



# AMATEUR PLAYERS OF SHERBORNE

# Newsletter

AUGUST  
1997



August is upon us and it is time for the first of the new season's newsletters. As some of you know things are already under way and we can look forward to an entertaining time.

First, however, a brief report on the AGM, held on 18th June, which was attended by 31 members and passed without controversy. In her annual report our Chairman covered all the year's events, filling in many of the details that had not been reported in the newsletters. Apart from our productions the most important event was the move out of the Eldridge Pope premises—a major undertaking for which Jakki thanked everyone who took part. Since then teams of people have been sorting through the wardrobe, which should make life much easier when we come to move it (again) into the Castle Stable rooms in the autumn.

The Treasurer gave us the happy news that the Society's reserves now stand at just over £12,341 — an increase of £4,157 since last year. The main reasons for this increase were a windfall from the Building Society (£1,334) and the sale of costumes etc (£2,466). He then went on to explain to a slightly bemused audience why the profit for the year was actually only £1,970, due to writing off (in the accounts, not literally) of our non-cash assets (remainder of wardrobe, scenery, lights etc). We were all glad to hear, however, that we still have that extra £4,157.

Speaking of cash, I omitted to mention in the last newsletter the most worthwhile coffee morning organised by Jennie Harvey-Hull in the Digby Hall on the Thursday during the last production. Jennie and her helpers raised £67, made all the more remarkable by the fact that, due to some crossed wires, the publicity consisted solely of a few hastily contrived posters on the morning itself. Because this fund-raising effort was such a success, the committee have decided that it will become a regular event.

Returning to the AGM, the President was formally re-elected and the meeting went on to consider the resolution to amend the constitution. Tony Field presented the case for the amendments and after a brief discussion the resolution was passed nem. con.. Election of officers then took place and as only one candidate for each office had been proposed, Anthony Stephens, Tony Field and Mark Lambert were elected unopposed to the offices of Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary respectively. Two new committee members, Sue Francis and Patricia Stewart, were also elected unopposed.

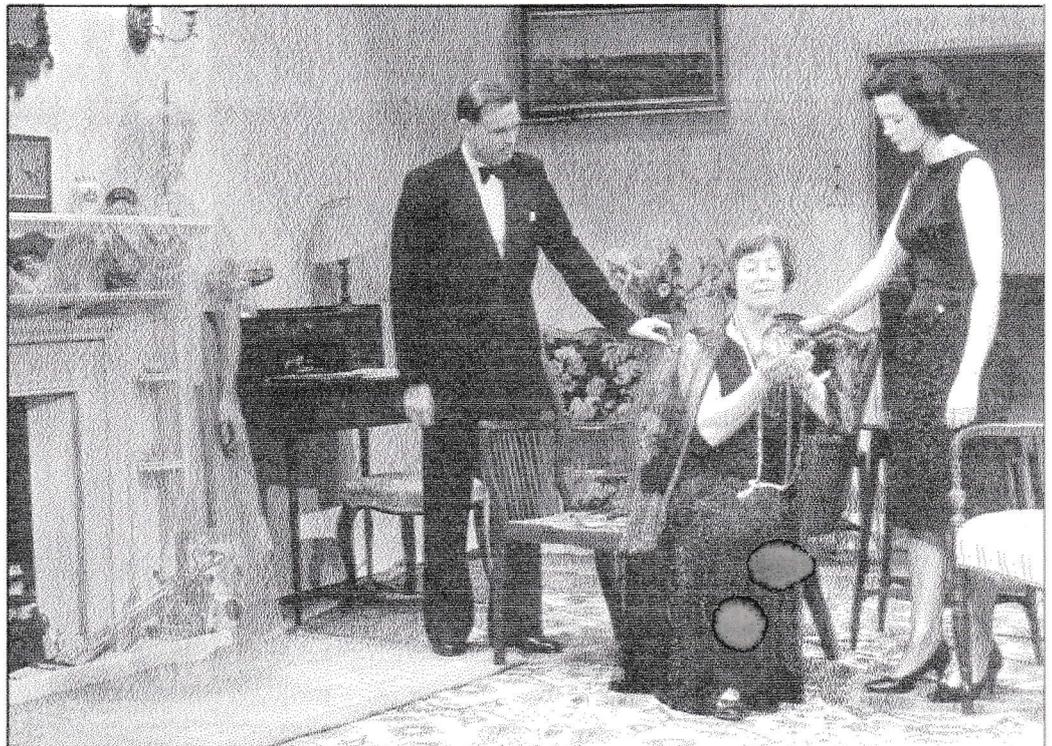
You may be a little surprised to see that Tony is once again Treasurer, as in the last newsletter I announced that he intended to retire. In the event, however, no other candidates for the office could be found and as Tony confessed to quite liking the job (there is no accounting for taste), it was not difficult to persuade him to stand for re-election.

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Auditions for the autumn production were held in July and the play has now been cast. After considerable deliberation, the committee chose Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*. Wilde is in the news at the moment as this year is the 100th anniversary of

*Deirdre Stewart as the ethereal spirit Elvira, Stanley McKay as Charles, Meg Hulme as Madam Arcati and Joy Saunders as Ruth in S.G.McKay's 1962 production of Blithe Spirit.*

See page 3. Photo by W.H.Rendell



## Officers and Committee 1997-1998

### President

Joy Saunders

### Chairman

Jakki Gregory  
01935-850708

### Secretary

Anthony Stephens  
01935-477567

### Treasurer

Tony Field  
01935-815427

### Membership Secretary

Mark Lambert  
01258-817270

### Committee

Jessica Colson  
Sue Francis  
Tony Manns  
Kieran Millar  
Jennie Harvey-Hull  
Stuart McCreadie  
Kathy Messinger  
Patricia Stewart

his release from Reading Gaol, and it is to be hoped that this will add to the play's already considerable box office appeal. Margaret Field is directing and she chose the play not least because it contains some of Wilde's best known and most pithy lines; "...the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable" is one that is highly topical today. A cast list is on page 3.

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The Opening Night of the new season is on Wednesday 10th September at 7.30 p.m. at the Crown Inn, Newell, Sherborne. This is an excellent venue, which has the added advantage that you can buy a drink at the bar if you wish and on the Opening Night a buffet supper will be provided. The owners will also supply us with excellent coffee on this and all subsequent evenings (so at least for the time being those of you who kindly agreed to take part in a coffee rota have been let off the hook). The room we will be using is well-appointed with comfortable chairs. It is about the same size as our former clubroom and has a raised area at one end. The only slight disadvantage is that the noise from the road traffic outside can be a little intrusive, especially if the double-glazed windows are open. However, few things in this world are perfect and this is something we will have to put up with.

Please do come to the opening night if possible. As usual subscriptions (*still* only £8.00 or £1.00 if you are a student!) are due on or before this date. If you really cannot come please send your subscription to me or Tony Field, upon receipt of which you will receive the usual printed Membership Card/Programme of Events. Obviously for anyone who wants to take an active part in our productions payment of a membership subscription is essential. However, we are also extremely grateful to those of you who do not see very often and yet continue to support us by paying a subscription. We do hope that you will continue to support us and join us for some of our evening entertainments.

The Opening Night will be swiftly followed by the first of our evenings on Friday 19th September, when Jennie Harvey-Hull will host an unrehearsed playreading. These are always fun and everyone gets a chance to read. On Wednesday 8th October, Hrolf Trump will give us the benefit of his extensive backstage experience on the subject of lighting. On Thursday 30th October we have re-booked Philip Rowe of Cary Make-Up Supplies to run a make-up workshop (last season's evening had to be cancelled at the last moment owing to the indisposition of Philip Rowe). A knowledge of basic make-up techniques and effects is important to nearly all of us, whether we aspire to be make-up artist, actor, director or even lighting technician. And having asked Philip to come, it is important that we get a good turnout, so please do attend if you can. I gather from a friend in SNADS that Philip Rowe's evenings are highly entertaining, and we will be inviting members of other groups to join us (and quite probably to Hrolf's evening as well). On Wednesday 12th November Patricia Stewart and Tony Manns will host an evening of music. Details of the rest of the season's events will be published in your membership card and future newsletters.

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## The Actors

Last season I published a series of articles by directors. This season it is the turn of some of our most experienced thespians, and the first contribution comes from Meg Whittingdale. As most of you know from last February's newsletter, Meg joined *The Players* in 1955 and has taken part in 32 productions. For this and many other services to APS she was made a Life Member during last season.

Looking back over 42 years of my membership of the APS, three things spring to mind. The enthusiasm, the friendship and the fun. Acting or taking part generally embraces all three of these qualities.

In the old days there were no auditions. The director of the selected play would choose whom he or she considered most suitable for the part, would contact that person and that was that. Obviously, as the membership and the competition grew, auditions had to be held in order to give all those yearning to act an equal opportunity to read and be considered for a part. However, I

have always hated auditions! You never know which bit you are going to be asked to read, and I always left an audition with a feeling of inadequacy and the feeling that I could have read better or differently, and the conviction that someone else interpreted the part much better than me.

Then there are the rehearsals. I enjoyed these almost more than the performances and the dedication of those taking part was astonishing. I can remember Christine Stones in *The Amorous Prawn* bringing Ben in a carry-cot and shoving him under the stage in the Big School Room while she rehearsed. Learning lines can be difficult for some. I envy those who appear to be able to read through a script two or three times and immediately know their part, but I suspect they are few and far between and perhaps they work harder than they seem to. I would repeat my lines in the bath every night and get up the following morning unable to remember a word. It is a slog. Continual repetition, particularly during rehearsals, is the only solution. The use of a tape recorder can be useful to some people, although I have never used one myself.

On stage it is total concentration. It is

## Prompt Corner

### Dates for your diaries

All events at The Crown Inn, Newell, Sherborne, 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 10th September

**APS 1997-98 Season Opening Night**

Friday 19th September

**Unrehearsed playreading**

arranged by Jennie Harvey-Hull

Wednesday 8th October

**Making Light Work**

An illustrated talk on lighting

by Hrolf Trump

Thursday 30th October

**A make-up workshop**

with Phillip Rowe

Wednesday 12th November

**A Musical Evening**

with Patricia Stewart and Tony Manns

## WHAT'S ON

**Octagon Theatre Summer School**

*Into The Woods*

by Stephen Sondheim

Friday 29th August 7.30

Saturday 30th August 2.30 and 7.30

The truly amazing results of just one week's very hard work by a group of mostly young amateurs. Well worth seeing.

so easy to be distracted by some little thing, like a forgotten prop or a noise back-stage. I shall never forget the night during the rather tense play *Suddenly At Home* (before we had any St Johns Ambulance personnel on duty) and Mervyn Davis had a fatal heart attack in the front row. The cast were magnificent, they carried on without a quail all through the trauma of sirens and ambulance men.

Nerves are a nightmare! And there is no cure that I can suggest. You are standing in the wings waiting for your cue on the first night feeling sick, and quite possibly with an urgent desire to go to the loo, and suddenly you are on stage. The adrenalin flows, the nerves disappear, and you are in command. During a performance of *Abelard and Heloise* I was standing off-stage, consumed with nerves, waiting to go on with that talented actress Eileen Snelling (she was Sister Godric and I was the Abbess). She turned to me and said "Meg, why do we do this?" Well, why do we? It comes back to the three words I started with, enthusiasm, friendship and fun—and the unique sense of achievement when the final curtain falls.

Meg Whittingdale

If you who are not already aware will be sorry to hear that Vivian Vale suffered a stroke at his home towards the end of July. Although the effects of this were initially quite severe, Patricia tells me that his doctors were pleased at how soon he started to recover. There was subsequently a setback, as Vivian contracted an infection, but this has now been overcome and Vivian continues to make progress. Patricia has asked me to say how deeply touched and grateful they both are for all the cards and messages they have received. Before this happened Vivian wrote a short article for 'The Actors', which will appear in the next newsletter. Vivian is also due to host a Shakespeare evening for us next April. For the time being this evening will remain in the programme, but Vivian may be in hospital for a while and his ability to play a part in APS activities will clearly depend on the speed and extent of his recovery. Our thoughts are with you, Vivian, and we hope to see you restored to your customary full and vigorous health soon.

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David Smith, I am happy to report, is back home and continuing to make a sedate but satisfactory recovery. A brief return to hospital recently revealed nothing untoward, and David's main concern is now to put on some of the weight he has lost during the 13 weeks he spent in hospital. He and Sylvia are also grateful for the cards and messages they have received and David is very much hoping to be present at our Opening Night in September.

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Incidentally, it has come to my notice that on occasions these newsletters find their way into the hands of non-members. While flattered that my ramblings are considered worthy of a wider audience, I must say that they are really intended for members only; your subscription is only for the production of the newsletters and they often contain financial information and/or news of a personal nature about members. Should non-members need any information about the players there is now an information sheet available, copies of which I shall be happy to supply on request.

Well, that's all for the moment. There is one more item of news, but I am restrained from telling you about it for the time being, as an announcement will be made at the Opening Night. How tantalizing! You really will have to come! See you there. M.L.

## A Woman of No Importance

Lady Caroline Pontefract	FIZZ LEWIS
Miss Hester Worsley	JULIE-ANN SOUL
Sir John Pontefract	TONY FIELD
Lady Hunstanton	JENNIE HARVEY-HULL
Gerald Arbuthnot	to be cast
Mrs Allonby	KATHY MESSINGER
Lady Stutfield	JILL HUDSON
Mr Kelvil	DAVID BOWEN
Lord Illingworth	STUART McCREADIE
Lord Alfred Rufford	MARK LAMBERT
Francis, <i>Footman</i>	KIERAN MILLAR
Mrs Arbuthnot	SUE FRANCIS
Archdeacon Daubeny	MICHAEL BAARTZ
Farquar, <i>Butler</i>	CHRIS JESSIMAN
Alice, <i>Maid</i>	PATRICIA STEWART

Director: Margaret Field

Stage Manager: Mark Lambert

Those playing Mr Kelvil, Farquar, Francis and Alice will also be part of the backstage team and scenes will be changed in costume without drawing the front tabs.



Stanley McKay as Peter Standish and Ernest Hulme as The American Ambassador in Bewsey Dyke's 1949 production of Berkeley Square. This photograph, and the one on page 1, is from the excellent collection of photographs, newscuttings and programmes of both APS and Foster's School productions accumulated by S.G. McKay over the years. We hope to acquire the material relating to APS productions for our own archives. The rest will go to Sherborne Museum.

### S.G. McKay

Older members will be saddened to hear of the death of a long standing and valued member of APS. Stanley McKay began his acting career during the 1930s, during his time at Maidstone Grammar School. On leaving the army after World War II, he came to Sherborne in 1946 to take up a teaching post at Foster's School. Recognising his obvious talent, Fred Alcock recruited him to play the part of Kit Cooper, the romantic lead, in the award-winning 1947 production of *Spring 1600* and he remained an active member of The Players for over 20 years. Our condolences go Stanley's wife, June, who is herself a former member of The Players.

S.G. McKay was both an actor and director and served a least one term as Chairman. Among the productions he took part in were *The Amazing Dr Clitterhouse* (1947), *Women Aren't Angels* (1948), *Berkeley Square* (1949), *I Remember Mama* (1950), *Pride and Prejudice* (1951), *Treasure Hunt* (1952), *The Farmers's Wife* (1955), *On Monday Next* (1958), *The Reluctant Debutante* (1959), *Tartuffe* (1961), *The Sound of Murder* (1964), *Salad Days* (1964), *Free As Air* (1967). He directed *Home at Seven* (1961), and both directed and acted in *Blithe Spirit* (1962). All this while holding down a teaching job and producing plays at Foster's. His last appearance on stage for The Players was as Major Clinton in Gerald Pitman's 1969 revival of *Berkeley Square*, having played the leading man in the 1949 production. Bewsey Dyke produced the 1949 version and the letter he wrote to Stanley soon afterwards says it all.

Dear Mac,

*While 'Berkeley Square' is still fresh in our minds, I want to write and congratulate you on what I consider one of the outstanding personal interpretations in the history of the A.P.S. Your performance was masterly, and I am proud to have produced a show with such a fine study in the leading man.*

*I do hope that the strain was not too severe, and that, now it is all over, you will have a little time to relax. Having seen the show as a whole from the front, it is very obvious that without a strong Peter Standish, it would be a complete and utter failure. It wasn't - and I am grateful for your hard work and concentration in what was a most difficult part. After all - playing a love scene with three different women in 2 1/2 hours takes a lot of doing, and you did it admirably!*

*Best of luck for Badger's Green. We are coming on the first night.*

Sincerely,

Bewsey

[One of the many Foster's School plays produced by S.G. McKay]