



Meopham Players Newsletter

e: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

June 2017/ issue 33

Treasure Hunt: Best Ever



Over 100,000 people are engaged in financial wizardry at Canary Wharf making it a major business centre of London.

Over 100,000 people are employed at Canary Wharf doing the financial busywork necessary to shuffle derivatives from one end of the globe to the other. However, the weekend is a foreign country, they do things differently there with the suits morphing into skin-tight lycra as joggers and cyclists jostle with preening parents promenading lunar terrain baby-buggies.

In the evening it is all change again as the skimpily dressed young materialise and transform the area into a bustling hedonistic playground as they swarm from pub, to restaurant to tapas bars.

Seeking gratification of a different sort, a party of Meopham Players alighted from their PleasureMobile and huddled together for warmth at the start of the eagerly awaited Annual Treasure Hunt arranged by the indefatigable Lesley Boycott together with her lovely assistant, Bill Lambert.

Some added extra thermal layers, others adjusted anoraks to protect the extremities compared sensible shoes before setting forth clutching, the requisite

instructions and cryptic clues. The more competitive pumped one handed power push-ups before launching themselves like demented ferrets, whilst the laid back were happy adjourning to the nearest tavern to study the clues over a glass of Italian Grape or Amber Nectar.

The aim of the Treasure Hunt is to explore the area by solving a series of clues that guide you from place to place highlighting points of interest as you go. The circuitous route covered the familiar edifices and paved concourses of Canary Wharf together with the less well

Clueless? Some stand & watch, others point in vain whilst the penitent fall to their knees & pray



known Victorian areas of Limehouse including a house that the artist Francis Bacon lived in, situated next-door-but-one to a pub that he frequented with connections going back to Dickens.

Inevitably clues got muddled, groups collided resulting in antics akin to schoolchildren anxious to prevent copying of their handiwork– with much pointing and furtive looks at erroneous objects and loudly whispered red herrings being the order of the day! The playacting so hammy that it was worthy of a Porkers Oscar.

Clued in? Answers marked, prizes awarded time to relax in the pub that Francis Bacon probably sat & imbibed Champagne with the gay young things



After all the excitement of the chase, the questions marked and the winning team awarded a prize, the party adjourned to a nearby hostelry to enjoy a convivial meal and continue the debate about the elusive unsolved clues.

At the end of the evening as we headed back to our coach the a shout went out 'that this was the best ever, Lesley' and so it was. Our hearty thanks to Lesley and Bill for all the time and effort in arranging such fun filled trip.

The Bard Returns!

The *Newsletter* is pleased to welcome David Alexander back after an unavoidable absence and as you will see he has lost none of the magic that makes him the Bard of Meopham.



Chance

When I think on chance,
On how two people,
Like sparks flying upward in an eddy,
Might come together or pass,
Each unknown to the other
I cannot resolve why it is or is not.

But however it is, however ordained
And by what or by whom or when,
Our sparks flew together,
Grew brighter yet
As in a slow embrace
We climb.

David Alexander

The Complete Player!



Throughout our 70 plus years of existence, to be a Meopham Player does not mean you have to actually tread the boards. Indeed, the majority of members of any dramatic organisation, either amateur or professional, do not do so.

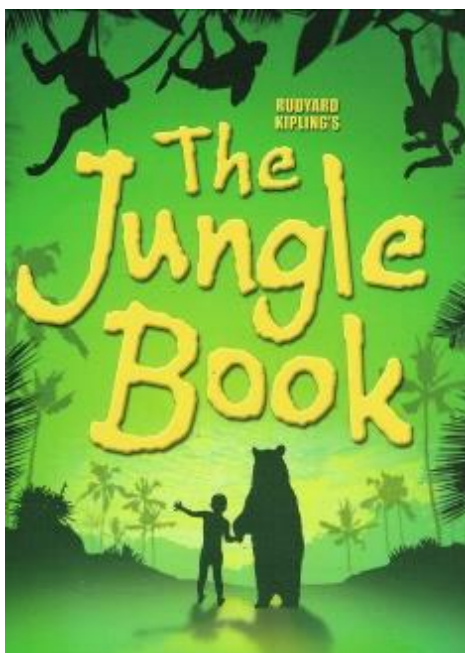
The actors are actually the tip of an iceberg supported by the set designers and builders; the sound and lighting technicians; the Front of House personnel; Box Office; Publicity, including newsletter producer and web master; stage manager; prompt and, of course, the director.

There is also an author somewhere in the mix. Usually he or she is an external contributor whose work has to be hired from a theatrical publishing house, but sometimes a play can be written in-house as, for example, with our own home-grown pantomimes.

Do any of you out there have a secret desire to write a play? Maybe you've considered it but can't think of a storyline or you're not sure where to make a start. If that's the case, perhaps we can help you whether or not you are an actual member of Players.

Terry Fairhead, a regular contributor to the Newsletter came across a few unfinished plays when he was going through some old writing files recently. One of these, with the working title of *MISSING*, was intended as a one-act play, although with a bit of imagination and an injection of energy it could conceivably stretch to two acts. In a way it would be ideal for Meopham Players with its current level of membership in that it has a cast of two men and one woman, all middle-aged.

The synopsis – as far as it goes – is centred on a middle-aged couple, Bernard and Kate who live in an upstairs maisonette. He is mid-to-late sixties taxi-driver and ex-contender for the middle-weight boxing title, while she is some ten-or-so years younger and disillusioned with how her once-glamorous life has evolved. They hardly communicate and keep secrets from each other. She has a lover and he has a discreet expensive camera...I think it has potential for a rather black, or even sinister, comedy, but as it is currently only 6 pages and just over 1,000 words long there is lots of room for development. If you are interested in collaborating in its completion please email TFairhead@aol.com and he will send you a copy.

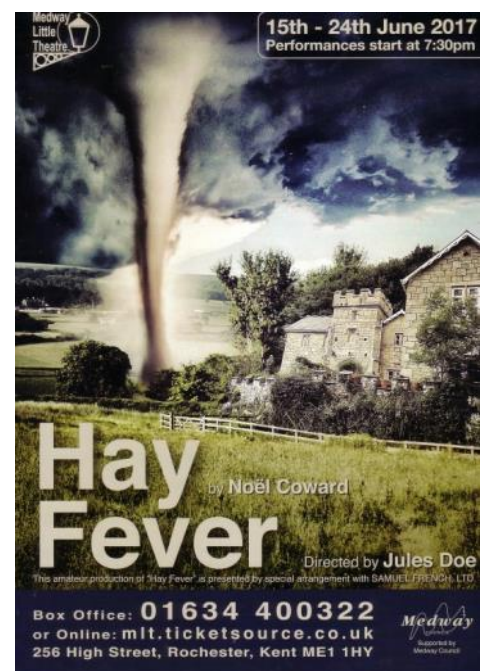


Auditions

Open Auditions for the Meopham Players' Festive Production for 2018, will be held in late July. So iron your loin cloths, start practising those roars and hissy fits so that you are well prepared to strut your stuff. Date to be confirmed.

News from other Groups

Our own Matt Dallas, is an accomplished actor in addition to producing the award winning monthly PRATS strip for the *Newsletter*. He is appearing in *Hay Fever* at the Medway Little Theatre. A treat not to be missed!



A week through the window...



Geoff Sullivan

another bewitching tale from the pen of our resident Master Storyteller

Monday

It looks cold outside this morning, I am so glad that I am inside, in the warm.

Look at that, yet another delivery for number 22, it's the third this week. Last week they had five deliveries, can't they use shops like normal people? All this 'online shopping' they call it, how can you choose something if you haven't seen it?

I see number 18 must be on holiday again. Forgotten to cancel the milk, two pints outside now, been there all day. Silly people, they are always doing that. I will wait until it is dark and take the bottles in for them.

Our postman is late again, scruffy devil. They are not like they used to be. Shorts! I mean, in this weather.

Tuesday

Those boys again, little terrors ringing my doorbell and then running away. I only offered them sweets because one of the little ones was crying, but now they keep pressing my doorbell. Ignore them, best way. Last week I opened an upstairs window and they saw me, started calling me an evil witch and smelly old bitch and other horrible names. What are they ten or eleven? Where are their parents? They should be controlling them.

You remember the milk bottles outside of number 18, well I had a bit of an altercation with the woman who lived there. I was only taking her milk because I thought they were away, as I told you. I didn't realise they had just forgotten to bring it in. She accused me of stealing and threatened to call the police if she saw me doing taking her stuff again. I tried to explain, but she just told me to go to the food bank if I wanted free feed.

Wednesday

It's a lot cooler today, thank goodness. I am not one for sunshine, not like our postman. There he is still in his shorts.

My new neighbour was noisy last night. He plays his music so loud. I did ask him to turn it down a few weeks ago. He apologised and everything was fine for a week, but then it started again. I just can't sleep when his music is that loud. I do miss Ethel, she used to live there, but she is now in a home. Her son, I don't know his name, moved in two months ago.

Oh look, there's little Ellie from The Avenue, my she has grown, just look at her. Her mother, Alice, is a lovely mother, so kind, unlike her husband Darren. He is horrible, doesn't like me. I haven't spoken to them much this last year, just the quick hello.

Ellie made me a card last Christmas, yes really. It was lovely, pride of place on my mantelpiece. Not that I get many cards. I mean, they are so expensive, you can't blame people for not buying them. I also had a card from Mary, my daughter, which my two nieces also signed, which was a lovely surprise. I do miss them now they have moved to Scotland. I wish they would write more, but I know they are all very busy. My son-in-law is a manager of his department, so it is difficult for them to come home and see me.

Christmas decorations? No, I don't bother will all that palaver. Well there is only me and my son George's family, he has two sons. He always pops in to see me on Christmas Day, on his way between the pub and his Christmas dinner at home. I fully understand them not asking me around to join them on Christmas Day, they haven't got much money and another mouth to feed would be so expensive. But he always comes to see me for a few minutes when he can, such a good boy. That reminds me, I must ask him for the twenty pounds he borrowed on his last visit.

Thursday

Another delivery at 22. They must have so much money to waste. It was a big box too.



Started to rain again. I am so glad I haven't got to go to work. I am quite happy to stay indoors, in the dry thank you. I have my television and radio as companions, there is so much to watch and listen to, I am spoilt for choice.

Friday

My day out today, shopping at the local supermarket.

I had a bit of a chat with one of the checkout ladies today, she was so kind and even packed my bag. We couldn't talk long as she was so busy, but it was nice.

On no, my doorbell ringing. It's them again, ignore them, the little devils. I just need to stay hidden and they will go way. Where are their parents? They should be stopping them annoying people.

Saturday

Saturday evening, look at all people going out, dressed up. Although some of the clothes girls look like, well street-walkers, the parents obviously don't care. They go out dancing, get drunk, shout in the street on the way home and then throw up everywhere. You should see the piles of sick on the pavement in the morning. I counted four plies last week.

I used to go out dancing with my Eric on a Saturday evening. Eric, was my husband, but he passed away five years ago. I can remember getting dressed up, not too much otherwise I wouldn't be allowed to go out, stickler was my old dad, 'I know what those boys are like' he would tell me. Luckily, he didn't find out what Eric and I used to get up to sometimes. But if I ever came home after ten thirty I would be in so much trouble.

/Continued page 3

A week through the window...

/continued from page 3
by Geoff Sullivan



Sunday

Church bells calling everyone to church. Look there goes Mrs Arthurs from 92, regular church goer, with her bible in her hand. She will meet up with Mrs Edwards and that new woman, I can't say her name, foreign name, Okin or whatever.

Me? No, not anymore. Mrs Edwards and I had words over the church flower arrangements. It has always been a tradition that we buy our flowers from Dawkins, in the high street, But Mrs Okin comes along and takes over. Says she knows somewhere cheaper and she could arrange the flowers herself. I told Mrs Edwards that it was her or me. Anyway, I don't care. I prefer my own company.

I do miss my children though, It has been four months, three weeks and two days, since Mary came to see me. She promised to phone, but I know she is so

busy that she doesn't get the time. It would be nice to see more of George though, he only lives three streets away, but he is very busy at work. He was a godsend when all this digitalised TV thing came in, I hadn't got a clue what to do. I saw a TV at the supermarket for £250, but George said it was incompatible with the new system, which I thought was strange. Still he is the expert. Instead he got me a really nice Alba 32inch Television which would have cost me £3000, he told me, but he got mine for only £1500. The money came from my savings, but it was worth it. It was expensive because had to buy special software called Freeview he called it. But now I have all these channels. I call them my new friends.

As I said, I am glad of my own company. Things were different when I was younger. As a married woman. I had my friends who lived around here. We all knew each other and helped each other out. Then these new people started to move in and their ways were different to my ways, so I don't have much to do with them.

Anyway, time to put the telly on and have a cup of tea. You'll be wanting to

get home no doubt.

Now where's that TV Guide, let's see what's on shall we? Look at how many programmes I can watch now. Who needs other people anyway?

Playing Coward Workshop

7 June 2017 at 8pm
Meopham Village Hall
Members free. Guests £5

'You ask my advice about acting? Speak clearly, don't bump into the furniture and if you must have motivation, think of your pay packet on Friday.' **Noel Coward**

A Workshop session with Paul Doust looking at the style and elegance of Noel Coward guaranteed to be entertaining with ample opportunity to participate for those who wish to do so. The meeting is open to all so please come along and have fun as you learn!!

Paul Doust trained as an actor at the Guildhall School, London and then took to playwrighting and TV scriptwriting (BBC's Eastenders / Holby City). He now runs theatre workshops all over Kent.

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 be missed!

What to do, what to see

June 2017
Brick Lane Visit

The second visit to this popular music hall arranged by Lesley Boycott for the 25th Anniversary Event, cost is £49.50 incl. coach travel, if interested email: lbboycott@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

29 July: Henry's Hut Clean Up
Volunteers needed, to help please email Sylvia Stickings: ssupersylv@aol.com

September 2017
6 September
Meopham Players AGM

The Committee is seeking a Publicity Manager. If interested, email Sylvia Stickings at the address above.

7 December 2017
Meopham Players Christmas Dinner for friends & family at the Three Daws.

February 2018
22, 23, 24 February

Festive Fun with the Meopham Players production of the Jungle Book.

October 2018
Producer needed for our October show - email Sylvia Stickings at address above



Meopham Players

CONTACTS

PRESIDENT: Henry Roberts
CHAIRMAN: Sylvie Stickings
SECRETARY: Emma Hawkins
TREASURER: Ann Horrocks

BOX OFFICE

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

NEWSLETTER

EDITOR: S Sangha
e: MeophamPlayers@gmail.com

And then, everything changed

Terry Fairhead



After a shaky start, Oklahoma confounded expectations and Musicals were never the same

Oklahoma, the musical, opened on Broadway on March 31st 1943. It wasn't expected to do all that well and empty seats were scattered around the theatre on the first night.

One of the reasons for the uncertainty was that it was the first time Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II had worked together. Rodgers only song-writing partner up until that time had been Lorenz Hart and he had always written the music first leaving Hart to add the lyrics in his own time. It was a partnership that had produced many great songs such as *Blue Moon*; *Manhattan*; *My Funny Valentine*; *Mountain Greenery*; *The Lady is a Tramp* and *It's Easy to Remember*.

Tragically though, Lorenz Hart was in the grip of alcoholism and became progressively more ill to the point where he could no longer work. Consequently Rodgers had to find a new partner and he turned to Hammerstein.

Hammerstein was born into a theatrical family and had collaborated as a lyricist with many great composers in the field such as Sigmund Romberg, Vincent Youmans and Jerome Kern. It was with

Kern that he wrote the lyrics for the landmark *Showboat* in 1927. However he was at the end of a run of nine flops by the time he teamed up with Rodgers and this was another reason for the new show being viewed with something less than unbridled enthusiasm.

The other thing about Hammerstein is that he was primarily a poet and was meticulous about his writing; so it was essential for him to write the lyrics before the music was composed. Fortunately this was acceptable to Rodgers and so the partnership was compatible; so much so that Rodgers' music arguably gained greater depth.

The story was based on a little-known play by Lynn Riggs called *Green Grow the Lilacs* and rehearsals began in early February of 1943, the lead parts of Curly and Laurey being played by the equally little-known singers Allred Newman and Joan Roberts.

A month later the show was given its first run-out in New Haven, Connecticut. At that time it was called: *Away We Go* after the square dance call of: "Do-si-do and away we go."

It is perhaps worth mentioning that up to this point musicals had to start with a bang to let the audience know it was in for a fun, sexy night of frothy entertain-



ment. "Bring out the chorus, bring on the girls!" But *Away We Go* opened very quietly with a single cowboy coming on stage to sing to an old woman sitting in a rocking chair.

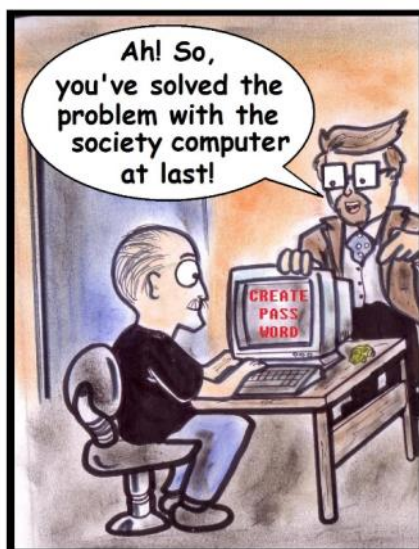
It wasn't that badly received though one critic wrote: "No girls; no legs; no chance."

The next pre-Broadway performance was in Boston but Hammerstein had already decided some changes were needed and so axed one song and promoted one of the others to become a theme the whole company would sing. It was called Oklahoma and that's when the name of the show was changed. It was also when the show became destined to be a smash hit.

Joan Roberts described the scene just after the company finished singing the title song for the first time in Boston: "The applause was so deafening, and it continued and continued, and we just repeated two encores and we stood there until they stopped applauding. And I didn't think they ever would."

Musicals would never be the same again.

Pottham Regional Amateur Theatre Society



Matt Dallas 2017