



Meopham Players Newsletter

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Quartet plays to packed houses



L to r: Rodney Buckland (Reg), Diane Dixon (Jean), S Sangha (Wilf) & Brenda Ogden (Cissy)

particular stand out performances from Brenda Ogden (Cecily) and 'S' Sangha (Wilfred Bond) who had us in stitches. The performance was excellent, more please. The Theatre Experience was equally superb as well, a great addition to a really enjoyable night, thank you. Please send my congratulations to everyone involved in this production."

Any criticisms I have are minor and hardly worth mentioning -one concerns the quality of the music, or at least the recordings that were used, which in my view were below what they should have been. The other related to the Quartet singing to a blank wall as a finale which felt rather odd especially when you consider how good the set was. These however are pernickety points and certainly didn't impinge on the audience's enjoyment and every member of the cast and crew deserve the highest praise for what was a really good production.

Terry Fairhead



The cast and crew deserve the highest praise for what was a really good production

We had very nearly full houses for each of the three performances with our biggest audience on Saturday which was almost sold out. Not surprising as we had a good evening's entertainment for this lively and thoughtful play by Ronald Harwood.

With an amateur group there is always a certain sense of being measured against a professional production of any sort and par-

ticularly one that has been turned into a very successful screen play. For me though, the great triumph of Players production was that I made no such comparison; the cast interpreted the characters brilliantly.

Of course, unlike the film, the play only required four actors on stage none of whom had recourse to another take if a particular scene didn't go entirely to the script. Nevertheless everyone gave performances of which they can be very proud.

After the show I received an email which summed up the overall experience as follows:

"Congratulations to you and the players for putting on a superb performance of QUARTET. The play was amazingly good in which every member played there part superbly. In

Cissy, in all honesty, have I ever told you...



The Magic Dolls Panto joint auditions



At the October Monthly Meeting, Meopham Players and Act One joined forces to hold auditions for the January 2017 pantomime production of The Magic Dolls. Written by Dickie Kagan and Henry Roberts it was first performed in 1993 and revived in 2007. This new production will have a slightly modified script which Henry has tweaked to suit the changed circumstances of the society. The story though is essentially the same as the original. Music will be provided by Sylvia Mann on keyboard. This will be a first for Players and something we will all be looking forward to after what we heard at the auditions. Most part were filled by the people present. The rest of the cast will be taken by members of both societies who were unable to attend.

The Magic Dolls: Meopham Village Hall 26, 27 & 29 January 2017

Putting on a show-the unsung heroes



DIRECTOR

Sylvia has been the backbone of the Players for many years excelling not only on stage but also as the producer of Quartet



PROMPT

A rising star of Meopham Players soon to be seen in our panto, Emily was certainly put to the test!



PROPS

Miss Marble on stage not so long ago, Liz worked wonders with the props she managed to magic up from nowhere.



STAGE MANAGER

Matt & John were joint stage manager - with John also supervising set design/building & helping with the sound.



LIGHTING

Anne has appeared on stage on numerous occasions and took on her new role like a duck to water.



BOX OFFICE

Terry administers the Box Office with a smile even when his patience is tested to the limit - also a dab hand with props.

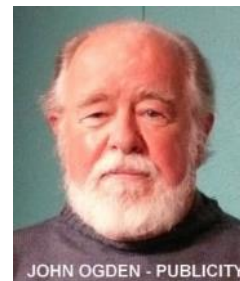


MARIE DODDS & MEOPHAM ART GROUP - SCENERY



SOUND

Another welcome addition to the Players, Howard's knowledge & wizardry at the control panel dazzled us all!



PUBLICITY

John is our official photographer and manages the publicity together with various other duties he takes on.

And there's more - the Front of House Team providing teas/drinks (see below), the set builders & strikers and all our supporters...



Oiling the wheels: Lesley Boycott & Bill Lambert

Front of House - not all tea and biscuits

When our delightful Brenda Ogden became our chairman I was asked if I could take her place on the front of house team. As is the case in Players a request is often impossible to refuse so there I was and here I still am!!!

So what is involved said I, "Oh I will give you a list of basics". Being a teacher I appreciated this as I like to work with lists (as everyone who joins me at performances well know).

Performances three times a year - how difficult can that be? Simple! There are three main areas. Set building performances and set striking which need catering.

Set building usually consists of breakfast, elevenses, lunch and if we are on a big set tea. Something to tempt the workers, whatever their dietary needs may be, and keep energy levels up.

Performances including dress rehearsals need to be small but interesting bits to relax nerves and keep the brains working.

Set Striking is the easiest as we are using up bits and pieces from the previous night's cast party adding copious pots of good strong tea!

Pre show Ok so setting out the foyer, with flowers on the tables, putting out the complimentary (to the delight of patrons) biscuits and making the tea and coffee is not arduous. (Did I mention programme selling?) Feeding the cast and crew during rehearsals and performances is a little trickier I found. Timing is of the essence, ready too early and the tea is cold, too late and they run out of drinking time. However with excellent backstage crew to tip me off we usually manage to send up the trays on time and open the bar and tea shop as the patrons stream through the door.

After the final performance there is the cast party to organise. Everyone donates goodies and in the second half trays are made up, tables rearranged and everything made ready for the festivities. Of course the bar hasn't been mentioned yet. When John Ogden retired from FOH we

asked Bill if he would be interested. Always willing Bill said "What is involved?" "Oh three performances a year, ordering and serving the drinks, you know!" "Okay" he said.

However... However come to the truth of the matter!!! As it says above "Not all tea and biscuits (or drinks)"

As Bill said after the first production involving him "Nobody said anything to me about set building, painting, step making, humping pallets, hanging washing and banner displaying!!"

While the "strong arms" get to work on stage we "girlies sort out the dressing room, put up the posters and notices, arrange the flowers, put out the chairs in the "theatre" those chairs have a mind of their own. It must be quite amusing for onlookers to see myself and Brenda walking round muttering hooks on left or no hooks at all! (Bill kindly lays down the row indicators)

And then... When all is over we have to restore the theatre back to village hall status in a matter of hours. All hands to the mill. The men take down the set and we clear away any evidence of there having been any activity at all. (Quite sad really) By lunch time the banner has gone back in the cupboard the wine glasses back in their box and no-one would know we were there. After all that I'm off home for a cup of tea! LESLEY BOYCOTT-Chief cook and bottle washer.



What to see, what to do...



Ima Starstruck

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



November

12 Nov - Trip to Meantime Brewery Company arranged by John Winson
email: jwinson1955@icloud.com

December 2016

7 Dec Christmas Social Meal at Three Daws-confirmed

January 2017

Magic Dolls Panto - 26, 26 & 28 Jan 2017

May 2017

Players' Spring Production

In the barber's chair

In the barber's chair sit I
Raised up on a red plinth
Legs swinging to my sandled feet
As the barber flourishes the gown around my shoulders In a whoosh that reeks of
barber shop perfume and stale snippets of oily hair.

I look in the mirror, all of six years, in a striped T-shirt and short trousers As the
world of men is reflected for me to behold.

With a deft kick, the mechanism for the chair raises me higher in this world Until, at
least in my imagination, I have entered the land of giants Become a man for a quarter
of an hour.

Smiling, the bespectacled barber snips and combs, My hair plastered wet and mallea-
ble from his hand spray Which puffed and wheezed in his grasp.

The world outside the barber shop roars past in summer heat While I sit, quietly,
holding my head as asked Proud, prince like, And fearful of losing an ear to the bar-
ber's flashing blades.

Order is restored to the mass of curls which crown my head Until a new self emerges
Wet fragments of the old tumbling down the coronation gown In soft torrents of
tousled, damp locks.

And, then
Having admired my reflection and smiled
Slowly, smoothly the chair is lowered
And I am a boy once more.

David Alexander

News from other Groups Hartley Players



Relive your childhood or bring your children and grandchildren to see this delightful adap-
tation of Kenneth Grahame's timeless classic - a musical version of *The Wind in the Wil-
lows*.

Fed up with spring cleaning in his secluded home, mild-mannered Mole ventures outside,
where he meets a water vole called Ratty. They visit Mr Toad and get caught up in his short-
lived, impulsive crazes until wise Badger joins them to devise a plan to protect Toad from him-
self.

Be enchanted by the delightful animal characters. Quake with Mole as he enters the terrify-
ing Wild Wood. Relish Toad's mischievous antics. Rejoice as the fearless heroes defeat the
villainous Wild Wooders. Enjoy the songs and music - skilfully orchestrated by Judy Smith and
with a chorus augmented by members of Local Vocals.

Performances: 8pm from 16 to 18 November and 2.30pm and 6.30pm on 19 November in
Hartley Village Hall, Ash Road, Hartley DA3 8EL. Tickets, £10 (£8 concessions)
boxoffice@hartleyplayers.org.uk or 0845 260 2545.

Meopham Players

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Distant Memories of Old Films

Terry Fairhead



Sadly though, they were only commodities and once their beauty started to fade, so did their careers.

Used to be young you know; but a young person looking at me today would find that hard to imagine, even supposing he or she wanted to bother.

Of course that's normal; it happens to everyone who goes the distance; it happened to those young women gracing cinema screens in the immediate post-war era who played such havoc with my developing teen-age emotions.

I'm talking about girls like Virginia Mayo, Teresa Wright, Gail Russell and Rita Hayworth to name but a few. They were beautiful and talented; and while they were young – or at worst youngish – they were cosseted by the studios



Rita Hayworth cosseted by studios

who owned them. The respective publicity departments spun carefully laundered stories about them which appeared in the sycophantic film fan magazines. They seemed both fragrant and eternal.

Sadly though, they were only commodities and once their beauty started to fade, so did their careers. Unlike their male counterparts who could still be offered leading roles deep into middle age, opportunities for women

were far fewer. Nevertheless all actors, despite this inherent gender unfairness, succumb to the ravages of time; eventually they all disappear.



Boris Karloff & Gloria Stuart monsterring it up

There was a film starring Boris Karloff made in 1932 called *The Old Dark House*. The screenplay was based on a novel by J.B. Priestley which told the story of a group of travellers stranded in a severe storm in a remote part of Wales who seek shelter in a sinister looking mansion.

I obviously didn't see it when it first came out because I was only two at the time. But I was still a child when I did eventually come face-to-face with it. I can't honestly say I remember much about the action apart from one scene which has stuck in my memory ever since.

This featured Eva Moore as the sinister owner of the old house and Gloria Stuart as the beautiful young heroine. It was set in a large, faded bedroom where the young woman had gone to change into dry clothes.

"This is fine stuff," the old woman says, rubbing the silk of the younger one's slip through her fingers. "But it will rot in the end."

Then, quick as a flash she puts her hand on the young woman's chest and says: "This is even finer, but it too will rot." Talk about telling it like it is.



Backstage roles at Meopham Players

Building sets, helping create props and operating equipment, the backstage crew support the designers and performers with the running of the show.

If you are interested in Stage Management, Lighting, Sound, Set design/build, Costumes and Props and a host of other back stage roles we would like to hear from you. Full training will be provided.

More info: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

Christmas Social Meal



The Players' Christmas Social Meal this year will be on 7 December, at Three Daws Riverside Inn. Open to non-members and members, email John Ogden to make your booking: john@looking-forward.co.uk

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society



Matt Dallas 2016