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Meopham Players Newsletter



December 2015 / issue 16

70th Anniversary Bash

Brenda Ogden



"altogether a splendid evening...and here's to the next 70 years" writes the Players' doyen

Wednesday 2nd December saw 47 members, supporters and friends of Players gathered in the Orangery at Bartellas in Meopham to celebrate the 70 years since the foundation of this very special group.

It was a hugely enjoyable occasion with good food, wine and, above all, company which made the whole evening go with a swing.

Our chairman, Sylvia Stickings, gave a speech of welcome to all our guests, in particular Councillor Julia Burgoyne and Councillor John Cubitt and his wife Moira who have been very supportive of our applications for grants for improvements to our stage and equipment.

An engraved crystal rosebowl was



Special Guests Cllr John Cubitt & Cllr Julia Burgoyne

raffled, and won by John Cubitt who then re-presented it to Meopham Players to use as an award or some mark of distinction to individuals or productions which the committee considers deserve special recognition - a very generous gesture which was appreciated by everyone.

Our own inimitable Henry Roberts entertained everyone by presenting an original piece which included the titles of nearly every play produced by Players in their long history. (*see page 2, for a complete transcript*)Clever clogs, that's all I can say.

Altogether, a splendid evening. What a lovely group of people - and here's to the next 70 years!



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Sylvia Stickings, Chairman, Meopham Players

The 70th dinner was a great success and I hope that everyone enjoyed it, I have to thank John Ogden for tirelessly organising the event and for purchasing the rose bowl and the inscription, in spite of visiting his family in Chicago for thanksgiving! Well done John for doing what you do best, what would we do without you!

The said rose bowl was raffled and subsequently won by one of our special guests, Councillor John Cubitt, who with Julia Burgoyne was instrumental in getting our grant from the council for the staging. He then promptly offered it to the Players to be given annually for an outstanding performance perhaps, we will have to decide how we want to use it. Any suggestions from the members would be most welcome.

It just leaves me to wish everyone a Very Happy Christmas and New Year and look forward to an exciting programme for 2016. Love to you all

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OPEN WORKSHOP - All Welcome!

The first monthly meeting of 2016 is a workshop with Paul Dust on comedy acting. Paul is an old friend who has facilitated several workshops in the past which have been very entertaining as well as highly instructive. This session will be of interest to those that enjoy learning some of the tricks of the trade as well as the budding comics.



This is an OPEN MEETING so all are welcome - please come along, whether you are a member or not, and start the year with a bang and pick up some great professional insights!

Paul Dust Workshop |
Meopham Village Hall
6 January, 2016 at 8pm.

Still Crazy After All These Years

A potted history in plays of the Meopham Players 1955-2015



Henry Roberts



The President gave a highly original welcome at the 70th Anniversary Bash by linking almost all the plays that have ever been staged by the Meopham Players into one speech, which we are pleased to print in full



It all began when ISOBEL EDWARD & ANNE met JANE EYRE who was DANGEROUS COMPANY, went past FUMED OAK, round a DANGEROUS CORNER and there were no medals for solving THE MYSTERY AT GREEN FIN- GERS.

After a QUIET WEEKEND, THEY CAME TO A CITY, went on a HAPPY JOURNEY to BADGERS GREEN and ON MONDAY NEXT they met MISS MABEL at the SHOP AT SLY CORNER and attend- ed A QUIET WEDDING with MIRANDA wearing BLACK CHIFFON.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE they found that IT'S NEVER TOO LATE. AND SO TO BED where they slept like THE BABES IN THE WOOD and the BRIDE AND THE BACHE- LOR told them THE WHOLE TRUTH about REBECCA and SIMON AND LAURA who were suffering from HAY FEVER and that's A QUES- TION OF FACT.

Then they met CINDERELLA on GRAND NATIONAL NIGHT said GOOD- NIGHT MRS PUFFIN before meeting THE HEIRESS who was A PLAINTIFF IN A PRETTY HAT living in THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE. They ate at SEPARATE TABLES lit by THE MAGIC CANDLE, but there was DANGER INSIDE as they had a BRIEF SUSPICION that ALADDIN was the MAN MOST LIKELY TO.

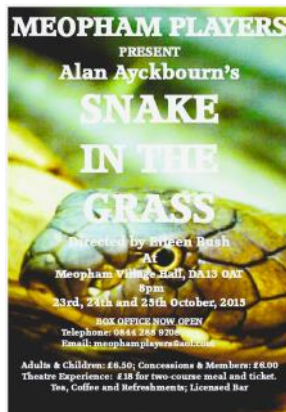
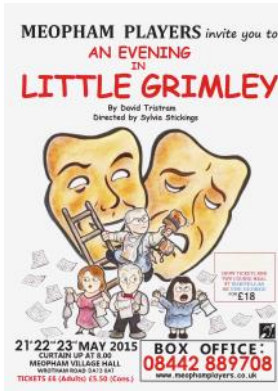
THE SLEEPING BEAUTY, THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR was a FRIEND INDEED and introduce them to a DOCTOR AT SEA who was on his way to TREASURE ISLAND for A NIGHT OUT with ALIBABA.

On their ANNIVERSARY

they met the GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN and DICK WHIT- TINGTON which was a bit of a SHOCK. Like THRILLER OF THE YEAR they were CAUGHT ON THE HOP by the MAGIC CANDLE. ROUND AND ROUND THE GARDEN at the HOUSE ON THE CLIFF they met THE BABES IN THE WOOD at the VICTORIAN MUSIC HALL.

At the HAUNTED THROUGH LOUNGE at FARNDALE CASTLE they met the LA- DIES IN RETIREMENT, THE GENIE WITH THE LIGHT BROWN BOOTS, THE RELUC- TANT DEBUTANTE and THE MAGIC DOLLS. But ALAS POOR FRED was at his LUNCH HOUR. THE FAITHFUL WID- OW OF EPHEBUS told them A PACK OF LIES at 84 CHARING CROSS ROAD. But BEING OF SOUND MIND, RELATIVELY SPEAKING, on TWELFTH NIGHT they found HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES but hey! NOBODY'S PERFECT.

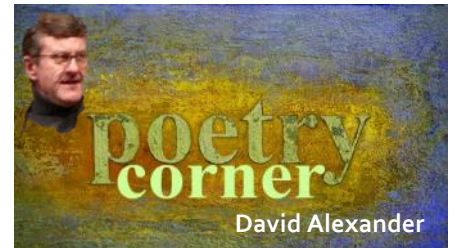
To slow up a bit, they took an INSIDE JOB, suffered from PROSCENOPHOBIA and after a BRIEF ENCOUNTER, with the RAILWAY CHILDREN on THE DAM FINE ROAD met NOBODY'S FOOL, read THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE and THE JUNGLE BOOK, watched the CALEN- DAR GIRLS by GASLIGHT, woke up and asked IS ANY BODY THERE? They thought they heard someone calling SAY WHO YOU ARE but could- n't confirm it.. On examination they discovered that there was a hoo-ha at GRIMLEY VILLAGE HALL but when they arrived they found it was only a SNAKE IN THE GRASS who slithered off muttering GO GREEN OR DIE.



If you enjoyed the riotous 'An Evening in Little Grimley', that was staged in May, you are going to love David Tris- tram's new comedy 'Going Green' which is the Players' next production.

This is a bitter sweet comedy and its success relies on engaging the emotions of the audience on many levels. There are six Characters -John Winson, directs and plays 'Brian', Party Chairman, and Gill Skinner is 'Christine', his wife. Rodney Buckland is 'Sir Clive'-Secret Service Head. S Sangha is a politician, with Anne Horrocks 'Laura' his girlfriend. Terri Hor- ton is 'Madeline' a medical professional.

Going Green | 25, 26 & 27 February



Dusk

As the horizon slips to a veil of bitter blue I Clasp hands and turning the collar of my coat Hurry on The sharp nose chiselling cold Kept at bay by the urgent clapping Of gloved hands That applaud the gathering gloom

Before me the horizon shimmers with light from the city But here In the coun- try lane Dark walls of earth rise up around me And the trees wave sinister frosty branches Clawing at the gather- ing gloom

The road drops and turns As awkward feet seek out treacherous rut and hole My eyes strain and flit from sky to ground and back And smart as the cold plucks at them

I think on the warm room that awaits me A fire oozing heat Food and beer And smile to myself Not far! Not far!

Where are you now Mrs Worthington?



Terry Fairhead



'Do put your daughter on the stage Mrs Worthington' suggests the Players' Arts Correspondent

Even today when there seems to be so much opportunity to display a young entertainer's blossoming talent to an ever demanding and eager public, the profession is still a precarious



Gemma Arterton, local made good, to play Nell Gwynn

one. In acting, for every Gemma Arterton or Daniel Radcliffe there are hundreds – perhaps thousands – of attractive, talented, young would-be actors who for one reason or another have not managed to

catch the eye of a sufficiently influential figure to guide them through to fame and fortune.

For the majority the dream, if not entirely abandoned, is put in the pending file while the dreamer seeks other routes to journey through life. Some though will persevere in whatever way they can and may turn to the amateur stage. This allows them – to some extent – to fulfil their creative needs while following a more lucrative profession that puts food on the table.

And how lucky is that for people who don't have a professional theatre reasonably close to where they live and cannot perhaps afford the tickets prices anyway? It seems to me that although some amateur dramatic groups like ours may struggle at times, they fulfil a need not just for the performers and crew, but for local audiences too; even if – in our case – it is a while since they attended in the numbers we saw for *Calendar Girls*.

In the New Year the Newsletter will be printing a series of articles which will attempt to trace the origins of Meopham Players right back to 1945 when the production of our first play, *Isobel, Edward and Anne* was presented at Meopham Vil-

lage Hall. We will also be able to look back to a time when we could not only produce five or more plays a year; we didn't seem to have any problem with casting for up to twenty characters.

Of course we are not the only AmDram group struggling to find members and perhaps the problem is there are too many other distractions. But maybe – just maybe – the problem is more fundamental in that we have insufficient younger people amongst the general public eager to perform on stage.

So, let's hear it one more time:

Do Put Your Daughter on the Stage Mrs Worthington.



Great productions –but where are the younger people?

Witch Report?



Eileen Bush



A consumer guide to the weird world of stage superstitions & facts

Vertical strips of cloth on the stage are called legs, and horizontal ones are borders, except for the first one behind the proscenium which is called a teaser even if there are no others further upstage.



Upstage - farthest from the audience. Downstage, nearest to the audience. Stage left and stage right, the actors' left and right when facing the audience.



Footlights were often called floats from the days when they were oil filled and had candle wicks floating in them.



Lime light dates from when blocks of lime were burnt to give a very defined and harsh light for the leading players. Follow spots and operators as still sometimes known as limes.

Never use real flowers on stage. A well founded health and safety issue here in the days when H&S did not exist. Flowers wilt under hot lights and are liable to drop petals thus causing a slipping hazard.



Do not whistle. This dates from a time when most daymen were out of work sailors who looked after all the rigging in the flies. The sailors communicated by coded whistles and so anyone else whistling was in danger of cueing a sailor to drop a piece of scenery upon his head.



The 70th Anniversary Bash in pictures

John Ogden, the *Newsletter's* Photographer of the Year captures the moments



Chairman Sylvia – it's behind you, oh, no it's not



Joy smiles, Henry lost in doggerel?



'Ere...stop messin' about' - Howard shares a Kenneth Williams moment with Brenda



Bill & Lesley start as they mean to go



Guests John & Moira Cubitt, enjoying the evening



Jo & Graham, staunch supporters of the Players



Angie gets a smile out of Lester



Look into my eyes, the eyes, the eyes, not around the eyes- Pauline & Liz on the razzle



The Vice Table: Edna & Terry- President and Chairman



Sonia, a Players mainstay, makes a point



The Alexanders dress for dinner in matching crowns, doesn't everyone?



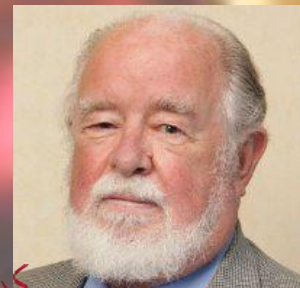
Gaeme ponders, whilst Anne Phone Piddles



For whom the bell tolls-Terri and the bell-



Players' sound supremo, Sylvie, with her minders



The dapper snapper –John Ogden

Bijou Tales of Theatre



Les Peters



The latest story from a long successful career in the professional theatre is 'Swan Lake'

In the late seventies I was working at the Adelphi theatre and one Sunday we did a benefit concert for charity. A star studded line-up was performing for free and all the very expensive tickets had been sold ensuring a packed 1600 strong audience.

One of the highlights was a spoof ballet with the famous dancer Wayne Sleep dancing an extract from Swan Lake with Penelope Keith who was not famed for her dancing.

The Royal opera house had lent us the swan boat from their production. It was about big enough for two people and ran in a straight line on four fixed wheels. We had set up a rostrum in the middle of the stage for Miss Keith to alight from the Swan onto while Mr Sleep awaited her arrival.

The operation was simple, me on one side of the stage and my mate Chris on the other each holding a rope attached to one end of the boat so that we could pull it on and off in both directions.

Rehearsals went well and we went for a break. Before we went we did consider just checking that it had all been reset correctly. We decided it would be OK and



we should spend our time more productively in the local hostelry refreshing ourselves for the show.

Come the big entrance all looked OK, the truck might have been a little out of line but we thought we could pull it back by the angle we pulled the rope, (we were young, what can I say). Miss Keith boarded and we started to pull. Unfortunately we could not correct its track and it crashed into the front corner of the rostrum, catapulting Miss Keith out of the boat.

Luckily she had a soft landing and suffered no injury. Not so luckily the soft thing she landed on was Mr Sleep. Anyway no harm was done and to tumultuous laughter they picked themselves up and carried on like true pro's.

Afterwards Chris and I thinking we were in the deep do-do waited for them to come off. But instead of the abuse we were expecting we were thanked for affording them the biggest laugh of the night. Their only complaint was that we had moved the comic climax to the start of the piece.

So back to the bar to settle our nerves!

What to see, what to do and how to help

Ima Starstruck



Our Showbiz Reporter with her ear glued to the keyhole

January, 2016

Paul Doust, acclaimed actor and director will facilitate a workshop on comedy acting at our regular monthly meeting on 6 January. This is an open workshop and all are welcome. We hope members, supporters and friends will make every effort to attend.

February

An Inspector Calls, one of the most famous works written by JB Priestley, seen as relevant today as when it was first performed in 1945 will be part of a play reading at the monthly meeting on 3 February.

Brick Lane Music Hall-6 February
SOLD OUT

Going Green by David Tristram, the next Players' production on 25, 26 & 27 February. Director John Winson has cast the play with mix of regulars and new

faces but still requires back stage and technical crew. If you can take on stage Manager or help with props, or any of the other essential support roles for a successful production, please contact John Winson.

April

Luke Taylor, stage director at Medway Little Theatre will be giving a talk on "The Perils of Stage Managing" on 6 April. Given Luke's personality this will be very amusing as well as teaching us a few trade secrets. It will appeal to actors and stage crew alike, so make sure you don't miss it!

June 2016

Auditions for the October production on 1 June. Sonia Williams has offered to direct with Anne Horrocks assisting.

Habeas Corpus, by Alan Bennet, to be staged at Nurstead Court in June, (*not May as incorrectly reported last month*). John Winson and Sylvie Stickings will be directing at a superlative alfresco venue. Dates for auditions and the play to follow.

September 2016

Annual General Meeting on the 7th.

Meopham Players



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First Impressions are lasting...

Terri Horton



First impressions are lasting impressions or are they?

We all do it don't we, make a judgement on first impressions? Indeed how many interview candidates (in the good old days when you actually met some face to face!) put that extra shine on their shoes, ensured their fingernails were clean and checked the outfit for missing buttons or marks?

Well sometimes that first impression can be accurate, what is it that makes us feel we trust/distrust, like/dislike someone and which later turns out to be quite accurate – intuition, reading the non-verbal communication signals we all send out? I don't know but it is fascinating and of course can be challenged.

When I worked with older people with severe communication problems and/or dementia who were living in care homes, one of the parts of my role which I found most rewarding was assisting in "revealing the person". Together, sometimes with family members if they had them, we would put together life story books drawing out whatever information we could discover about the person, their life and interests which then gave the care staff and the individual a deeper level



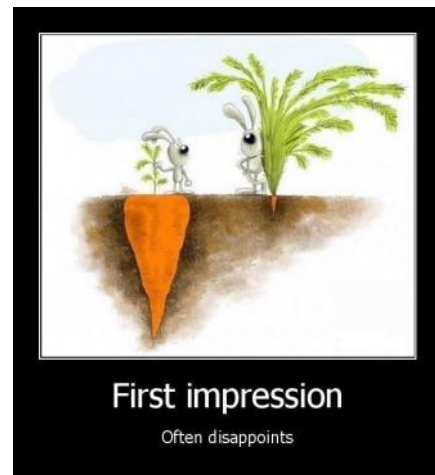
of understanding and ability to connect. Along the way fascinating stories were often revealed, colourful past lives and experiences that all helped to refocus that "first impression" and reveal the rich and fulfilling experiences that shaped the individual. Sometimes the changes in relationships between carers and the individual were dramatic because these "first impressions" were challenged and new connections and shared interests revealed.

Another less serious but fun thing is one of those ice-breaker events with groups of people called "people bingo". Now I usually dread anything of this nature but have to say that the times I have done and used it have been fun. The idea is that each participant reveals something unusual/unexpected/unknown about themselves to the host in advance who then produces bingo type sheets with these things on. The group then chat and get to know each other, trying to match the

individual with the characteristic or event on the bingo sheet. There can be more than one right answer and it is always fun – in fact finding out who has that tattoo in a delicate place, who has travelled to a far flung destination, who has an unusual hobby etc. can be eye-opening – now there's an idea for a monthly meeting – only joking folks!!

Challenging first impressions is also a well-used device in theatre, how often we find that the original presentation of a character is either incomplete or false and we, as the audience find ourselves changing our first impressions as more of the plot unfolds.

So, whilst first impressions certainly have their place and can be useful, the journey to finding out the person at a deeper level can be interesting and challenging.



Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2015