



Meopham Players' Newsletter

www.meophamplayers.co.uk

January 2016/ issue 17

Are You Having a Larf?

The extraordinary talents that can be found among local societies and the skills of an expert facilitator were on show at the first monthly meeting

Dame Kurtan Razor

Critic Of The Year



Comedy In Acting

Open Workshop, 6 January



'Raised eyebrows are all you need?' says Paul

What is Comedy? asked Paul Doust at the packed open monthly meeting held in January. The assembled group which comprised three local amateur societies - Act One based in New Ash Green, Cobham Amateur Dramatics Society (CADS), and Meopham Players – eagerly split into four sub-groups to answer what at first sight appeared to be a simple question but in practice proved to be anything but.

Paul facilitated a lively plenary session where ideas were exchanged, brains taxed and long lost memories dredged in an effort to define what makes us laugh until he revealed the solution.

This proved to be as simple as 'The Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life' posed in 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy' which was calculated by an enormous supercomputer named Deep Thought.

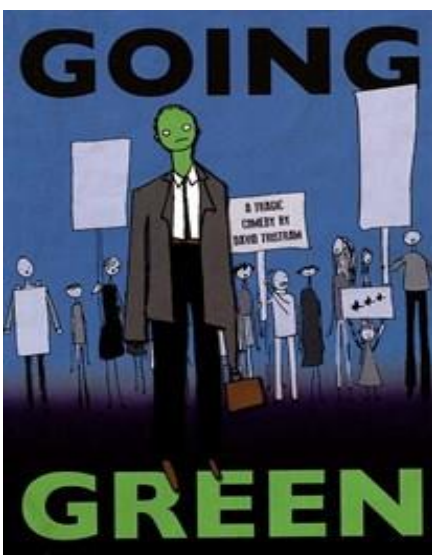
After clunking and whirring for a period of 7.5 million years, Deep Thought spat out '42', Paul's response was 'difficult'.

Once the initial spadework had been done, the second half of the evening was about using what we had learned about the rudiments of comedy and applying it to two set pieces of classic comedy – the handbag scene from Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest' and a ribald passage from 'What The Butler Saw' by Joe Orton.

Willing volunteers duly obliged and acted out the extracts so that the parts could be dissected and analysed to obtain a better understanding of what tickles our fancy and makes us laugh out loud.

The evening proved to be highly entertaining as well as instructive and like any good performance the participants were left wanting more, with the general consensus in favour of further collaborations of this nature between the assembled AmDram groups.

See Page 2 for the workshop in pictures



Going Green, is tragic comedy penned by the irrepressible David Tristram, one of the country's most popular and performed playwrights with over 25 published comedies, two movies and a novel to his name. Samuel French, the world's biggest agent and publisher of plays, recently revealed that he has become the UK's most popular comedy playwright after the company analysed the performance of authors across different genres.

The Players' staged his hilarious duet of plays as 'An Evening In Little Grimley' last year which had audiences in stitches from beginning to end.

In *Going Green*, the people had lost faith in the political establishment. Expenses scandals, cash for questions, fat-cat bankers, austerity, riots - the whole country was crying out for a new direction, a fresh start.

Step forward John Brown, future leader of the Green Party. A man with vision. A man with charisma. But a man with a problem.

Forced by a mystery illness to quit his beloved politics, John decides to give one, last blistering farewell speech at the annual conference. The party faithful rise as one to greet their hero. The press cameras crackle and flash. And John stands to deliver his final, stark message to the waiting world. "Go green...or die."

Little could he know just how profound those words would be.

Going Green | Meopham Village Hall | 25, 26 & 27 February |



Paul Doust Workshop in pictures

Homeward

David Alexander
Players' Resident Poet



Members of Act One share a moment with a fellow thespian from Meopham Players

Tumbled in, one upon the other

We sit pressed like over-dressed sardines Abstractedly peering out of the goldfish bowl windows As the train lurches into the encroaching night

We read newspapers full of gossip
Slowly turning dull pages until
With a spasm of excitement we flip
To the pages of celebrity excess
And sigh and turn away

We contemplate what shopping we need
As square specks of light from receding houses slip from our sight Their stories and hopes and griefs lost to us And try to remember if the milk in the fridge is still fresh

We look to our fellow travellers
Their resigned and listless countenances betray no lust or curiosity about their fate As the train stumbles, jolts and careens forward

A thin female voice permeates the carriage Assuring the unconcerned of the destination of the journey if not its purpose And exhorts us to be mindful of our possessions in a voice admonishing yet comforting Like a novice undertaker

The train speeds up
We feel its screeching urgency
To be rid of us
Through throbbing pastel seats and swaying walls We vibrate shake and rattle in sympathy

At last
Our journey's end
In the speckled dark
The glistening platform receives us
And we shuffle
To bus and taxi and street
While standing empty at our backs
The rain lashed train hisses a farewell



Cobham Amateur Dramatics Society were out in force



The Group Scribe leans to jot an important point



Time for a classic - 'man walks into a bar, ouch...'



Steady on Madam, it's a workshop not Pilates



Time to think, cogitate even, before the punchline?

The Players' Crystal Award

Eagle eyed readers may recall that our Anniversary Dinner guest Cllr. John Cubitt won the star raffle prize of the engraved crystal rosebowl which he kindly gave back to Meopham Players to use as an award or some mark of distinction to individuals or productions which deserves special recognition.

Chairman Sylvia Stickings would like to hear your suggestions for the award– please email your ideas to: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com



Bringing Up The Bodies?

Our resident sleuth has unearthed archives which reveal that the Society was active in 1940's and that the first post-war show was staged in 1945, not 1950, which until now has been the accepted wisdom .

Terry Fairhead
Arts Correspondent



Last month we celebrated the society's 70th anniversary, an event that may have triggered an idea in the head of S, our Newsletter editor; namely that we should try to find out about how Meopham Players started and who the people were who started it. To this end I have begun researching currently available sources, i.e. the archived material contained a few boxes in my summer house at the bottom of the garden. Most of this material belonged to our late President, Dickie Kagan and though a very rich source, it doesn't go back much further than the early Fif-

ties, which means I will have to visit the Gravesend Library and go through back numbers of The Reporter.

The Meopham Review which dates back to the Nineteenth Century would be an even better source of information but there is apparently no local archive for it. This is a shame because printed on the back of Players programme for the 1952 production of *Miss Mabel* was a list of past productions the first of which was in 1940 and was called *Nine till Six*. Presumably the little matter of the Second World War intervened to delay the fledging society's second offering: *Isobel, Edward and Anne* until 1945.

Reference to it seems to have been dropped from later lists, but it does raise an intriguing question; if it counts as our first production, were we celebrating our 70th anniversary last month or our 75th?

If you have anything of interest that could help Terry with his mammoth task, email: meophamplayers@aol.com



Terri Horton [Madeline Gascoigne] makes a point as Rodney Buckland [Sir Clive] looks on



John Winson [Director & Brian] explains to Gill Skinner [Christine] the finer points of the script



Sir Clive is amused, or is it bemused, by a demonic 'S' Sangha [John Brown]



Annyes Laheurte [Stage Manager] realising what she has let herself in for, polishes off her first bottle



Anne Horrocks [Laura] holds the floor and the cast in thrall, but how will it all end?

What to see, what to do...

Our Showbiz Reporter with her ear glued to the keyhole



Ima Starstruck

Nurstead Court on 20,21 & 22 June.

September 2016

Annual General Meeting on the 7th.

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, the next Players' production on 25, 26 & 27 February.

March

Habeas Corpus auditions 3, 8 & 10 March

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

October production **Auditions** 1 June.

Habeas Corpus, by Alan Bennet, at

Meopham Players

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT: Henry Roberts
CHAIRMAN: Sylvie Stickings
SECRETARY: Terri Horton
TREASURER: Ann Horrocks

BOX OFFICE

MANAGER: Terry Fairhead
PHONE: 0844 288 9708
e: meophamplayers@aol.com

NEWSLETTER

EDITOR: S Sangha
e: meophamPlayers@gmail.com

MEOPHAM PLAYERS

By Arrangement with Samuel French Ltd.

presents



**25th 26th & 27th
FEBRUARY 2016**

CURTAIN UP AT 8.00pm

MEOPHAM VILLAGE HALL WROTHAM ROAD DA13 0AT

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Bijou Tales of Theatre

The latest story from a long & successful career in the professional theatre is 'Sandy'

Les Peters



This is a tale of the longest burst of hysterical laughter by both the audience and most of the back-stage crew I have ever witnessed. A bit of a "you had to be there" moment but should still give you a giggle.

In 1982 the national tour of Annie the Musical ended with a short West End run at the Adelphi Theatre. This tale concerns one of the principal actors in the show, Sandy the Dog.

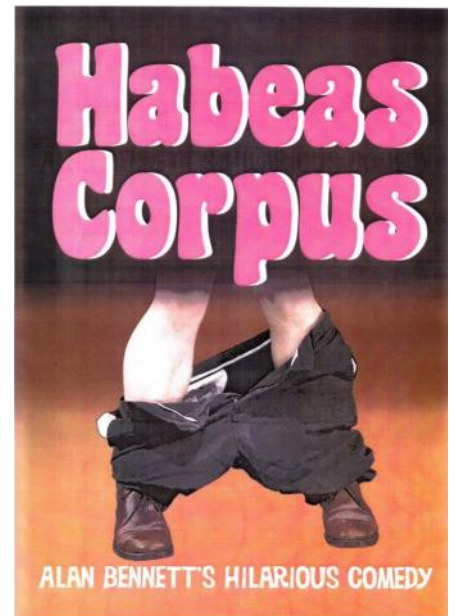
The dog in the show was normally housed with its trainer, who was always in attendance, in its own dressing room. On this day the lady trainer was called away urgently and not wanting to leave the dog locked in the room asked the wardrobe department to look after him for a few hours.

Unfortunately one of the wardrobe staff unaware that it is not a good idea treated the dog to half of the bar of chocolate she was eating. Those of you who know why you should not feed a dog chocolate are probably way ahead of me, but on with the story.

If you have seen the show you will know that there is a scene that ends with everybody leaving the stage. Then the dog walks on to the empty stage looking for Annie. He walks to the centre of the stage, sits, looks around and then walks off the other side. It is a sad scene and would often see a few tears shed in the audience, as it did this night but for a very different reason.

So the scene is set, the dog walks on, gets to the centre of the stage and sits. He then starts to rise but does not rise very far, assuming the position with his nether regions just off the floor he then demonstrated what chocolate does to a dog! He then calmly walks off leaving a very large deposit in the dead centre of the stage for all to see. I was there when he came off, I could swear he was grinning, everybody else was.

The audience were falling out of their seats, the orchestra could not play for laughing, I worked with a lot of top comedians in the 70's but I never heard as loud or sustained laugh as that. And do you know how long it takes an upholstered theatre seat to dry?



Auditions

Mammaries and mortality loom large in *Habeas Corpus*, Alan Bennett's classic seventies farce which the Players' are staging in the grounds of the historic Nurstead Court on 20, 21 & 22 June.

This is good old fashioned romp through the British permissive society. With classic lines such as "Where's your trousers" and "More tea vicar".

You do not have to be a member of Meopham Players to take part in this production as all roles, - onstage and ancillary- are open to any local AmDram Society members or any of our readers.

The cast comprises six men & five women with auditions on 3, 8 & 10 March. To register your interest, email John Winson at: jwinson1955@hotmail.co.uk

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society

By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2015