



February is one of my least favourite months of the year, so I'm glad there are one or two things to look forward to. Before we get to the two productions in March there are the APS dinner, and a quiz night served with fish and chips! I shall also be attending the SNADS pantomime, which is always a great lifter of spirits (see 'Whats On').

First, however, a brief update on the last production. The Treasurer's guess was pretty accurate, as it turned out that our profit on *A Woman of No Importance* was £885. The adjudicator's report was, on the whole, very complimentary--she ended by saying that she would very much like to be asked to adjudicate more of our productions--and it seems highly possible that nominations may be forthcoming later in the year. As a final footnote The Ven. Archdeacon Daubeny, having been inundated with solicitations after Mrs Daubeny's health, has asked me to tell you of the following note delivered to him by hand on November 30th. "Archeacon, URGENT, Mrs Daubeny succumbed to her burdens at 10.05 p.m. She was game to the end and never morbid, Thomas Hope, Curate". It is to be hoped that she now rests in peace.



As promised, a couple of scenes from *A Woman of No Importance*

The spring production and the DDL play have, with some difficulty, now been cast and cast lists are shown overleaf. For her play Jessica would like to acquire a park bench (or similar) and a short length (around 2m, say) of iron railings. Can anyone help?

We now have access to our new castle rooms. Jakki Gregory and others have already moved the boxes out of the scenery room and the task of moving the wardrobe from Parsons will take place on February 22nd. Jakki is organising the move and has arranged a rota. If you are needed, she will probably have contacted you already.

Meg's annual 'Give Us A Clue' evening went with its usual swing. Many of the titles we were given were, as usual, unheard of by the contesting teams, but some inspired miming and often equally inspired guessing made for a high scoring evening. I counted 27 members present, the normal high turnout for this event.

The next item on the calendar is, of course, the dinner on February 13th. Some places are still available, so if you want to come but have not yet applied, please do so immediately. The slip at the bottom of page 3 of the last Newsletter can be used but is

Prompt Corner

Friday 13th February
Annual APS Dinner
Black Tie
The Crown Inn, Newell, 7.30 p.m.

Friday 20th February
APS Quiz Night
Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Road, 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 11th March
Preview of our DDL entry, *See If I Care*
Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Road

Saturday 14th March
Dorset Drama League Festival
Shaftesbury Arts Centre

Saturday 21st March
Move into Digby Hall
and build set for *Table Manners*

Thursday 26th - Saturday 28th March
Performances of *Table Manners*

Friday 27th March,
Coffee morning, Digby Hall

Tuesday 14th April
Sweet Lovers Love the Spring
A seasonal celebration led by Sue Francis
Lyon House, 7.30 p.m.

Thursday 23rd April
Salute to Shakespeare
compiled by Vivian Vale
The Crown Inn, Newell, 7.30 p.m.

APS Membership

In view of the problems encountered by Chris and Jessica when casting their plays, I thought it might be interesting to analyse just exactly what our pool of available actors consists of. The current membership total is 80, but of these only 43 can be considered to be actors willing and available to take on major roles. The remaining 37 consist of those who used to act but no longer do so, those who are prepared to take on only very minor roles, those who provide backstage or front of house support and those who like to act but are not normally available at present.

A pool of 43 actors sounds quite good until one studies the breakdown of this group by age. Under the age of 20 we have just 4 actors; 1 boy and 3 girls. Another 4 (2 men and 2 women) fall into the 20-40 age bracket, with a further 6 men and 13 women falling into 40-60 age range. Actors over the age of 60 currently willing to take on sizeable roles include 11 men and 4 women.

At any one time, of course, not all of our actors are going to be available; work, holidays and other factors take their toll. So it is clear why directors can run into problems when casting plays. Many of you know of the difficulties that Margaret Field had in casting the role of Gerald in *A Woman of No Importance*---and the young man she did eventually find commuted from Salisbury! The 6 members of the cast of *Table Manners* are supposed to be in their 30's, which for us is clearly impossible at the moment, but even when the age range was broadened, Chris still found himself with problems. The 3 women were relatively easy to find, but there were simply not enough men of the right age and type available from among our existing members and Chris had to look elsewhere to fill the role of Norman.

For her play Jessica initially thought that it would be easy to find an all-woman cast, and it is true that the younger roles were easily filled. We had thought that as there are a number of older women among our members the two main roles would pose no

problems, but in the event there was only one member both willing and available and, again, Jessica had to look elsewhere to fill the other main role.

So the obvious conclusion to draw from all this is that we need either to choose only plays that we know we can cast or to recruit new members who want to act, particularly in the age ranges where we are short. The former is possible, but very limiting for both directors and actors, and, I suggest, would probably reduce our audience appeal. The latter is easy to say, but less easy to do.

Membership of The Players currently fluctuates around the 80-90 mark. Each year we gain a few members, but we also lose others, who go for a variety of reasons. Young people, in their late teens or early twenties, tend to be more mobile than the rest of us and thus depart to University or new jobs. Thus if we want members in this age bracket, we must be prepared to recruit anew each year. The reason why older members do not renew their membership is less obvious, but assuming that they haven't moved away they probably lose interest. In some cases, I suspect, that this is because they fall into an age category where there is quite a lot of competition and thus they feel that they are not getting enough parts to make their membership worthwhile. If this is the case there is not much we can do, especially if they are not interested in directing or working backstage.

So a policy of active recruitment is clearly necessary, how do we achieve results? Advertising can generate some interest, particularly when plays are being cast, or when we publicise evenings, particularly the opening evening of the season. However, most of us joined the players as a result of being introduced by someone who was already a member. So clearly this is our main source of new members. So do, please, encourage your friends and acquaintances to join us, especially if they fall into that crucial 20-40 age bracket. If anyone has any other ideas, I and the rest of the committee would be pleased to hear them. The future of APS could be at stake!

M.L.

not essential, as long as you send or hand your payment to Tony Field together with your name and, if appropriate, the name of your guest. Tickets are £10 each (excluding wine) and dress is black tie.

The quiz night on Friday 30th February will be held in the Digby Memorial Church Hall, Digby Rd. A fish and chip supper will be provided, as will coffee, and the charge will be £2.00 to members (non-members £3.00). Please bring your own alcoholic or non-alcoholic refreshments for mental lubrication. A number of other groups have been contacted and invited to send teams of up to six people. You can either make up your own teams beforehand, or join a team when you arrive. Stuart McCreadie will be quizmaster and will be putting in a lot of hard work beforehand. So please come and help to make all his efforts worthwhile.

The DDL play, *See If I Care*, is to be previewed on Wednesday 11th March at the Digby Memorial Hall in Digby Road Do come if you can; there is no charge, but there will be a plate for voluntary contributions. The festival itself takes place at Shaftesbury Arts Centre on the following Saturday (Feb 14th), when all *six* (sic) entries will be presented on the same evening. Please come and support our team, even if you have also been to the preview; a good turnout of supporters makes all the difference to our actors and to the reputation of the The Players.

On **Tuesday 14th April** Sue Francis will hold a musical evening at **Lyon House**. This evening is listed in your cards as being on 7th April at the Cheap St Church Hall, so **please make a note of the change of both date and venue**. Lyon House is not all that easy to find unless you are familiar with that part of Sherborne and so I have provided directions in the panel below.

We move into the Digby Hall for the spring production on Saturday 21st March. We have to transport most of our stock of large flats and build a boxed set, so please come and help if you can.

M.L.

HOW TO GET TO LYON HOUSE

From Acreman St, opposite Trendle St turn left (if heading North) into Horsecastles. Take the first turning right, then the second turning left. Lyon House is on the left. Go in through the second set of blue gates.

TABLE MANNERS

Sarah	Madeline Lambert
Annie	Suzanne Ford
Tom	Kieran Millar
Reg	David Smith
Norman	Steve Evans
Ruth	Anthea Watson

Director: Chris Jessiman
Stage manager: Stuart McCreadie

SEE IF I CARE

1st Lady	Barbara Shepherd
2nd Lady	Elsie Lombard
Young Girl	Rebecca Hill
1st Woman	Dod Pearson
2nd Woman	Yvonne Hill
3rd Woman	Janet Vincent

Director: Jessica Colson

Whats On

The 1998 SNADS pantomime, **Robinson Crusoe**, will take place at Sturminster Newton Hall, 9th-14th Feb. Tickets (£3.50 or less) are available from Petticoat Lane in Sturminster Newton. SNADS pantomimes always get richly-deserved rave reviews and invariably have audiences in fits of laughter. This year the company's all-male dance troupe will be 'vegetarian cannibals'!