



Meopham Players

Newsletter

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Players to celebrate 100 years of the RAF at the May meeting.

Editor's report

Meopham Players will be showing the 1945 film, *The Way to the Stars* at their Monthly Meeting in the Village Hall on Wednesday 2nd May. This will be a precursor to *Flare Path*, Players next production at the end of the month. Although this black and white film - which I first

saw some 72 years ago - is of its time, I still regard it as a masterpiece and one of my enduring favourites. I mentioned in the last newsletter that both the play and the screenplay were written by Terence Rattigan. However, the stories - though set in similar circumstances - are quite different, the

latter involving the arrival of an American bomber group on the RAF base.

If for nothing else, this film is worth seeing because it includes early appearances by such actors as Trevor Howard, Jean Simmons and Bill Owen. Members and non-members alike are welcome to come along at 8 pm. The run time is 104 minutes and there is no charge.





Poppy Cock's Column

Hello Darlings,

As you can see, I've managed to get a longer column this time because I have so much to tell you, but where to start? Well, clearly it has the be about **FLARE PATH** which we are all getting very excited over here with opening night being just about 5 week's away. This means, of course, set building week-end is only 4 weeks away, **18 to 20 May** to be precise. Do keep these dates in mind because we will need all the help we can get even if individually you can only spare an hour or two. AND, don't forget set breaking on **Sunday 27 May**.

But before all that, we have the Monthly Meeting at which - as mentioned on page 1 - we will be showing the film: **The Way to the Stars**. That's on **Wednesday, 02 May**. Members and non-members are welcome.

Saturday 12th May - It's Treasure Hunt time again and, as I write, there are just 4 places left. So if you want to join in this fun day out, give Lesley a ring on **07931236058**.

Saturday 1st September Brenda is in the process of organising an outing to the Globe Theatre for a matinee production of **Othello**. There will be more about this in the **June newsletter**, so stay tuned.

October 25, 26 & 27 Anne is still reading through a script and should be able to tell us what we will be doing in the next newsletter.

January 2019 - we will be producing a pantomime - oh yes we will - and it is likely to be an updated version of one of our home grown ones: **Alice in Panto Land**. Not sure who is going to be called on to update it, but we also need a director, so volunteers are sought. If you are interested in taking this on - Oops, sorry!! - I mean if you are burning with a desire to stamp your authority on a Meopham Players production and believe

you have the sheer strength of personality to stun an audience with your ground-breaking innovations, perhaps you could contact Sylvia on:

01474 812598

Props Plea: if you have any 1940s era beer and gin glasses you would be prepared to lend us for **Flare Path** could you please email-Maureen on: **maureenmogardner@aol.co.uk**

Google tells me that the sort of glasses we're looking for are these:-



I'm pretty damn sure these are the same sort of glasses they have in the pub down the road: was 1940 so different?

And finally... Don't forget we will be giving Henry's Hut a good clear-out on **Saturday 02 June**: so if you can spare some time then we will provide a barbecue lunch. xx



Casualty Corner



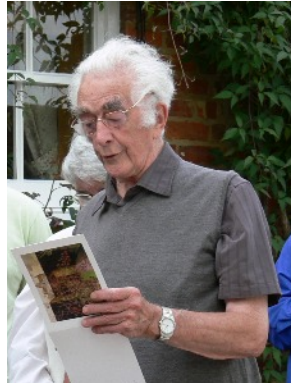
Bulletin from our Health Correspondent Lucy Lastic

News about Eileen



As reported in the last issue of the newsletter, Eileen has been suffering from severe back pain causing her to miss the March Monthly Meeting. We had hoped, having received an encouraging progress report, she would have recovered sufficiently to be with us for the April meeting. Unfortunately her condition worsened to such an extent she was taken to hospital. It seems she has now been diagnosed with a condition that will require an operation. I'm sure everyone within Meopham Players and without will wish her a speedy recovery and a return to her friends at Players and elsewhere.

News about Henry



Henry is still convalescing at home after being discharged from hospital. Recovery is not as rapid as perhaps his family and friends (and probably - indeed - Henry himself) would like, but he is doing pretty well considering (dare I say it) his age. Certainly he could not be in better hands which is why he remains in good spirits. And though seeing him again soon at one of Players meetings is not currently on the cards, with Henry (and Joy) - well - you never know.



Sidney George Smith

Who he? You might be asking yourselves. Well he is not part of Casualty Corner - this is just a handy space to tell his story. He is in fact Anne Horrocks' grandfather and the reason he is here is that

he is the author of a poem written during the time of his captivity.

Before the outbreak of the Second World War he trained to be a teacher but because he was deaf in one ear he found he was unable to pursue the profession and subsequently became a milkman as well as a lay preacher for the Congregational Church. At some point he decided he wanted to travel and to fund this ambition he went to Jersey to help with the potato harvest. While there, as he was fluent in both German and French, he also found work as a waiter. He was still there when the Germans invaded the Channel Islands. The British forces had already been withdrawn on the grounds that the Islands had no strategic value. In 1943 Hitler re-issued his order to deport all non-CI people to prisoner camps in Germany and Sidney was consigned to ILAG VII in Laufen, Oberbayern.



This photograph found on the Internet shows CI men grouped in the Laufen Camp shortly after arriving. It is difficult to see if Sidney is amongst them, but my money would be on second from the left in the middle row.

If

(With apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

*If you can sleep in a wooden bunk
With snoring all about,
And wake up in the morning fresh
When "water up" 's the shout:*

*If you can do a coal fatigue
And shovel with a smile,
And scrub the stairs, or peel the spuds
A-grinning all the while:*

*If you can wash and empty tins
And never even grouse,
But laugh and chatter merrily
Whilst grumbling fills the house:*

*If you can use a football pitch
With rivers on each side,
And never kick the bouncing ball
Into the streaming tide:*

*If you can use the swimming-pool
About a metre square,
And never hit the other side
When diving into there:*

*If you can study in a room
That's filled with talk and noise,
And concentrate upon your task
With perfect mental poise:*

*If you were blest at Pentecost,
If you're a polyglot,
Can hear a score of languages
And understand the lot:*

*If you can do these things I've named
And still come smiling through,
Then you're a blessed marvel lad
I'll give my place to you!*

Sidney George Smith

But Sidney didn't just spend his time in the camp writing poetry; he also taught Esperanto to the other inmates under the name of "Special French" because the Germans - for some unexplained reason - banned the use of the word.

In later life he learnt Latin and was studying Hebrew so that he could read the Bible in its original language. Sadly he died before he could complete the task.

Penny Pinching



Hidden Agenda

(An Edwardian tale of wicked endeavour)

If George had ever thought the seduction of Gwendoline was going to be easy, her lofty rejection of his advances had entirely disillusioned him. Until now the path to romance had, for him, been unerring; this setback wasn't just unexpected it was unacceptable.

He was after all quite a presentable young man. Most of the women he had encountered in his life so far had thought him quite a catch and had made strenuous efforts to haul him in; they had all failed though because beneath his charm was a deep love for himself and himself alone. For George, the chase was the thing. That and the overwhelming sense of triumph he felt once his quarry surrendered. But when that glorious moment passed so too did his desire. He always moved on.

Gwendoline, he decided, would be his greatest challenge for she not only rejected his advances she exhibited signs of actually disliking him. Difficult as this was for George to understand he redoubled his efforts. He was more charming; more thoughtful; more willing to back off if he detected the slightest discord in anything that passed between them.

He took an interest in whatever it was interested her; he praised the people she liked and he allowed himself to be persuaded by her arguments when they discussed

matters of the day. This was not difficult for him as the only real interest he had was self-gratification.

After a while it became clear his strategy was only moderately successful. She tolerated him and was prepared to smile when he said something witty but he knew he was not part of her inner circle – not yet. What he had to do, he decided, was persuade her to accompany him to some function which might appeal to what he was sure was her sensual nature.

But what could it be?

The answer came from a sandwich board poster that confronted him as he was walking down Kensington High Street. It advertised Mister Robert Newman's Promenade concerts at Queen's Hall.

Of course; that was it; Gwendoline loved music. Monday, he noted from the information confronting him, was Wagner night; *Tristan and Isolde* was the main offering; how perfect. He could almost feel the sensuous waves of lust and longing and ultimate tragedy emanating from the orchestra. Surely even Gwendoline could not fail to be moved by such beauty; surely her blood would be stirred.

There would, he was sure, be no objection from her family. He had cultivated them as carefully as he had Gwendoline and with far greater success. However, convention demanded he would not be allowed to take their daughter out without a chaperone.

But this was no problem for George. He would merely mention that his sister, Helen, would be included in the party and the matter would be dealt with. What the family would not be aware of though was the conspiratorial nature of the siblings' relationship. Each would be prepared to turn a blind eye to the other's indiscretions as the occasion demanded.

Thus it was the three young people found themselves sitting in the grand circle of the Queen's Hall listening to the orchestra conducted by Henry Wood on Wagner evening. It was everything

George had hoped for. The music engulfing them was magnificent. It entered their souls; it captured their hearts. By the end of the concert Gwendoline was clearly deeply moved; tears glittered in her eyes. It was, thought George, the chink in her armour he'd been waiting for.

Helen played the part of his accomplice perfectly and took the almost distraught girl off to the ladies' room where she would, no doubt, press George's case for him. He waited in the emptying foyer fidgety with excitement. When they returned refreshed, Helen would suddenly "remember" an appointment she could not avoid and would rush off, leaving him to take Gwendoline home in a snug hansom cab.

The plan was working perfectly. In a few short moments he would be sitting arm-in-arm in the dark, gently swaying cab with the still emotional Gwendoline, whispering comforting words in her ear. And then as the journey progressed at the slow pace for which George had paid extra to the cabby, perhaps he would capture her hand and slip off her glove before gently kissing her fingers.

He could feel the excitement growing as he imagined the barrier between them beginning to melt... "Excuse me sir;" It was one of the uniformed ushers. "Are you Mister George Davenport?" The note the man handed George bore a scent he recognised. The writing too was familiar.

Dearest George, it read. Please forgive us for evading you after such a lovely evening, but I fear it was necessary, not least to prevent your suffering undeserved humiliation. Unfortunately for you, if not for me, the castle you have been trying to storm will never open its doors to you, nor to anyone of your gender.

In other words, dear brother, she is mine, not yours.