



Meopham Players Newsletter

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To Err is human, to Arr is pirate



Cap'n Slingya Hook
Marauder of the Year

Annual Treasure Hunt
Saturday 7 April, Greenwich

A vast me 'Earties, fifteen women and men on a Dead Man's Chest sailed the motorways, saw good and bad, better and worse, fair weather and foul until they were set down by the Cutty Sark in search of the elusive Black

Spot *ARRRRRRR* - or to put it another way Meopham Players and friends gathered in Greenwich on a lovely sunny day where the annual Treasure Hunt took place this year.

The motley crew of bilge rats were whipped into shape by *Long Lesley* Boycott and *Will Blackbeard* Lambert and each team was quickly despatched with a set of cryptic clues which needed to be solved to progress to the next stage. Some fell at the first hurdle and had to resort to a reviving snifter from nearest tavern. Whilst others hoisted up the main sails and skimmed the circuitous route around the maritime World Heritage Site designed to take in the sights and enrich the participant's knowledge of the locale.

The merry dance started amongst the bustling Saturday crowds before entering the beautiful parish church of St Alfege where gravestones and surrounding gardens were examined forensically for clues to answer the fiendishly clever questions. Streets were scoured for signs, parks surveyed for pointers and the riverside inspected for inkings leading to the winning team attaining wealth and riches beyond all expectations – a used note in an envelope and a bottle of vintage *Chateau Thames Embankment* gen-



The Bilge Rats at play

erously provided by the organisers.

Eventually with the marking completed and the prizes awarded, the ragbag of hungry and tired pretend pirates *ARRRRRRR* with sabres sheathed adjourned to the *Admiral Benbow Inn* (otherwise known as the Greenwich Union) with food aplenty and wine aflowing.

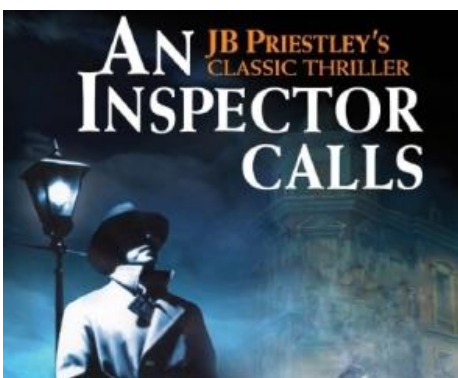
Peg-leg-less and replete the lily-livered buckoos weighed anchor, hoisted the mizzen and were wafted safely back to their hammocks by Grange Travel.

A hearty cheer of Yo-Ho-Ho for Lesley and Bill for arranging a swashbuckling day packed with big fun and adventure.



St Alfege, a Grade I listed Church designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor

NEWS IN BRIEF



Players' Autumn Production

The Players will be staging the classic thriller 'An Inspector Calls' on **27, 28 & 29 October**. The breaking news is that the wealthy Birling family will be played by Rodney Buckland (father), Brenda Ogden (mother), Ann Horrocks (daughter) and new member Geoff Sullivan, the son. David Alexander will be the fiancée and 'S' Sangha the mysterious Inspector that calls. The part of the maid is to be confirmed. Make a note of the dates in your diaries and make sure you don't miss what is set to be a spine tingler!

Panto January 2017

The Players' July monthly meeting will be with Act 1 to prepare for the panto which will be a joint venture with the cast drawn from both societies and staged at Meopham, together with a performance at New Ash Green, the home of Act 1..

Henry's Hut Clearance

The Spring clean resulted in a good clear-out although there is still more to be done. The volunteers were sustained by Sylvia with cakes who is now looking for someone that is willing to wash a bag of costumes!



The Reason Why

I do not know the reason why
I know the length, the width, the height

I know the age, the distance run, the cost, the range of possibilities
the number of stars in a typical galaxy, the likelihood that six numbers
chosen at random will make me rich and happy, or rich or happy

But the reason why, well that has always eluded me Why for example
does i have to come before e except after c?
I know that it does, because that is what I was taught But I do not
know the reason why

I mean, what if it were the other way around?
Would the world spin in the other direction?
Would a gust of wind smooth the surface of a lake?
Would day be night and night be day?
It troubles me

And I do not know the reason why.

David Alexander

What to see, what to do...



Ima Starstruck

Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & iphone on the pulse

June

Monthly meeting

on the 1st will be a play reading

July

Taming of the Shrew - Sat 30 Jul

Brenda's annual pilgrimage to the Globe - a few tickets available.

Monthly Meeting

Joint Panto planning meeting with Act 1 on 6th for a show in Jan 2017

September

Annual General Meeting on the 7th.

October

Workshop on 5th -to be confirmed

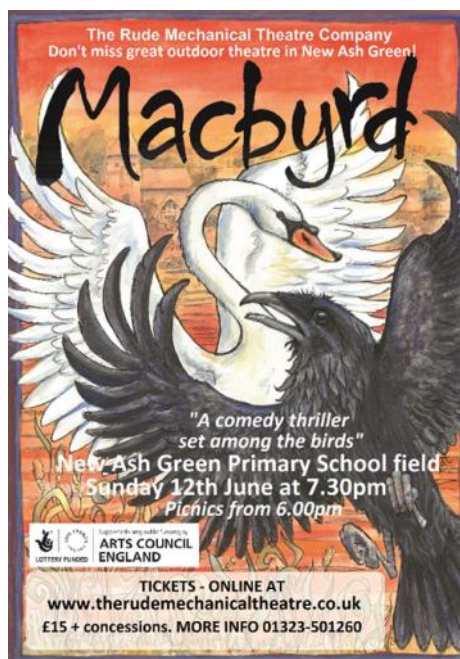
January 2017

Panto - Jan 2017

Are you interested in taking part in a panto?
Please contact Chairman Sylvie Stickings to register an interest .

News from local Societies

Our neighbour the Cobham Amateur Dramatic Society (CADS) is staging *Laying the Ghost* from 19th to 21st May and our friends at New Ash Green are promoting *Macbyrd* on 12 June, please see below for details and support them if you are able.



Meopham Players

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Pieces of Eight!



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My life in eight pieces, by **Sylvie Harmer**
Player's Sound Supremo and enthusiastic bass guitarist in a band.

1. Poncho

Bolivia – I was born in La Paz, Bolivia and left age 5 months! I would love to return one day. Here is an Alpaca wool poncho that used to belong to my Mum until I “inherited” it!

2. DVD

Jungle Book is my favourite Disney film. It reminds me of my time in Muscat, Oman as very young child. I had short dark hair, very dark skin thanks to the perpetual summer we had there and, yes, a pair of red shorts and so my nickname became... Mowgli!

3. Badges

Because I was a Foreign Office Brat, I went to boarding school for my teenage years. Here are the badges for the good stuff I did while I was there. Of course there wasn't any bad stuff! Honest guv...

4. Blanket

I love this blanket. Apart from being lovely and cosy and colourful I made it myself. It did take me two years but I got there in the end and I'm so happy with the results. Life doesn't allow me to express myself creatively very often until I find a project like this or a play with the Players!

5. Programmes

I love going to the theatre, especially musical theatre but in the last couple of years I've started going to see new, original, non-musical plays and enjoying myself immensely.

6. Book

One other thing I took from boarding school was a favourite author – Terry Pratchett. Mort is my favourite book of his as I loved the idea of Death having an apprentice. The imagination he had showed and the humour his books had gave me a great place to go when I got homesick.

7. Bass Guitar

Music is another love of mine. Not only do I like listening to anything from heavy metal to classical, I also like to play a bit too. I'm in a band as bass player and we have a great time writing our own stuff as well as playing covers.

8. Photos

My friends and family. I love to surround myself with their photos and pictures that they make for me. They remind me how lucky I am to have so many wonderful people in my life!

9 until 6 - a saucy start?



Terry Fairhead

Meopham Players History Project - 2
The first play performed by the Players was no Calendar Girls but may have made your Grandmother blush

As I think you probably know I have been spending time at the Gravesend Library going through the local newspaper for 1940 using the Microfiche facility. This is quite painstaking as the images are not as sharp as I would like. And as if this was not enough the film for this particular year was severed around February. Nevertheless I have been carrying on regardless in my attempt to find some reference to the first play produced (apparently) by Meopham Players, namely: *Nine Till Six* by Aimee and Philip Stuart.

Until I started researching this I only had the play's name however, the all-knowing Google gave me a lot more information including the year of its first performance: 1930. The play had an all-female cast and the action was set in the millinery department of a fashionable dress shop in London. What follows is a brief excerpt from the script which gives a flavour of the contemporary dialogue:

MRS PEMBROKE Come, Miss Roberts, you're an old enough hand at millinery to know what a difficult time we've had since the **Felts**. (*Crossing MISS ROBERTS to L. and putting flowers on the table.*) You've seen most of the old firms go under through no fault of their own.

MISS ROBERTS (bitterly) It's Paris that's responsible!

MRS PEMBROKE It's cause and effect. The War made it necessary for women to do men's work; men's women made it necessary for them to cut their hair; short hair made it impossible to pin on large hats – and so we came to the **felts**.

MISS ROBERTS (grumbling) Paris started them.

MRS PEMBROKE Paris, as usual, took the lead; it what was inevitable, that's all. It was hard on the milliners.

When it was first performed it was compared to R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End* because both plays had single sex casts and were related to changes brought about by events of World War One. It was an unlikely comparison though for Sherriff's classic play was a tragedy set in the trenches while *Nine until Six* portrayed a struggle for survival in the commercial battlefield of post-war Britain.

As far as the performance by the embryonic Meopham Players was concerned though, *Nine until Six* was probably chosen because young men were in short supply due to having been called up – it was 1940 after all when Britain found itself standing alone against Nazi Germany.

However, this was also a period when the Nation's favourite cartoon was *Jane* featured in *The Daily Mirror*. This was quite literally a strip cartoon with minimum plot and maximum exposure of the heroine's anatomy. So it is possible there was a more saucy reason for making this choice.

This is one of the original stage directions:

[*The staff at a fashionable dress shop are getting changed.* **Stage directions:**]

DAISY'S underclothes are cheap and not too fresh. One of the two Juniors wears a coloured artificial silk cami-knicker of the



A still thought to be from the film of *Nine until Six*

cheapest sort; the other wears a woven vest, a bust-bodice and a pair of knickers that don't match...

GRACIE, by her hook, takes off her slip, trying to get into her dress while BRIDGIT'S back is turned. Her underclothes are homemade, of thick white cotton material, plain and neat...

The three MANNEQUINS (BEATRICE, JUDY and HELEN) come in, breathlessly, having run up the stairs. With the speed of habit they go to where their outdoor clothes hang, take off their slips and put on their own things. Their underclothes vary to suit their type, but they are skimp and up-to-date. They talk while they change. Their movements – also from habit – are always harmonious.

And this is one of the scenes (see above) – a still (I think) from the 1932 film.

Not exactly *Calendar Girls* but pretty racy for the time.

Have you got news for us?

Time to put pen to paper? Have you got an article, poem or snippet that you could share?

- ◆ We are always looking for willing scribes and budding authors to contribute to our monthly newsletter. Can you help?
- ◆ There are so many skills and areas of expertise amongst our readers, that we would like to invite and encourage all to participate.
- ◆ We are always pleased to receive interesting articles for publication and preference is given to those that have accompanying photographs or illustrations to bring them to life.
- ◆ With limited space not everything can be published so please bear in mind that submissions are printed at the editor's discretion.

Please email the Editor at:- MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day



Brenda Ogden

A stroll through Shakespeare's London leaves our correspondent dumbstruck by a surprise appearance of Mark Rylance.

There's more to Shakespeare's Globe than meets the eye. It's not just a matter of open-air plays in the summer and winter productions in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, a beautifully restored Jacobean theatre on the same site.

Ever since Mark Rylance was the director of the Globe, they have also had sonnet walks. The clue is in the name: they are walks to the Globe from different points around London, punctuated by presentations of some of Shakespeare's sonnets along the way. All very dry.

They are usually organised on the weekend nearest to Shakespeare's birthday, 23rd April. This year they have been celebrating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death too, which happens to be on the same date, so it was all a bit special.

We were on the West walk and we started from the north door of Westminster Abbey where we were met by a member of the company who gave us a booklet indicating the route, presented us each with a white rose and set us on our way. Fortunately for those who belong in a home for the permanently bewildered, like me, there were volunteers along the way, also carrying white roses, to set us on the right track if we started to stray.

The route took us past many famous landmarks and many unknown and surprising back streets and gardens, all having some connection with Shakespeare's life in London. The thing is, you never knew by whom or where you were going to be given a version of a sonnet, or an extract from a play. A busker, a couple having a row, a back-packer, a group of students, a prostitute asking for money, a WOMEN'S CHOIR, for heaven's sake, all stopped what they were doing and involved us in extracts from Shakespeare - and really involved us.

They would take one of us by the arm or address someone directly, or pretend that they recognised someone from somewhere so that you were immediately engaged. All in all, we were treated to 10 sonnets, and extracts from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Macbeth" all by people who just emerged from the crowd. The above-mentioned women's choir were the Paddock Singers and they treated us to a choral version of "Double, double, Toil and trouble" to music composed by Claire van Kampen.

The icing on the cake was undoubtedly in Fountain Court in the Middle Temple, where a barrister, complete with wig and gown, suddenly detached himself from the shadow of a building and walked towards us. It was Mark Rylance.

At this point, all semblance of maturity and common sense left me completely, I said "O wow!" very loudly and proceeded to gawp like a star-struck teenager, while he spoke Sonnets 46 and 47 - to Christine Antwiss who immediately let go of Howard's arm and pretended she had nothing to do with him. Probably because, when Howard saw him, he walked towards him and said "O



Shakespeare denier Mark Rylance conceived the idea of the Sonnets Walks some twenty years ago

hello." He didn't say "Mate", but it was close.

It was all terrific, but not entirely trouble-free. Towards the end of the walk, after we had got more used to perfectly ordinary people turning into something quite different and spouting Shakespeare at us, we took a wrong turn. Somebody misread the directions, the sheep syndrome took over and we all followed onto a secluded roof garden. There was a tramp asleep on a bench, completely rolled up in a blanket, with the handle of a rather posh umbrella sticking out of the head end. We all nodded wisely and waited for something to happen. Which it didn't. It was a real tramp and we all shuffled off shame-facedly and relocated the route deeply thankful that no-one had thought to nudge him awake.

It was three hours of walking on quite a cold day, but as we all congregated at the Globe, meeting the people who had been on the East walk with their red roses and twining them into the wrought iron gates we realised what a wonderful day we had enjoyed.

I can't imagine anything less drry.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



PUBLIC WARNING: SMOKING CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH! NOW YOU KNOW! AND KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE!