



# Meopham Players Newsletter

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## Going Green-record crowds & plaudits



### Brenda Ogden

'Altogether this was a memorable production, and congratulations are due to all involved, particularly to John Winson', writes our chief Guest Reviewer

Interesting". That was the dominant word which I heard as people came out at the interval and the end of the play when I was helping Front of House on Thursday and Friday evenings of our latest run. And quite rightly too, as I discovered when I went as a member of the audience on Saturday night.

The set was eye-catching in its spare simplicity which, combined with clever lighting, came to dramatic life as the actors took up their roles. This was a real ensemble piece with most of the actors on stage all time. Their rigid discipline when sitting to-

tally still while the attention was on another actor was truly impressive and gave a professional edge to the whole production.

This wry look at the conflict between political manoeuvring and matters of principle was by turns very funny and thought-provoking.

Each of the actors slipped into their roles as though shrugging on a much-loved and comfortable garment. Rodney Buckland as Sir Clive, the enigmatic Head of Security, gave an understated authority to the part and Gill Skinner, as Christine, the apparently down-trodden wife of a male chauvinist husband very successfully conveyed her quiet independence and ability to give as good as she got. Anne Horrocks, as Laura, the selfish girlfriend of John Brown, showed the self-absorption of the character and, incidentally, proved that she could scream with ear-splitting efficiency as she ran through the hall! John Winson as Brian brought a toughness to the character, totally unaware of the effect he was having on other people and slipping in Alf Garnet-like comments to his

wife and about women in general.

As ever, Terri Horton excelled in the role of Madeleine, mixing humour and perfect timing to give this interesting character total credibility as she changed and developed through the play. I think it's significant that on Saturday when Terri said that her husband, John, had died, a voice at the back very clearly said "oh no" - that's how well Terri pulls the audience into a play.

'S' Sangha in the central role of John Brown, was outstanding. He caught the wry humour of the character and also the passion with which he fought for his cause. People not only laughed but felt total sympathy for his dilemma - a difficult mix to achieve.

Altogether this was a memorable production, and congratulations are due to all involved, particularly to John Winson, who not only acted in but also directed the play as well.

**Playing it Green above [L to R]: Rodney Buckland, Gill Skinner, Anne Horrocks, John Winson, Terri Horton & S Sangha**

## Plus



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# They Also Serve Who Only Stand and Wait

**Terry Fairhead**  
Arts Correspondent



This phrase has tripped off many, many tongues over a very long period of time in circumstances not always appropriate to the original sentiment.

It is older than most people probably realise, being the last line of John Milton's sonnet, *On His Blindness*, in which the poet realises God's indifference to the works of man. This, so Milton's argument suggests, means those unable to do any more than stand among the righteous can also serve God.

As with many sayings it has been misused over the course of time, if not actually corrupted. It was quite popular during the last war when people stood in seemingly endless queues waiting to be served by shopkeepers who had very little to sell. It was sometimes the response made by the lazy when questioned about their job prospects and it was probably an ever present thought in the minds of peace-time servicemen on guard duty in the middle of the night.

It seems to me though that this saying could as well be applied to things as much as to people; perhaps even more so. This thought struck me as I walked along the road passing car after car parked and empty. They were not being used; they were sitting quietly – repositories of their owners' belongings – waiting to be used. The same applies to almost everything we possess, from cutlery to television sets. Nothing is in use all the time, with the possible exception of smart phones and, hopefully, my pace-maker.

So there you have it, most of us – people and things – are not doing anything for quite a lot of the time, but we are consoled by the thought we are ready to serve should the call come.

Well, some of us are at any rate.

## More about the Poet



John Milton (1608-1674) was blind when he composed his greatest poetry. Milton did not have an easy life. His first wife, 17-year old Mary Powell, fled to her parents' home immediately after the marriage ceremony and stayed there for several years. He managed a reconciliation, and Mary bore him three daughters and a son who died in infancy. She died three days after the birth of the third daughter.

He sought child-rearing aid from his mother-in-law, a woman who strongly disliked him. His second wife died in childbirth within two years of their marriage.



## Summer castle

I wait in the sun at the side of the old van that reeks its oily warmth into the street  
Its sides splashed in violent tumbling colours that tell of the eternal summer war of  
the cones and the tubs

Around me my playmates crowd in, impatient in the heat, clamouring for salvation  
From far above me the ice cream man spins the cone in one nimble wizened hand,  
wrapping and moulding the gushing frozen sweetness

I offer up fiercely held pennies that are as hot as an engine block and clammy with  
sweat

The exchange is made

The cone, heavy now, teetering, and dripping like an icy fountain passes to me

My greedy mouth devours the sweetness

My tongue gouges the smooth tower

As the sun washes us all we take our turn

Finally sated, my chums and I turn and walk off licking milky lips

And behind us the old van erupts

In strained metallic notes

Screeching and shuddering in the afternoon air.

**David Alexander**

## Keep On Running

When he is not acting and directing John Winson likes to relax by completing the odd 10k run, or so he would like us believe.

In reality, he found himself entered for the Hyde Park event by his son, after he had somewhat foolishly chided that running 10k was child's play and anyone could do it.

Never one to do things by half measures, John undertook a strict training regime and set an objective - at the age of 60 - to complete the course under 1 hour 30 minutes without stopping or walking.

So he was delighted with a time of 1:19:18, although, he did feel the pain later.

This run was not for charity but John may be seek sponsorship for a half marathon which he is planning to run later this year .

Is it a bird, is it a plane? No it's a man that wears his shorts over his trousers& runs like the clappers



# Great British Thesp Off

There is much more to baking a successful production than meets the eye-the *Newsletter's* showbiz editor, **Ima Starstruck**, gets unprecedented access to all areas and discovers an army of unsung heroes without whom the actors would be left flouncing.



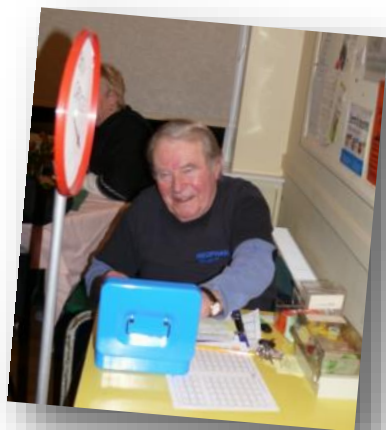
**To knee, or not to knee?**  
Howard Antwiss, *Equipment Manager*, puts the finishing touches to one he made earlier



**To you, to me?**  
[L to R] Terri Horton, Clive Taylor, John Winson, Ian Blackman, Bill Lambert, *Set Builders R Us*



**What is that unforgettable line?**  
Sylvie Stickings, *Prompt*



**You got to pick a ticket or two?**  
The Artful Dodger, Terry Fairhead, *Box Office*



**Art Attack?**  
Sonia Williams [L], *Makeup*, Puttin' on the Ritz, slapping on the slap - ably aided & abetted by Anneyes Laheurte [R]



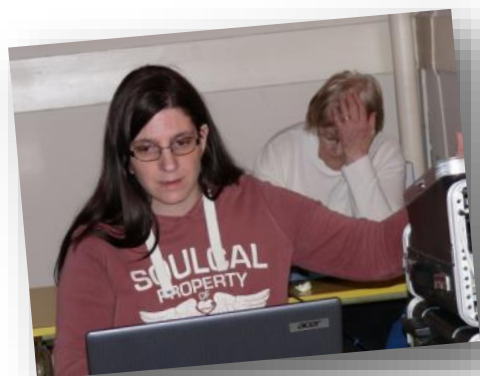
**Ground Control to Major Frog?**  
Anneyes Laheurte, *Stage Manager, Props, Makeup*



**Spin Doctor or political hack?**  
John Ogden, *Publicity*



**Shaken not stirred or are you just pleased to see me?**  
Lesley Boycott & Bill Lambert, *Front of House* [top] with their delightful helper, Brenda Ogden [foreground]



**Thunderclap and the Lightning Seeds?**  
Sylvie Harmer [L] ponders the sound mix whilst Eileen Bush [R] loses the Lighting Plot, *Sound & Lighting*



**Set Striking?**  
Let's have a cuppa first [L to R] John Winson, Rodney, Buckland, Sylvie Stickings & Lesley Boycott

# Bijou Tales of Theatre

## Les Peters



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

This one is a bit different in that it happened in a theatre but the main protagonist is not at all a theatrical personage. It is also a bit of a "you had to be there" but 35 years later it still makes me smile when I think of it.

The Rocky Horror show which started in the Royal Court Upstairs in about 1973 had moved to the Kings Road Theatre and at the time of this tale in 1980 the show was transferring to the West End.

I was part of the crew employed to get it out of the Kings road and our job was to start as soon as the last performance had ended. Because the place was a converted cinema a false proscenium arch made of steel and fireproof sheeting, weighing about a ton and a half. Had been fitted, by about seven in the morning the only thing we had to do was to remove and scrap this. Unfortunately the people who had fitted it had tied it to the ceiling with wire ropes and we had no way of lowering it. After we had finished the place was to be gutted for redevelopment so the only way it was coming down was in one piece.

So we prepared to cut the lines and let it fall into the stalls. At this point we realised that there was a cleaner in the stalls. He was a 4'10", 50ish rotund Polish man with very little English. It turned out he was told not to come here anymore but had not understood. It took some time and a lot of sign language to get him safely into the foyer where we left him happily hovering.

So the lines were cut and the result was like a scene from a disaster movie as a ton and a half of steel fell into the stalls. Seats were smashed, plaster fell and a dust cloud obscured the stalls, great fun.

But as we stood on stage admiring our handy work the dust cloud started to settle we realised that there was something moving about where row J was a few minutes earlier.

Yes there he was in the middle of the stalls pushing his Hoover with a look on his face that plainly said "I'm never going to get this cleaned up".

The Rocky Horror Picture Show



# What to see, what to do...



## Ima Starstruck

Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & iphone to the eye

### April

#### Monthly meeting -Wed 6th Apr

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!

#### Henry's Hut Clearance—Wed 16th Apr

We need able-bodied volunteers to clear out the Henry's Hut and give it a good spring clean. Please be there!

### May

#### Monthly meeting -Wed 4th May

Auditions for October production

#### Treasure Hunt -Wed 7th May

Lesley Boycott is arranging a Greenwich forage this year. Places are limited to 16 so book early to avoid disappointment

### July

#### Taming of the Shrew - Sat 30 Jul

Brenda's annual pilgrimage to the Globe - tickets are selling fast!

### September

#### Annual General Meeting on the 7th.

### January 2017

#### Behind You! - Jan 2017

The Committee is considering staging a Panto in the new year and would like to hear from you if you would be interested in taking part. Please contact Chairman Sylvie Stickings if you would like to strut the stage or able or help backstage.



# Shakespeare's Globe-Taming of the Shrew

The visit to the Globe this year will be for the 2 p.m. performance of The Taming of the Shrew at the Globe on Saturday 30th July. Brenda Ogden is organising the event and the tickets cost £40 (approx.)

Travel is included in the package as Brenda will also arrange a coach to take us there and back, which usually works out at about £20 per person.

Anybody wanting tickets should contact Brenda as soon as possible as places are limited.

# Oh, yes he is, Oh no he isn't- East End panto hits the spot



**Lesley Boycott**

*Our Roving Correspondent enjoys another night of jollification, frivolity and excellent company.*



Sixteen stalwarts shrouded in a pink haze more redolent of a French bordello than your actual Ye Olde English Panto raise a glass or two before curtain up.

On February 6<sup>th</sup> sixteen stalwart members journeyed once more to Woolwich for the annual pilgrimage to the Brick Lane Music Hall. Why? Well it was the Brick Lane Panto of course.



A rose by any other name, Lesley Boycott receives abouquet

Another night of jollification, frivolity and excellent company.

This was The Players first panto visit- I have a feeling it may not be the last.

The performance was full of traditional panto "innuendoes", thigh slapping and some great ad-libbing when lines were lost!

Oh how good to see that it is not only amateurs who miss their cues or stay on stage too long!!!

Once again the meal was excellent- how they manage to make sure every diner (all one hundred and eighty of us) had hot food

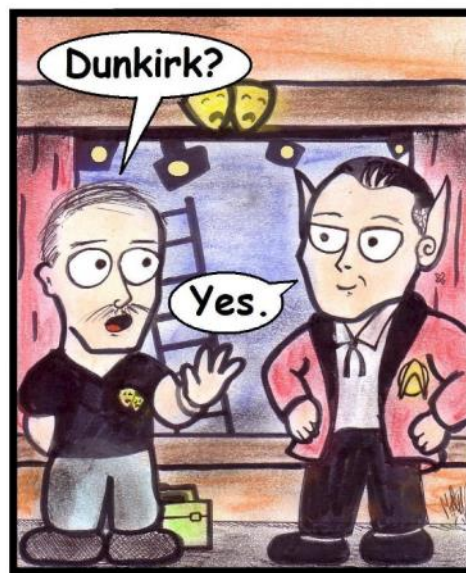
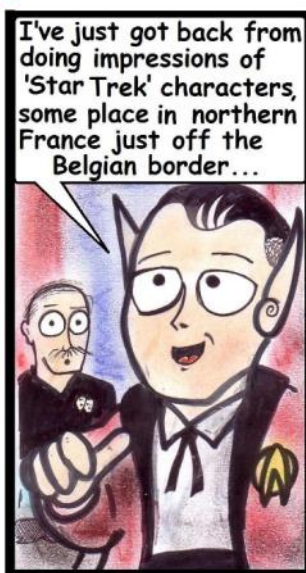
on hot plates working from very small kitchens is amazing. And served with a smile!

The evening was rounded off with the usual dance session enjoyed by those still upright!!

An added bonus was the lovely bouquet of roses from the management as a "Thank you" for our continued support over the years.!

Finally our reliable transport delivered everyone safely back to Meopham thoroughly fed, watered and entertained ready to fall into the arms of Morpheus.

## Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2016