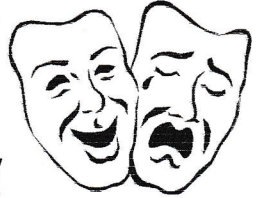


# AMATEUR PLAYERS OF SHERBORNE

# Newsletter

MAY 1997



The completion of the spring production signals that the end of the APS season draws near, and this newsletter is therefore the last of the 1996/97 season. It has been a good year, with two very successful productions in the Digby Hall, and a prizewinning entry in the Dorset Drama League Festival, not forgetting a series of most entertaining club evenings.

Membership has increased slightly this year. Although 13 people fell by the wayside at the end of last season, we gained 19 new members, including a number of younger people. Sadly we cannot hope to keep them all; Jenny Bunker, Holly Burbage, Sally Chapman, Andrew Helson and Louise Lambert will soon be going on to university. We do hope that if you find yourselves back in Sherborne, you will join us again. Meanwhile, we wish all of you the very best for the future and trust that you have enjoyed being members of APS. If you have, please tell your friends and encourage them to come and join us next September.

We hope that all the rest of you will join us again next season. If, perhaps you feel that you have not been included as much as you would have liked, remember that the best way to get asked to do something is to be proactive. Keeness is always noticed and one volunteer is better than ten pressed men (or women). So come to the club evenings and auditions and make it clear, particularly to directors, stage managers, set-builders and committee members, that you want to be involved. If you would like to do a particular job, the best way to get it, and sometimes the only way in my experience, is to ask!

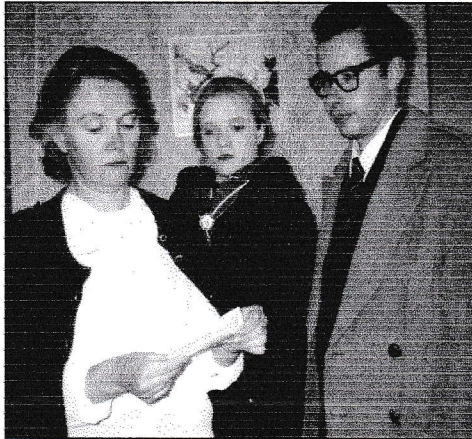
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The first of the spring production plays to get under way was, of course, Lunch Hour. Most of you already know of our success with this play. We were runner up in Weymouth and won the Ana Lyle Trophy for Best Presentation ('Best Set' Trophy). The adjudicator's comments lacked much in the way of a positive element, but some of his criticisms were helpful and several alterations were made before the play went to Shaftesbury for the Southern Division Final. There we acquitted ourselves well and although we were not winners, the adjudicator passed some kind comments and we came away satisfied that we had done our best. The surprise element at Shaftesbury was that the play produced by Weymouth Drama Club that beat us by, it has to be said, a considerable margin in Weymouth and was widely thought to be a probable winner in Shaftesbury, did not go forward to the next round. An interesting and somewhat controversial decision.

Lunch Hour then joined Knightsbridge and Edwin in the Digby Hall, forming the three elements of our Spring Production. Overall the production was well received by those who saw it, which was gratifying as a great deal of hard work was put into it by everyone involved. Audiences were mostly quite small to begin with--probably for several reasons; there is a well-documented lowering of turnout to one-act plays; the weather was, or rather had been, fine; and the spring production normally attracts fewer people than the autumn one. Even so, perhaps the news got round and the Saturday night audience was not at all bad--we had no seats at the sides this time because of the narrower setting required for Lunch Hour, and Front of House were forced to put in an

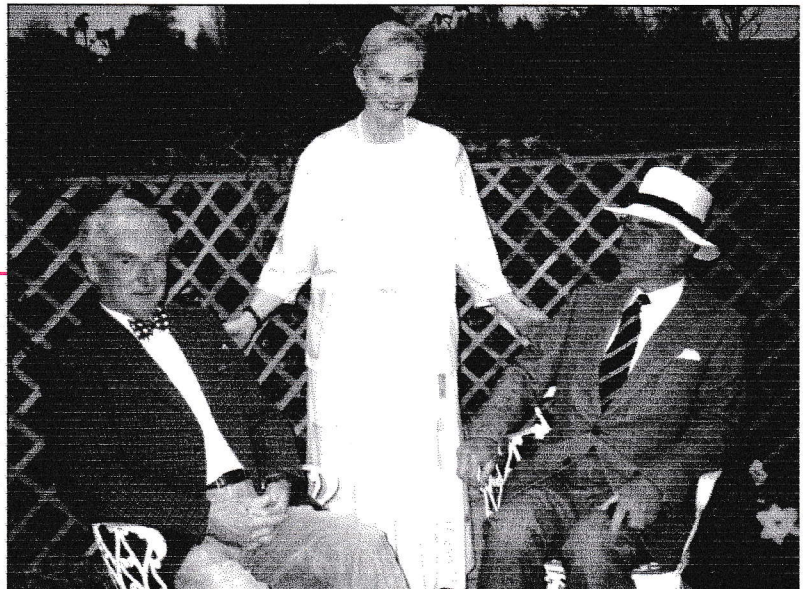


Above: Francesca Stokes (Suzanne Ford), Henry Bulstrode (Chris Jessiman) and Muriel Stokes (Jikki Gregory) pose on the set of Knightsbridge. The Man in the Mac was seen lurking seedily somewhere nearby. Photo by Jessica Colson, courtesy of Suzanne Ford.



Left: The Manageress (Mally Lambert) examines her pound note, watched impatiently by The Girl (Louise Lambert) and The Man (Kieran Millar) during a rehearsal for Lunch Hour. Photo by Jack Tucker.

Below: Tom Marjoriebanks (Tony Field), Lady Margaret Truscott (Margaret Field) and Sir Fennimore Truscott (Anthony Stephens) take a moment to relax during rehearsals for Edwin. Cattermole, the dirty dog, is probably potting geraniums in the conservatory. Photo by Jack Tucker



extra row of seats at the back. With three plays and the consequent need for three separate sets and three licence fees per performance, expenses were not low. Even so we did not actually make a loss-- we made a profit of £10.80!

As many of you already know, David Smith, who was to have played Tom Marjoriebanks in Edwin, was sadly unable to do so, due to having to go into hospital for a major operation for cancer. The operation was, I understand, successful, but unfortunately post-operative complications set in, resulting in him suffering a great deal of pain and having to undergo a second operation. He has had to spend an inordinately long time in hospital, but should be going home very soon. I know I speak for everyone in sending him and Sylvia our very best wishes. We wish you, David, a speedy return to full and vigorous health and very much look forward to having you back with us next season.

You will also recall that Louise Lambert held a Prize Draw during the performances, in order to raise money for her trip to Tanzania with Health Projects Abroad. Altogether, including both the sale of tickets and donations, she raised £150 towards her target. She has asked me to thank everyone for their help and cooperation and particularly all those who bought tickets and/or generously donated cash.

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Since February club evenings have continued, beginning in March with **Salad Days**, presented by Margaret Field. I was not able to be there, but Jakki Gregory tells me that this was a wonderful evening. Margaret, having adapted and abbreviated the script, acted as narrator. Sally Chapman and Simon Manaton took the lead roles, with Patricia Stewart and Sue Francis giving some lovely solo renditions of some of the familiar songs. They were ably supported by the chorus, which included several people roped in from the

## Prompt Corner

### Dates for your diaries

Friday 30th May  
**Make-up Workshop**  
with Philip Rowe  
of Mail Order Make-up Supplies,  
Castle Cary.  
Cheap St Church Hall

Wednesday 18th June  
**Annual General Meeting**  
Cheap St Church Hall

Saturday 5th July  
**End of season summer party**  
Horn's Hill, Nethercompton  
(or Nethercompton Village hall if wet)

## The Directors

*I hope you have enjoyed reading this series as much as I have. Next season I hope to include some articles on acting, or perhaps something about off-stage work, such as publicity, stage management, lighting or sound, so keep watching this space. If you would like to contribute something please do let me know.*

*The last contribution in this series comes from Gerald Pitman, actor, former Chairman and President, and director of a number of plays for the Players.*

We used to be known simply as Producers and my first production for APS was the delightful *Love's A Luxury* in 1966. Three years later it was to be *Berkeley Square*, followed by *An Ideal Husband*, which was our second production in the newly-opened Digby Hall. A favourite farce, *Rookery Nook* was presented in 1977. When the players celebrated our Golden Jubilee in 1984 I was privileged to direct *Quality Street* and in 1991 *Under the Greenwood Tree*, staged in the round. I devised the major production *Saint Aldhelm* (not to be confused with *St Aldhelm & Co*) in the Abbey, as well as two Pageants of the Church's Year at Castleton and St Paul's and various school productions.

In the main we are amateurs. Some are very gifted amateurs, but all of us continually learning and aiming at a professional standard in our productions. In common with many other APS directors I prefer to produce *and* direct.

So how to go about it? First find a play that you are happy with and that is within or close to the capacity of the society with whom you are working. Prepared, you face the officers and committee to present your case. Your homework and enthusiasm are now stretched. Some members of the committee will not take any risks, so you have to persuade and convince them. You return from the meeting either frustrated and despairing or on a 'high'.

With the go-ahead given, auditions are announced, giving plenty of notice. I always hold auditions well ahead of rehearsals, auditioning for an autumn production, for example, in July to give the cast the chance to use to holiday period to begin the learning process. Always remember that the majority of your cast are usually in full-time employment, running a home and family, or at school or college, with other work to be considered.

A production demands commitment from the *whole* team. With the play cast, the rehearsal schedule planned and given to *everyone* involved, there are meetings both formal and informal with the stage manager, those in charge of lighting, sound, costumes, properties and publicity. Communication with the team is vital at all times and not just in the last week of production.

Planning completed and delegation agreed, you will now be in discussion with the cast about their parts. You will have made a loose-leaf file of the script, interleaved with pages on which moves are noted and comments made. Listen to members of the cast as you rehearse. Moves will be changed, suggestions considered and very

often acted upon. Be prepared to seek advice, to listen, to learn and to change.

When I began with my cast for *Under the Greenwood Tree*, I felt it useful for them to see the area of the action in the novel. So as many as could, some twenty of us, went together to Stinsford, Lower Bockhampton and Hardy's Cottage. We walked where the characters 'lived' and visited the Dewy home.

Rehearsals are serious work, but keep a sense of humour. You have to lead (I was going to write 'be a benevolent dictator') and you have to take full responsibility. In the end blame will descend on you--praise will be showered on the cast.

Production dates come closer and closer. The stress factor is now only too evident. I have returned home after some rehearsal absolute despair, thinking why, oh why, did I take this on--*never, NEVER* again! Hopefully, by example, encouragement, humour and moral blackmail you eventually somewhere near to your original conception. On the last night, as the curtains close, the relief is terrific, if only they knew the drama off stage during the last three months! Even so you know that you are going to miss those busy, creative evenings, and the cast are wishing they could have enjoyed a longer run.

In spite of it all, I enjoy directing. The Players have given me the opportunity time and time again, and for that and for those who have worked so hard with me I am eternally grateful. We have shared a great deal of stress together and had a lot of fun. From their response, our audiences have enjoyed evenings at the theatre with us, and that is what matters.

G.H.D.P.

...ence of around 30. The success of this well-arranged evening suggests that it is about  
...me we put on a musical; we have the talent.

In April Mytyl and Tony Stephens led an evening of poetry readings, under the title  
.....**Can Spring be Far Behind?**. Again I was unable to attend, due to a tight rehearsal  
schedule, but I gather that a contingent of some 16 members enjoyed themselves enor-  
mously, reading a variety of poetry, more or less, Tony tells me, concerned with spring.

By May Stuart McCreadie had understandably had enough of plays and so instead of  
the originally scheduled playreading, he organised a members' quiz evening. Stuart had  
clearly done a huge amount of research and had compiled over 120 questions, not all of  
which were very easy to answer. Some 26 members organised themselves into five teams  
and the winning team was 'The Villagers' (Gill and Tony Manns, Simon Manaton and  
Mark Lambert), due largely, it has to be said, to the wide-ranging knowledge of Gill  
Manns--yours truly was just along for the ride! We all learned a great deal of quite useless  
information and had a great deal of fun in the process. In future perhaps we might throw  
open such a quiz evening to other groups, in much the same way as SNADS do.

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By the time you read this only the last three events of the season will remain. On Friday  
30th May, there will be a make-up workshop in the Cheap Street Church Hall. Please re-  
member that the AGM will now take place on Wednesday 18th June (**not** Thur 19th as  
originally given in the Programme). The arrangements for the end of season party have  
also changed, as obviously David and Sylvia will not now be able to host it. The party will  
be held at the home of Jennie Harvey-Hull (Horn's Hill, Nethercompton) or, if wet, in  
Nethercompton Village Hall, and entertainment will be provided by the 'Compton Players'.  
Tra<sup>o</sup>ort will be available from Sherborne to Nethercompton if required. Please fill in the  
appropriate slip enclosed with this newsletter.

The above mentioned slip also includes a reply about coffee making because the re-  
sponse to the appeal in the last newsletter for people to help with coffees on club evenings  
was, to it mildly, disappointing--not one member telephoned! Do please take the trouble  
to fill in this part of the slip. As I said last time, the more people willing to do it the less  
often any one person will have to. By saying you are willing to do it you are not commit-  
ting yourself to doing it every time--perhaps only once in a season, if that--it isn't much to  
ask!

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As usual at the AGM it will be necessary to elect officers and other committee members.  
A list of current officers and committee members, together with their status is given on  
this page. Our Chairman, Jakki Gregory, has served one year and is thus eligible to con-  
tinue for a further year, and Tony Stephens is willing to continue as Secretary if re-elected.  
However, Tony Field, having served as a most meticulous and painstaking Treasurer from  
1987-90 and then again from 1993-97, a grand total of seven years, has decided that the  
time has come for him to pass this task on to someone else and so we must elect a new  
Treasurer.

As far as the rest of the committee is concerned you will see that six members are  
due to continue and one has reached the end of his term. As the committee is actually two  
members short at present, this would normally mean electing three new members. How-  
ever, the committee proposes to present resolutions at the AGM, which if agreed upon by  
members will have the following effect. The Membership Secretary will become an officer  
of the society and thus will have to stand for re-election every year along with the existing  
officers. The number of ordinary members of the committee will be reduced from nine to  
six. It is proposed that the reduction will take place over a period of three years, by elect-  
ing two new members instead of three each year. Accordingly, if the resolutions are  
passed by those present at the AGM, we will be electing two new committee members this  
year. Nomination forms for the election of officers and committee members accompany  
this newsletter.

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You will have probably noticed that so far I have not mentioned the choice of play for the  
autumn production. The reason for this is quite simple; we haven't chosen one yet. How-  
ever, we will have done prior to the AGM and the choice will be announced then. Part of  
the reason for the delay is that the committee is a fairly unwieldy body for choosing plays  
from scratch and the result has been that the moment of decision has gradually been left  
later and later. So we have decided to revert to an earlier practice and create a small  
group of people with experience of the theatre, whose sole task will be to read, review and  
choose plays, and find directors, with the aim of producing a production plan that extends  
one, two or even three years into the future. This group will, of course, work with the  
elected committee, who will agree, or not, to the ideas generated by the group as it sees  
fit. Initially, the committee has asked Tony Field, Lance Salway and Eve Snell to join this

## Officers and Committee 1996/97

### President

**Joy Saunders**

(standing for re-election)

### Chairman

**Jakki Gregory**

(standing for re-election)

### Secretary

**Anthony Stephens**

(standing for re-election)

### Treasurer

**Tony Field**

(retiring)

### Committee

Elected in 1994 and retiring

**Mark Lambert**

Elected in 1995

**Jessica Colson**

**Tony Manns**

**Kieran Millar**

Elected in 1996

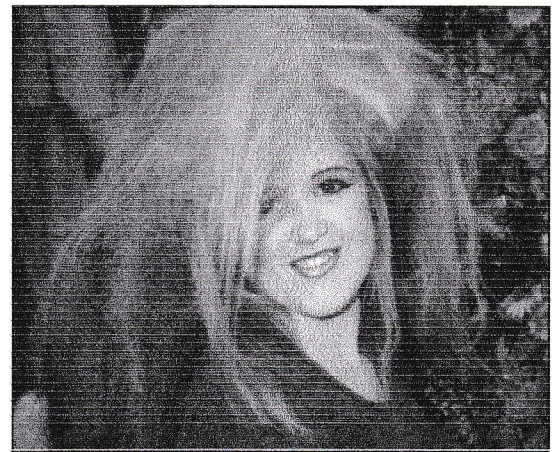
**Jennie Harvey-Hull**

**Stuart McCreadie**

**Kathy Messinger**

*What a shocker! Clearly, acting the part of The Girl in  
Lunch Hour became too much for Louise.*

*Photo by Suzanne Ford.*



production planning group, and there may be room for one or two more people. If there is anyone who feels they would have something to contribute and would like to be considered, please do let the Chairman know.

Another recent move made by the committee has been to appoint a member to take care of Public Relations. Patricia Stewart has agreed to take on this role, and has already made an excellent start. The task is not an entirely new one, as it has in the past been accomplished by various members of the committee, placing advertisements and dealing with the press as and when necessary. However, the committee believe that a rather more positive policy is needed and so the role of the new PRO will be to try to keep APS in the public eye throughout the year, not just at production time. If anyone has any ideas that might help Patricia achieve this, I'm sure they will be very welcome.

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The move from the clubroom has now been successfully accomplished. Most of the wardrobe is stored in two rooms in the flat above Parsons, the butchers in Cheap St, to whom we are extremely grateful for this temporary accommodation. The largest trunks and boxes, together with various screens and props, have been temporarily stored in our set-building room at the Castle stables. The move was, as you can imagine, a major undertaking and thanks are due to all those who took part, but particularly to Jakki for her efficient and tireless organization. Some more sorting will now take place, prior to the final move in October/November to new rooms in the Castle stables. We also hope to compile inventories of our costumes and props.

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Jakki Gregory has worked hard to find us this accommodation and we are greatly indebted to her. She has not stopped there, however, and has also found us a room at the Crown in Newell (at the bottom of Greenhill on the A.30), where we can hold club evenings. The advantages of this room are that it can be a regular venue and that it is *free*. It may, on occasions, be available for rehearsals, but for the time being we are assuming that we will have to continue to hire halls, as it is not possible to book venues for rehearsals very far in advance.

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Finally, can I draw your attention to the workshops being organized by the Octagon Theatre Summer School. Each workshop occupies a full day and the morning is given over to a general warm-up followed by 'developmental drama lessons'. The afternoons are devoted to the specialist subjects listed in the 'What's on' panel on this page. Classes of this sort are generally more fun if you know at least some of the other 'students', so perhaps we could try and collect a group of people from The Players. The cost is £18 for each workshop (or £75 for all five). If you are interested, please fill in the appropriate slip enclosed.

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Well, that's it for this season. See you at the AGM, I hope, if not before, and then again at the end of season party. After that I hope we all have a long, hot and relaxing summer before reconvening in September.

M.L.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given of a resolution, proposed by Mr Tony Field and seconded by Mr Tony Manns, to amend the Constitution as follows:

amend **Article 6** (which specifies the Officers of the Society) by deleting "and a Secretary, the two latter Officers..." and substituting ", a Secretary and a Membership Secretary, the three latter Officers....";

amend **Article 7** (which specifies the composition of the Committee)

a) in the phrase "...the three Officers...", by deleting "three" and substituting "four";

b) in the phrase "...nine ordinary members...", by deleting "nine" and substituting "six"

amend **Article 8** (which specifies the quorum for Committee meetings) by deleting "seven" and substituting "six", to reflect the reduction in the size of the Committee from twelve to ten.

Reminder: under **Article 14**, amendment of any part of the Constitution requires a majority of not less than two-thirds of members present and voting at the General Meeting concerned.

## WHAT'S ON

### Octagon Theatre Summer Workshops

Monday 11th August

#### **Movement and Basic Dance**

Includes communication through mime, and movement on stage

Tuesday 12th August

#### **Voice and Vocal Projection**

Includes tone and breathing, quality of sound produced, and accents

Wednesday 13th August

#### **Direction**

Working with a director and how to direct other people

Thursday 14th August

#### **Make-up, Wigs, Costumes and Props**

Bring a brush and comb. Make-up would also be useful.

Friday 14th August

#### **Audition Techniques**

Speeches, sight reading, attitude, grooming. Theatre, film and TV auditions

### The Chapel Arts Centre, Shaftesbury

The staff and students of Shaftesbury School present

#### **The Tragedy of Tragedies or**

#### **Tom Thumb the Great**

by Henry Fielding.

A burlesque that satirizes heroic tragedy

Thursday 17th - Saturday 19th July, 7.30 p.m.

Booking: 01747-854498

### Artsreach Productions

#### **Bristol Old Vic Theatre School**

#### **The Canterbury Tales**

Sturminster Newton

Tuesday 24th June, 7.30 p.m.

Booking: 01258-473200

#### **Ridiculusmus**

#### **All About H. Hatterr**

Buckland Newton Place (outdoors)

Saturday 5th July 7.30 p.m.

Booking: 01300-345521

#### **Kneehigh Theatre**

#### **Arabian Nights**

A rich tapestry of epic adventures

Kimmeridge Bay (outdoors)

Friday 18th & Saturday 19th July, 8.00 p.m.

Booking: 01305-269512

#### **Miracle Theatre**

Shakespeare's

#### **A Midsummer Nights Dream**

Beaminster, 7th August, 7.30 p.m. (tbc)

Shillingstone Rec, 8th August, 7.30 p.m.

Booking: 01258-860784