



# NEWS LETTER



MARCH 2000



As we enter the month of 'wintery wind' it is time, once again, to bring you up to date with what's going on.



## Players Events

Give Us a Clue in January was, as always, well attended and much enjoyed by those who came. It was marvellous to see Meg Whittingdale back in the chair, and in such fine form—for the past two years she has had to ask someone else to do it for her. Sadly, however, she announced that this year's Give Us A Clue was her final one. Thanks, Meg, for all the enjoyment you have given us with this evening for so many years. Thanks, too, to Charles Napier, Meg's son who has several times in recent years devised the fiendish list of plays, musicals, books, films and TV programmes that we have subsequently had to mime and on this occasion acted as Meg's assistant.

So there is now a vacancy for hosting this perennial evening. It is so popular that it would be a shame to let it pass into history. Does anyone fancy the idea of taking it on? If you do, please let the committee know before next year's programme is planned.

The aim of the rehearsed play readings in January was to give newcomers and other members that we seldom see on stage a chance to perform. In this aim the evening completely lived up to expectations. The casts of the two plays introduced by David Smith and Steve Evans were made up almost entirely of newcomers, and it was also a delight to see Gerald Pitman in such good

form again. Newer members present might just have got the impression that Gerald had done some acting before. In this, of course they would be entirely correct—just a glance through past programmes testifies to our former President's experience and skill.

Nightingales Sing, our evening of folk music went well and Gill Manns has kindly written with some comments (see panel below). I must admit to having some doubts as to how popular folk music might be with APS members, and was quite startled at the enthusiasm with which our efforts were received. Thanks to all who came. We enjoyed ourselves immensely and will certainly do it again if requested.

## Forthcoming Events

The next event is, of course, the spring production, the cast of which is shown in the panel above. Jim Schofield is building the set, assisted by the Stage Manager, Tony Manns. As always, help will be needed moving the set in on Saturday 18th March, so please contact Jim (01935 812051) if you are available to help, even just for an hour or two. Jim may also be grateful for some help beforehand, so again do get in touch with him if you would like to lend a hand.

The Front of House Manager on this occasion is Peter Thomas (01935 815355). At the time of writing he still needs a couple of people to help on the Friday performance and would be grateful if someone would volunteer to help do coffees for the cast and production team during the Wednesday dress rehearsal.

Following the spring production, on Wednesday April 5th, Michael Baatz, to-

## The Constant Wife

by W. Somerset Maugham

### Cast

Mrs Culver	Joy Saunders
Bentley	Kevin Beer
Martha Culver	Suzanne Ford
Barbara Fawcett	Ann Russell
Constance Middleton	Kathy Messinger
Marie-Louise Durham	Jan Bridgman
John Middleton, FRCS	David R. Smith
Bernard Kersal	Mark Lambert
Mortimer Durham	Tony Birks-Hay

Director: Jessica Colson

Production Manager: Anthony Stephens

gether with Eve Snell and Steve Evans, will conduct an Acting Workshop – an event that Michael describes as an evening of exploration and practice of acting. Please note that the venue for this has changed from the Cheap St Hall to the Digby Memorial Hall. As always, non-members are welcome, so do bring any friends that may be interested.

## Summer production

The daunting task of casting *As you Like It* is almost complete. Those who have been cast in speaking roles should either have already heard from Jason or will hear from him very shortly. The remainder will be contacted by either Jason or me within the next month or so with a view to establishing who among the original volunteers are willing to perform as courtiers, forest people, singers etc.

## Poster design

As you know Robert Doling, who has produced such excellent posters for the past few years, recently moved away to Surrey. Even so, he has since moving produced the posters for three more plays. Sadly the time has come that he can no longer do so, as he has decided to move to Greece for a while in order to paint. We are sorry to see him go, but wish him all the best. Many thanks, Robert, for all your help.

So we are looking for new (or just unknown to us) talent and as the first poster we need is for *As You Like It*, I am opening

## A contribution from the Chairman.

### "Nightingales Sing" arranged by Mark Lambert and Mandy McEvoy.

To save the Editor from either immodesty or understatement, I embrace the chance to comment on the evening of folk music presented at The Crown on Friday, March 3rd by Mark Lambert, Mandy McEvoy, Jason Hepple, Kathy Messinger and newcomer Kevin Beer. This most accomplished line-up performed a varied and cleverly chosen programme which quickly had the audience enthralled. Swaying, tapping and sometimes singing along, we were taken on poignant journeys on the high seas, to the mines, the countryside and elsewhere, interspersed with some well judged earthy light relief and instrumental interludes. As the second half drew to a close, the group's talent and versatility allowed them to lead the enthusiastic singing of unrehearsed requests.

Such entertainment, hugely enjoyed by performers and audience alike, must surely find a regular place in the Players' calendar, and could well be offered to paying visitors on future occasions.

GNM



this up for anyone who would like to try their hand at poster design.

The play is set in the Forest of Arden, so Jason and I envisage trees being a feature of the poster. The contrast in the play is between the formality of court life and the relaxed, idyllic, life of countryside people. Among the leading characters are Rosalind, who at one stage dresses up as a man, her friend Celia, the melancholy wanderer Jacques and the jester Touchstone. Our production will be in modern dress, and this too can be reflected in the design. Modern phenomena, such as anti-hunt and motorway protests (perhaps a JCB in the picture somewhere?) could also form part of the poster theme.

So if you would like to have a go at designing a poster, please do let me have your ideas. Designs can be created on a computer or drawn on paper (the finished design can be scanned for reproduction). A preliminary sketch will do in the first instance, but if possible we would like it by the end of March. At this point Jason and I will make a choice from the designs submitted, and I hope to have a finished design by the end of April, in order to place an advert in *Lewiston News*.

### Production Team

The committee is currently in the process of revising and updating the briefs handed out to the various members of a production team. Most of the changes are relatively minor and merely reflect what is actually current practice. One or two major changes have been made, the most important of which is the upgrading of the post formerly known as Business Manager to the new post of Production Manager. This is not alto-

**Obit.** Sadly, I have to inform those of you who do not already know of the recent deaths of three former members, Joan Snelling, Stella Dyke and Iris Trump.

### Joan Snelling

Joan died last year, and I really must apologise first for not having mentioned this before now. She was a member of APS for many years, but was never one to take the lime-light. A really excellent seamstress, she helped with the wardrobe for many productions, and at other times she could be found helping backstage with props and scene shifting. She would never have classed herself as an actress, but on occasions could be persuaded to undertake walk-on parts. Always quiet and self-effacing, Joan was a person that only a few people got to know well, but I know they miss her, and the rest of us miss her smiling face and readiness to help. ML

### Stella Dyke

On leaving the Women's Royal Navy after the war, ex-W.R.N.S. Officer Stella Thurgood came to Sherborne to take up the post of Secretary to Ross Wallace, Headmaster of Sherborne School. She joined the Players in 1946, when Fred B. Alcock was looking for someone to play the part of the wife of Jim Brent in *Quiet Weekend*. As luck would have it the part of Jim Brent was being played by Bewsey Dyke, and the rest, as they say, is history—they were married the following year.

From 1947 to 1961, while her husband continued to take a leading role in the running of The Players, Stella Dyke played many varied parts, the most memorable of which was perhaps the part of Mama in the 1950 production of *I Remember Mama*. Bewsey Dyke died some years ago, but Stella is survived by her daughter Penny Knight, who was also a member of The Players for many years, and our condolences go to her. JS and M

### Iris Trump

Iris joined The Players at the same time as her husband Hrolf in 1958. Never an actress, she was nonetheless a sterling supporter both of Hrolf and The Players and, I believe, attended in one capacity or another virtually every production since she joined. She was often seen helping front-of-house and at one stage used to make and sell sweets. She also helped Hrolf with his sets and made a variety of decorative stage items, including a complete set of stage curtains for use in the Digby Memorial Hall in the days when APS produced plays there.

Iris was a strong personality, with decided and sometimes controversial opinions that she was not afraid to put forward. It is people like her who do much to shape the continued evolution of The Players and she will be sadly missed. I know that everyone joins me in sending much sympathy to Hrolf. ML

gether sudden, as in fact two of the last four productions have had Production Managers, but this post will now become a feature of all future productions.

The purpose of creating this post is to take from the Director the burdensome organisational tasks, leaving him or her free to concentrate on directing the play. The Director will, of course, cast the play and choose the Production Manager, who will in turn then recruit and be responsible for overseeing the work of the remainder of the key production personnel; e.g. Stage Manager, Set Designer, Lighting Director, Sound Director, Properties Manager, Wardrobe Mistress (or Master), Publicity Manager and Front-of-House Manager. These people will in turn be responsible for ensuring that the tasks described in their briefs are carried out and will recruit the remaining members of the production team.

All members of the production team will, of course, liaise with the Director and each other as necessary, but the overall responsibility for seeing that the Director's wishes

are carried out lies with the Production Manager, who should therefore be informed of all important decisions. The committee hopes that by creating this major post the task of directing plays will be made easi

### APS in the Computer Age

More and more APS members are now acquiring computers and, as an added benefit, access to the Internet and e-mail. The latter is an excellent way of communicating with people, and is potentially a useful way of sending 'Grapevine information'—usually last minute changes to the programme—more easily and cheaply than by telephone. I already have some e-mail addresses (J. Hepple, A. McEvoy, A. & G. Manns, D. & S. Smith, and J. Thompson); if anyone else has Internet access just send me an e-mail at [lambert.ridge@virgin.net](mailto:lambert.ridge@virgin.net) and I can pick up your address from your message. Those of you who do not have computers, don't worry; you will still be contacted by telephone.

Mark Lambert

## Prompt Corner

Thur. 9th – Sat. 11th March

**Dorset Drama League Festival** of one-act plays. Shaftesbury Arts Centre.  
APS are not entering a play this year.

### The Constant Wife

Sat. March 18th Set up in Digby Hall  
Mon. 20th – Wed 22nd. Technical/Dress  
Thur. 23rd – Sat. 25th. Performances  
Sun 26th. Strike set

Wednesday 5th April

### Workshop on Acting

An evening of Exploration  
and Practice of Acting with  
Eve Snell, Michael Baatz and Steve Evans  
7.30 p.m. Digby Memorial Hall, Digby Rd

Wednesday 24th May

### An unrehearsed play-reading

Conducted by Anthony Stephens  
7.30 p.m. at The Crown Inn