lydia...shines when Lydia's deeper sadness is explored"

Sarah Westgarth

Adelaide Theatre Guide

"BRAVO! Unmissable"

John Ovenden

Hills Weekender Herald

"..fine performances, a compelling ensemble."

Fran Edwards

GlamAdelaide



We thank Director, Megan Dansie, Petra, Debra, Tracey and April, for their understanding in the cancellation of the last weekend of WICKED SISTERS. We also wish to thank the many patrons who had bought tickets and were unable to see it. We apologise for any disappointment caused.

Some memorable moments from WICKED SISTERS





IF THIS NEWSLETTER HAS A GREEN STICKER ON THE TOP YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR FEES
THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER. THE PLAYERS CANNOT FUNCTION WITHOUT
FUNDS. POST YOUR SUBS NOW TO PO BOX 455 STIRLING. (\$25 FAMILY, \$15 ADULT &
\$10 CONCESSION).

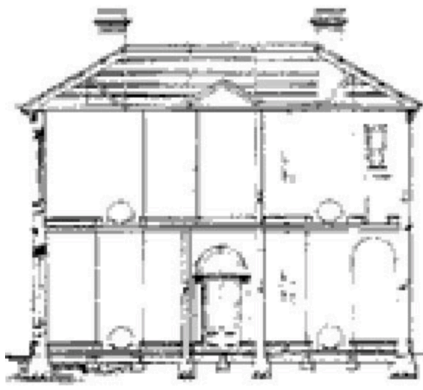
The One Act Play has been cast and rehearsals are going well. Stirling Players have drawn the last play performed on Saturday 13 October at the Tower Arts Centre Cnr Daws & Goodwood Rds. Those of you that have been to the Tower know that there is limited space and in fact Stirling Players' allocation of seats is only 20 per night. If you want to go PLEASE BOOK NOW with Tom on 391 1985. Prices are \$10 for 2 nights for adults, \$6 for 1 night (Conc. \$7 & \$4). There will be a preview on Sunday 7 October at the Stirling Theatre for those of you who miss out on tickets. This will give the cast the opportunity to perform in front of an audience for the first time. Time to be announced later. Support Tom and his cast by attending one or more performances of A SLIGHT ACHE.

PLAZA SUITE has also been cast and is rehearsing 3 nights per week. Marg is pleased with rehearsals so far and the cast are working hard as the rehearsal time is short. PLAZA SUITE is actually 3 One Act Plays all of which take place in the Plaza Hotel, New York in Suite 719. Opening night is 5 October and already some seats have been sold. Prices will be \$8 and \$6 so book early to avoid disappointment. All the cast are 'locals' so come and support the Players

If you get a phone call from PETER SHARPE he will be asking you to spend some time working in and around the Theatre (painting, sanding, etc etc). He has a list of all the Players and will eventually get around to you all. He will probably only require your help for an hour or two on a weekend - please help him to maintain your Theatre. We are lucky to have his services.

23/8- 8/9	Sr.Mary Ignatius ...	Uni Theatre Guild
30/8- 8/9	Services Rendered	Blackwood Players (Tower Arts)
31/8- 8/9	Our Town	Walker Village Players
14/9-29/9	Whose Life is it Anyway	Salisbury Players
21/9-30/9	GreasePaint Galore (Variety)	Galleon (Pioneer Hall, Sturt)
12/9-22/9	Family Planning	Spotlight Theatre Co

PAY FEES IF NOT ALREADY PAID
BOOK FOR ONE ACT PLAY FESTIVAL - A SLIGHT ACHE
HELP PETER SHARPE WITH YOUR THEATRE
KEEP A NIGHT FREE FOR PLAZA SUITE - OCTOBER 5-6, 11-13, 18-20.



STIRLING COMMUNITY THEATRE - the early history

Situated in Avenue Road, next to Steamroller Park, the historic Stirling Community Theatre, home to The Stirling Players since 1972, dates back to 1884 and has served many purposes!

In July 1882, a public meeting moved that "it is desirable that an institute be erected conveniently situated for the present and prospective population of the neighbourhood". The quoted price for the work was £700. George Brown, owner of the land all round, councillor, gardener, builder, carter, lodgeman and local justice, made the land at Lot 3 Avenue Road available at the give away price of £150. On 18 May 1883 a commendable crowd of locals met in the Lodge Room at the Halfway House to consider an institute suitable to Stirling's needs. Upon raising an initial £100, the committee elected for the purpose were authorised to proceed with the construction.

On 20 October 1883 the chairman of the new District Council of Stirling, Dr. Edward Stirling (later Sir Edward), laid the foundation stone of the hall. In laying the stone he told the gathering that the building was being built *"for the purpose of providing means of healthful recreation for the minds of the residents of Stirling West"*.

On 18 January 1884, the modest rectangular building, not yet completed, was opened with a garden affair at Mr. Edwards large Aldgate flower garden.

On Saturday 8 May 1884 a musical and literary evening was held in the Institute Hall, marking its commencement as a theatre venue although sporadic until 1972. The ground floor front two rooms were added in 1885 and by 1898 the building was complete. The stage area was added and two rooms upstairs. The room on the left as one entered the front door was the Stirling Council Office and the room to the right was the Stirling Library. The two upstairs rooms were also used by the Council the larger of the rooms was used for meetings - Council, Lodge on Friday nights and Anglican Church services on Sundays. The shelter with curved iron roof at the front of the building is a comparatively recent addition by Council (1980s). It is surely very much out of character with the rest of the building, and its erection was vehemently opposed by members of the committee at the time.



The auditorium was a social gathering place for the locals. Silent movies were accompanied by Mrs. Hart playing appropriate mood music on the piano. After these films had finished and also after the early "talkies" had finished, the seats would be relocated around the hall and a dance would be held.