



Meopham Players Newsletter

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Camp Cockney Celtic Caper



Clockwise from main: Paul James & Co. giving it some welly. Fings are what they used to be as the Players raise their glasses in a blush pink Victorian Boudoir. The Gaelic limerick in the 'Thank You' card foxes event organiser, Lesley Boycott. The Sixties called the main host Vincent Hayes: can we have our flashamac back?

Sue Goldsmith

Our Roving correspondent reports on a rollicking night of fun, food & frolics



An enthusiastic group of 16 Meopham Players Members and friends made their way to the Irish Night at the Brick Lane Music in a cheery mini bus on a Saturday for early Spring treat. Everyone had made an effort to get into the spirit of the evening by dressing in various shades of green as instructed by our fabulous Team Leader, Lesley Boycott.

The Brick Lane Theatre celebrated its 25th Anniversary on 12th February this year having originally opened its doors in Brick Lane, central London in old

workers canteen in the former Truman's Brewery. The company then moved to Shoreditch before relocating to the current site in Silvertown in a wonderful former church building which is a perfect venue with plenty of theatrical character that always feels so welcoming.

The food is always very traditional in keeping with the shows and a very tasty 3 course meal was provided by the waiting staff who always are very professional and friendly helping to keep the atmosphere fun.

The show itself was full of Irish fun and also very camp and entertaining. Vincent Hayes is the main host who was the same person to open the doors at the original venue 25 years ago and his love of entertainment is so clear to see by his audiences. Such is his devotion it was great but unsurprising to dis-

cover that in 2013 he was awarded an MBE for his Services to British Music Hall. Starring alongside Vincent was the equally entertaining Paul James who form a perfect double act including a scene where they played a prank on fellow cast member who could not keep a straight face, adding to the fun. There was lots of singing from 3 very talented ladies that had everyone joining in and of course the singing included Danny Boy.

I think everyone who went would agree this was a great evening and it was lovely that Lesley got a special Thank You and flowers from Brick Lane for organising the trip and supporting them which was a lovely touch and echoed our Group's thanks too as without Lesley taking the time and trouble to arrange it, none of us would have been there to share in the Gaelic fun!!

Bring up the Bodies

Terry Fairhead



I found something interesting in the woodshed *writes* the Meopham Players Archivist.

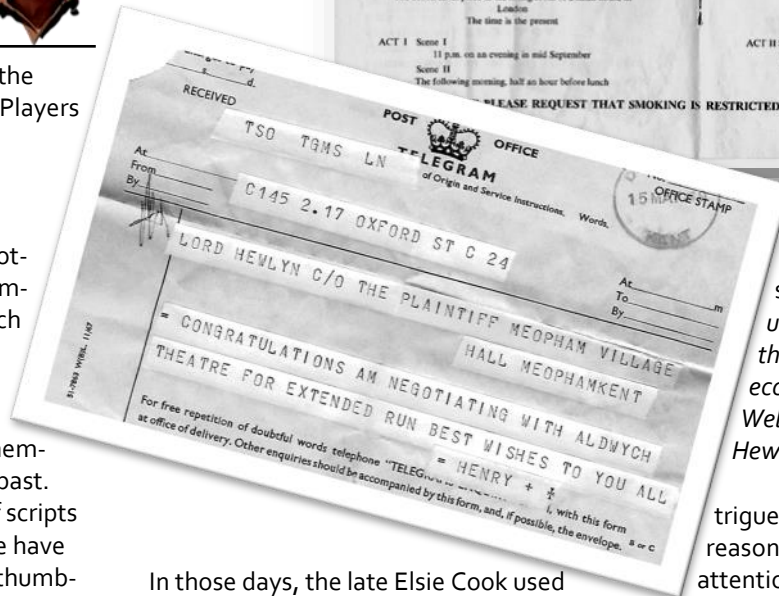
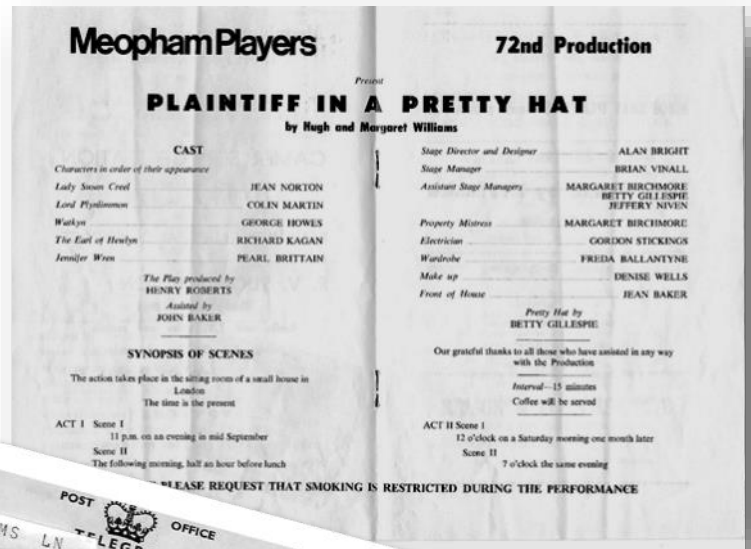
In the summer-house at the bottom of my garden I have a number of large plastic boxes which contain what I am pleased to call *The Archives*. They are mainly collections of memorabilia from various people who have been members of Meopham Players in the past.

But there are also quite a lot of scripts from some of the productions we have played over the years. I was idly thumbing through them the other day and came upon that for *Plaintiff in a Pretty Hat* by Hugh and Margaret Williams which we performed for our 72nd production in May 1969.

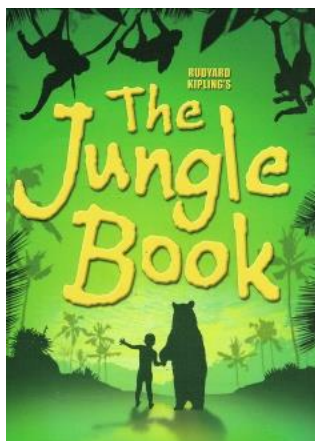
In those days, the late Elsie Cook used to write a review for all our plays in *The Reporter* and for this one she headlined it as "Sparkling and witty." In particular she was impressed with Dickie Kagan's ability to lift one eyebrow which, she

said: "has nowhere been used to better advantage than his portrayal of that eccentric, not to say cunning, Welsh nobleman, the Earl of Hewlyn."

The thing that intrigued me though – and the reason for bringing it to your attention – was that tucked away inside the script was a telegram addressed to Lord Hewlyn himself. It was a genuine telegram, still in its little brown Post Office envelope; only the message was bogus.

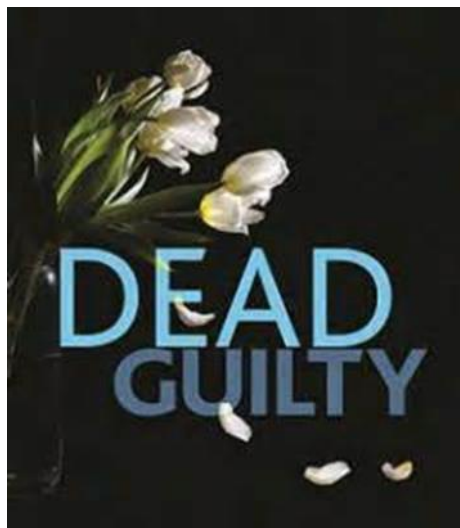


Auditions



As the *Newsletter* revealed last month the festive season production will be *The Jungle Book* which will be a joint venture with Act 1 following the highly successful panto collaboration earlier this year. Open Auditions will be 5 July and the show will be the premier performance of a new script.

Autumn production cast & confirmed



Eileen Bush, who will be directing the next Meopham Players production in the Autumn, told the *Newsletter* that following successful auditions she has cast *Dead Guilty* and that she was especially pleased to welcome two new Meopham Players members to the cast. Maureen Gardner will be seen in the role of Julia and Jan Coombs will play Margaret Hadrell, both are recent recruits to the Players. Geoff Sullivan will play Gary and Brenda Ogden will play Anne

Dead Guilty

26, 27 & 28 October 2017
Meopham Village Hall.

What to do, what to see

Ima Starstruck



Our Showbiz Correspondent with her ear to the keyhole & pulse to the iPhone provides a pick of the upcoming hot ticket shows and events not to missed!

13 May - Annual Treasure Hunt

This year's foray is to Limehouse and Canary Wharf where competing teams will once again lock horns solve the clues and win the coveted first prize, arranged by Lesley Boycott, email: lubbycott@btinternet.com



June 2017

7 June 'Playing Coward'

The June monthly meeting is a workshop led by Paul Doust looking at the style and elegance of the Master. A session with Paul is guaranteed to be full of fun, so book your place now!



June 2017

Brick Lane Visit



The second visit this year to this popular music hall that is being arranged by Lesley Boycott for its 25th Anniversary Event, cost is £49.50 incl. coach travel, numbers are limited to 16. if interested email :

lubbycott@btinternet.com

July 2017

5 July: The Lady of Larkspur Lotion

Paul Doust will bring his Festival entry of the Tennessee Williams short play The Lady of Larkspur Lotion. This will not be a full presentation, more a rehearsal and work in progress with a Q&A session afterwards, so should be a very interesting evening



September 2017

6 September

Meopham Players AGM

October 2017

4 October

Open Auditions for The Jungle Book

February 2018

22, 23, 24 February

To lift the post-festive season blues. the new year production will be the children's classic Jungle Book. This will be a joint venture with Act 1 once again and be performed in venues besides Meopham Village Hall.

Committee Notices

AGM Nominations

Chairman

Nominations are invited for the position of Chairman as Sylvia Stickings is stepping down after completing a two year term. This is a pivotal role for the society so do please consider it carefully.

Box Office Manager

Terry Fairhead is relinquishing this position after many years of service and a nominee is required to manage the bookings of our productions.

Newsletter Editor

The circulation of the *Newsletter* was languishing in the thirties before its current format and now it is closer to the three hundreds due to the creativity and hard work of all its regular contributors. The current Editor will be standing down at the AGM after completing three years in the role.

Volunteers Needed!

For a leaflet drop in the local area

New Members

Meopham Players welcomes not only budding actors, but also directors, and those with an interest in stage management, lighting and sound production.

The society is a friendly group, with plenty of opportunities to socialise throughout the year.

There is a regular, monthly programme of meeting/workshops which are drama related as well as a variety of outings including theatre trips and social events.

For further information about any of the above roles or an informal chat, or if you would like to join us, please email:

MeophamPlayers@gmail.com



Meopham Players

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Alive to the sound of musicals

Terry Fairhead



With his third article on music, our *roving Arts Correspondent* looks at how America has nurtured the Musical genre



I'm singin' and dancing' in the rain
Doo-dloo-doo-doo



As I may have mentioned before, *The Musical* is a genre which, if not actually born in America, has been adopted and nourished by that country to a greater extent than anywhere else. This, I believe, would be difficult to dispute whether considering productions for the theatre or for the cinema.

Of course from the end of the 19th Century to almost the first third of the Twentieth they were all theatre productions; but once the Talkies came in, Hollywood became the dominant source for such entertainment.

In some ways – and perhaps somewhat cynically – you could say the technical innovation that gave cinema its voice came at a fortuitous time for the industry because this was when the great depression started.

People, who found their standard of living falling off a cliff; their jobs disappearing and their security diminished, needed a few hours of frothy distraction for very little cost and the cinemas pro-

vided it. And nothing did that better than a musical.

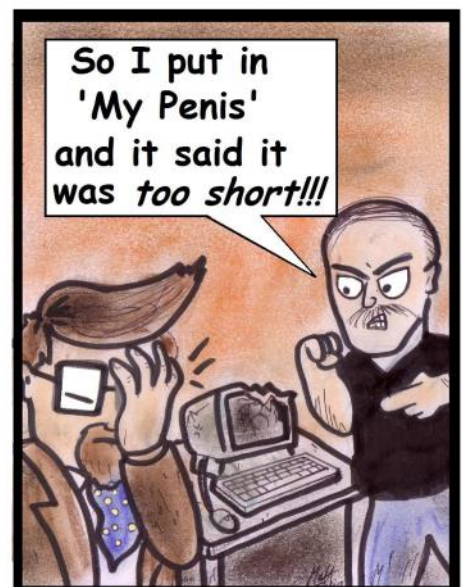
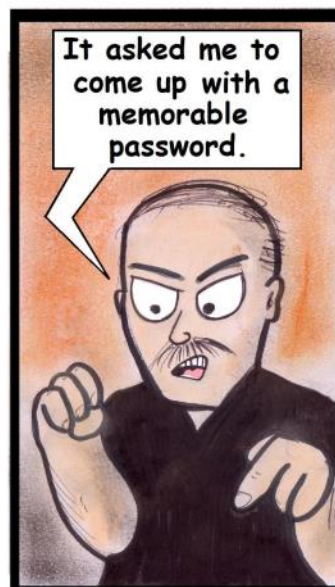
The explosive growth of this particular form of entertainment can be gauged by the fact that the generally acknowledged first commercial talking picture, *The Jazz Singer*, screened in 1927 was the only talkie produced that year. In 1928 there were two: *My Man* and *The Singing Fool*. In 1929, Hollywood produced about 140 musicals; an incredible quantity, though the quality of most of them would have been abysmal. The public probably didn't care though for the novelty alone would have been enough to attract them in their droves.

In 1952 one of the best musicals ever made came to the American screens, and subsequently to ours; it was called

Singin' in the Rain. It starred 20-year-old Debbie Reynolds in the role that really launched her career. Her co-stars were the much older Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor. The reason for mentioning it here is that it was a brilliantly played parody of that era when talking pictures first arrived.

If you have never seen it and perhaps only know it from the much played scene with Gene Kelly singing the title song in the pouring rain (or perhaps Morecombe's and Wise's hilarious version) then I suggest a search of Netflix might be worthwhile if you want to get a light-hearted flavour of how Hollywood initially struggled to add a sound-track to the silent film. It is well worth spending an evening in to see it.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society By Matt Dallas



Matt Dallas 2017