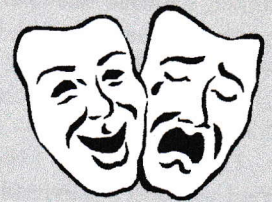




NEWS LETTER



AUGUST 2003



During one of the best summers for years we failed to put on an outdoor production. But then again could we really have tolerated performing, let alone setting up, in the heat of those first two weeks in August! Glorious weather, though, tempered only by our sadness at the death of Joy Saunders at the end of July. More, much more, about Joy elsewhere in this Newsletter, but for now on to APS business.



AGM

The AGM passed swiftly and fairly uneventfully. During matters arising from the previous year's minutes, the subject of the toilet facilities was raised and members will be glad to hear that steps have since been taken to improve the state of the loos (see next page).

The retiring Chairman, Jason Hepple, then reviewed the previous year's productions and events. In his closing remarks he commented that the life of the APS is all about quality, energy and membership, and that although the quality of shows is very high, we are still failing to attract enough younger actors. He also mentioned that there was the possible opportunity of moving to a new clubroom at Vestbury Hall, and a discussion followed on the advantages and disadvantages of moving.

The Treasurer reported that we had had a good year financially, with an overall profit of £1707, which was due largely to the £1300 profit made on last summer's production of *Twelfth Night*.

Elections were held and Tony Field, Pauline Tillet and Mark Lambert were re-elected unopposed as President, Secretary and Membership Secretary respectively.

Grateful thanks are due to the retiring Chairman, Jason Hepple, and Treasurer, Janet Vincent, both of whom have worked very hard in their respective roles during the past two years. In their places Jennie Ward and Ed Oaksford were elected unopposed as Chairman and Treasurer.

Newly elected to the Committee were Patrick Knox and Carolyn Faussett. They replace retiring Committee Members Tony Birks-Hay and Kathy Messenger, to whom the society is also indebted for their hard work and contribution over the past few years.

After a few minor items had been raised under any other business, the meeting was closed and we enjoyed a pleasant party.

Membership

As always Membership subscriptions (still only a mere £10 for adults and a footling £2 for students) are due on or before the Chairman's Opening Night. Again as always, can I plead with you to pay your subs promptly. Many of you are really good about this, but there always seem to be a dozen or so people who let it slip. Please don't; prompt payment really does make life less complicated for me and the Treasurer!

Another plea. **If you do not intend rejoining this year, please could you let me know;** it will save me a lot of time sending out unwanted Newsletters and subscription reminders later on. All it takes to make my life easier is a quick phone call (01258 817270) or e-mail (lambert.ridge@virgin.net) so please do contact me.

Forthcoming events

The first evening of the season, The **Chairman's Opening Night** will this year take place on Friday 5th September. Jennie Ward, our new Chairman, will arrange an entertainment and food will be provided, but please bring a plate and cutlery to eat with. Drinks may be purchased at the bar at a nominal cost.

On Thursday 18th September, Ed Oaksford invites you to an evening we have

Prompt Corner

All events at 7.30 pm in the Clubroom unless otherwise indicated

Friday 5th September
Chairman's Opening Night
With an entertainment arranged by Jennie Ward

Thursday 18th September
Chinese Whispers
How good is your acting and how observant are you?
Arranged by Ed Oaksford

Tuesday 14th October
Play reading of 'Nude with Violin' –
Arranged by Jennie Ward

Monday 10th November
Unrehearsed play reading
Arranged by Joy Parkinson

Saturday 22nd November
'Get in' day for Autumn production
Digby Hall, start about 9.00 am

Thursday 27th - Saturday 29th November
Autumn Production, Hedda Gabler
Directed by Diane Spencer
Performances, 7.30 pm Digby Hall,

Tuesday 9th & Wednesday 10th December
Auditions for 'Nude with Violin'
Directed by Jennie Ward

Friday 19th December
Christmas Party
Entertainment by Chris Jessiman

Officers and Committee

2003-2004

President
Tony Field

Chairman
Jennie Ward

Secretary
Pauline Tillet

Treasurer
Ed Oaksford

Membership Secretary
Mark Lambert

Committee Members
**Margaret Dixon, Carolyn Faussett
Jakki Gregory, Jill Hudson
Patrick Knox, Joy Parkinson**

Forthcoming Productions

2004

SPRING
Nude With Violin
by Noel Coward
Directed by Jennie Ward

SUMMER
Macbeth
by William Shakespeare
Directed by Jason Hepple

AUTUMN
The Farndale Avenue.....Macbeth
by Royce Ryton
Directed by Fizz Lewis

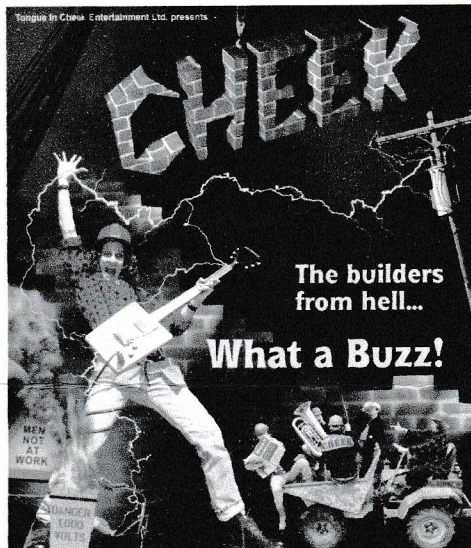
entitled **Chinese Whispers**. I'm not going to give too much away about this, except to say that it will test both your powers of observation and your acting skills, so come along to find out more.

Then on Tuesday 14th October, Jennie Ward will host a **playreading** of *Nude With Violin*, the play planned for our next spring production. This is not an audition, merely a chance for you to find out more about the play prior to the actual auditions in December.

On Monday 10th November Joy Parkinson will host an **unrehearsed play reading**, by which time we will be running up to the **autumn production**, which at the time of writing is still *Hedda Gabler*, directed by Diane Spencer, although casting has presented some problems. Production week starts with the get-in on Saturday 22nd November and performances are on Thursday 27th, Friday 28th and Saturday 29th November.

Auditions for the spring production, *Nude With Violin*, will take place on Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th December. More details about this play will appear in the next Newsletter. The final event before Christmas will be our **Christmas party** on Friday 19th December. Chris Jessiman has kindly agreed to put on an entertainment, so this should be good.

Incidentally you will see in the panel overleaf that the name of the Scottish Thane appears twice in the list of forthcoming



The six singing builders from hell. Slapstick comedy, crazy dances and ingenious 'tool' percussion.

The Site electrician literally 'conducts' the proceedings, shortcircuiting everything with his shovel and bog-seat guitars. Meanwhile a bodger-builder phone-in has irate callers furious about Cheek's shoddy workmanship and bone-idleness. Songs include 'Builder's Bum' and 'Jesus was a Carpenter'. Routines include The Wheelbarrow Waltz and The Sledgehammer Swing.

Having started at the Edinburgh Festival Mark Freestone is currently touring the country in this hilarious production, which will arrive at Weymouth Pavilion (01305 783225) on November 7th.

productions. This is not a mistake. The summer production will be a production of Shakespeare's play, but the Autumn production will be quite different. The full title of the play is *The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society's Production of Macbeth*, but don't expect to see this title in full again very often! For obvious reasons the cast consists mostly of women, and the play is hilarious. More about this production next year.

APS in Sherborne Museum

Next year the Players will have been a part of Sherborne life for exactly 70 years. To mark APS's contribution to the town over the years Jill Hudson came up with the idea of creating a display that illustrates our history. As a result a framed and glazed board can now be seen hanging in the town museum.

Due to the restrictions space (27" x 34"), it is of necessity a brief summary of the Players' history from 1934 to 2003. Each decade is described in a short piece of text together with, in most cases, a single photograph taken from one of the productions during that decade. A miniature copy of the museum board can be seen on the Clubroom Noticeboard.

APS Clubroom

As you may have gathered, there has been some discussion recently about the possibility of APS moving to the Westbury Hall. However, after considerable debate and negotiation, the Committee has decided that the considerable increase in costs involved in such a move cannot be justified. So, at least for time being, we remain at Sherborne House.

With this in mind, improvements have been made and more are planned. The loos are now all in working order and have been cleaned; many thanks to Tony Field for this effort. There is even talk of slapping a bit of paint on the walls.

The possibility of installing washing up facilities in the storeroom is also being investigated. Water supply is relatively easy; there is a source of water reasonably close by. However, drainage may be more of a problem. Watch this space.

Regarding the Clubroom itself, we no longer have a Clubroom Manager—it is quite a burden for one person to keep having to clean up after everyone else; many thanks to Daphne Clapperton for taking on this task for the past two years. So first and foremost everyone is asked to try and keep the clubroom tidy. If you make a mess for any reason, it would be appreciated if you would use the Hoover to clean it up. And please rinse out all mugs, glasses after use; there is a tap in the covered way near the entrance, and taps and basins in the toilet block.

However, to make sure that the place gets properly cleaned every so often the

Rosebowl Nominations

Two nominations have arrived: **Patrick Knox** for **Best Supporting Performance Drama** (Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, summer 2002) and **Mark Freestone** for **Best Actor Drama** (McMurphy in *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, autumn 2002). Congratulations to both Mark and Patrick for well-deserved nominations; they come as no great surprise to most of us.

We have only just heard this news, so as yet I have no details of the Award Ceremony. But on past form it is likely to be sometime early-mid October, quite possibly in Weston-Super-Mare as last year. APS will pay for up to 10 tickets, which are available, on a first come first served basis, to any paid-up APS member, as well as the nominee and one guest. So if you want to attend, contact The Secretary, Pauline Tillet on 01935 389618.

Committee also plan on devising a cleaning roster. This will involve some members turning up to clean the clubroom, probably no more than once in the year. You can, if you wish, opt out of this roster; we are aware that some older members will prefer not to be included, as well as some of those who live a long way from Sherborne. But we must hear from you if you want your name left off the list. If we do not hear to the contrary, we will assume that you are willing to help.

Finally

Attendance at the recent auditions for *Hedda Gabler* was disconcertingly low, particularly for an autumn production (cf the auditions for *Ring Round the Moon* two years ago). A similar situation arose with the planned trip to Salisbury Theatre in January; as only four people registered interest the project has been cancelled. We are not sure if the low numbers present at the auditions was due to the nature of the play, apathy or some other factor, but it is worth remembering that we are a theatrical group and our survival therefore does ultimately depend on members wanting to act.

I do hope to see most of you at the opening night. ML

Tasty Ridge Farm Lamb

Last year we had no lambs, due to foot and mouth movement restrictions the previous winter. But this year we are back in production. We have 5 or 6 surplus lambs, so if anyone wants to buy a lamb or half a lamb (butchered to your requirements), let me know. Cost is normally around £35-£45 per lamb. First come, first served. Call me or e-mail (see elsewhere in this Newsletter). ML



Joy in costume as Mrs Cheveley in *An Ideal Husband* (1972).

Joy Saunders

1927 - 2003

Joined APS 1942

President 1993-2000

Chairman 1974-76, 1984-85

Committee Member 1978-81, 1983-84, 1985-86, 1989-92

I joined The Players in 1992 and first met Joy Saunders in November of that year. We were helping front of house, standing on either side of the entrance door to the Digby Hall auditorium and, seeing this new, slightly confused face, she quickly introduced herself, setting out to discover more about me and put me at my ease. She had that gift of making people feel interesting, welcome and valued.

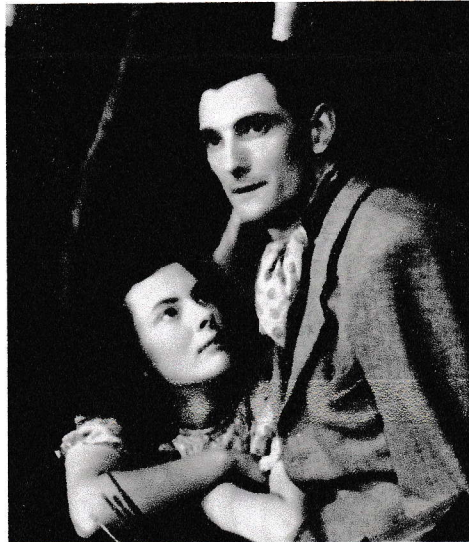
Since then I have cherished her both as a dear friend and as a mine of information, particularly in my role as Membership Secretary. Whenever I telephoned or went to see her, she always wanted to hear the news, both about The Players and my family, and was always delighted to help me in any way she could.

This is the end of an era for The Players. Joy has been so much an integral part of the Society for so long that she leaves a gap that will never be filled. Her father, Fred B. Alcock,

founded APS in 1934 and Joy joined a mere eight years later at the age of 15. In 1946, aged 18, she appeared in *Dear Brutus* together with her proud father—an immense success for Joy, but only the start of a long, busy and fruitful career with The Players.

On the pages that follow you will find some thoughts and memories from Joy's great friend Eve Snell and the entire address given by Jeremy Brett, a former member of The

Joy and Fred in Dear Brutus (1946), in which Joy produced "a tender and lovable study of Margaret". The production won the award for Best Production at the Bristol Amateur Drama Festival, beating the Nomad Repertory Players' production of Hedda Gabler by just two points. I recommend that you read Fred's book, As It Was, for a detailed, moving account.



Players, at Joy's funeral service, which I found both very moving and apposite. My task is to try and fill in the gaps. However, there really isn't room to describe all the roles she played, so alongside I have simply compiled a list—one that spans nearly 60 years!

When not on stage Joy was frequently to be found working backstage, sometimes as ASM, handling props or helping with costumes, but often as not as prompter (many of us have had cause to be very grateful to Joy for her clear, well-timed prompting). If she was not actually involved in a production she would, whenever possible, take a turn helping front of house. And in any case she always took a close interest in each and every production. One way or another, Joy rarely, if ever, missed a production during her 61 years as an APS member.

On stage Joy's acting was never less than excellent, but there were some particularly outstanding performances in roles such as Mrs Cheveley in *An Ideal Husband* (1972), the blind Suzy Henderson in *Wait Until Dark* (1979), Helen Lancaster in *Waters of The Moon* (1983), Bella Manningham in *Gaslight* (1985), Barbara in *Pack of Lies* (1987) and Miss Trafalgar Gower in *Trelawny of The "Wells"* (1996), for which she received that season's Rose Bowl Award for Best Supporting Actress. Her last appearance on stage was as Mrs Culver in *The Constant Wife* (2000). I had the pleasure of being a fellow member of the cast in that production and I can personally vouch for the accuracy of Jeremy Brett's comment about acting with Joy. She was so natural that conversing with her on a stage sofa was just like talking to her in her own home, the only difference being that we had said the words once or twice before.

I was glad to have been able to see her just ten days before she died. I was able to show her the finished APS history board that now hangs in the museum, and give her a miniature copy of it, too. She was delighted with both, and the board, containing as it does photographs of both Joy and Fred, is a fitting tribute to both of them.

It has been a privilege to have known Joy and I know that every one of her family and friends will miss her kindness, thoughtfulness and love, not forgetting her infectious enthusiasm for life in general and especially for APS.

ML

S Productions Joy took part in

- 1942 *Much Ado About Nothing* (a lady)
- 1946 *Dear Brutus* (Margaret)
- 1946 *Quiet Weekend* (Miranda Bute)
- 1947 *Spring 1600* (Anne Byrd)
- 1949 *Berkeley Square* (Marjorie Frant)
- 1949 *Before The Morning* (Grizelda Chard)
- 1950 *The Trick Cyclist* (The Lady Visitor)
- 1951 *Pride and Prejudice* (Jane Bennett)
- 1952 *Treasure Hunt* (Veronica Howard)
- 1958 *On Monday Next* (Sandra Layton)
- 1961 *Tartuffe* (Elmire)
- 1962 *Blithe Spirit* (Ruth)
- 1966 *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (Louise de Keroualle)
- 1966 *Love's a Luxury* (Mrs Charles Pentwick)
- 1968 *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (Pearl Bond)
- 1968 *Present Laughter* (Liz Essendine)
- 1969 *Berkeley Square* (Miss Barrymore)
- 1970 *Love From A Stranger* (Cicely Harrington)
- 1972 *An Ideal Husband* (Mrs Cheveley)
- 1975 *St Aldhelm & Co*
- 1975 *Suddenly At Home* (Sheila Wallis)
- 1976 *The Chalk Garden* (Miss Madrigal)
- 1979 *The Vigil* (Susanna)
- 1979 *Wait Until Dark* (Suzy Henderson)
- 1983 *Waters of The Moon* (Helen Lancaster)
- 1984 *Quality Street* (a lady)
- 1985 *Gaslight* (Bella Manningham)
- 1987 *Pack of Lies* (Barbara)
- 1989 *A Murder Is Announced* (Letitia Blacklock)
- 1996 *Trelawny of The "Wells"* (Miss Trafalgar Gower)
- 2000 *The Constant Wife* (Mrs Culver)

APS Productions Joy directed

- 1971 *The Boyfriend*
- 1974 *The Amorous Prawn*
- 1977 *The Gazebo*
- 1978 *Move Over Mrs Markham*
- 1986 *Deathtrap*

Wait Until Dark (1979)

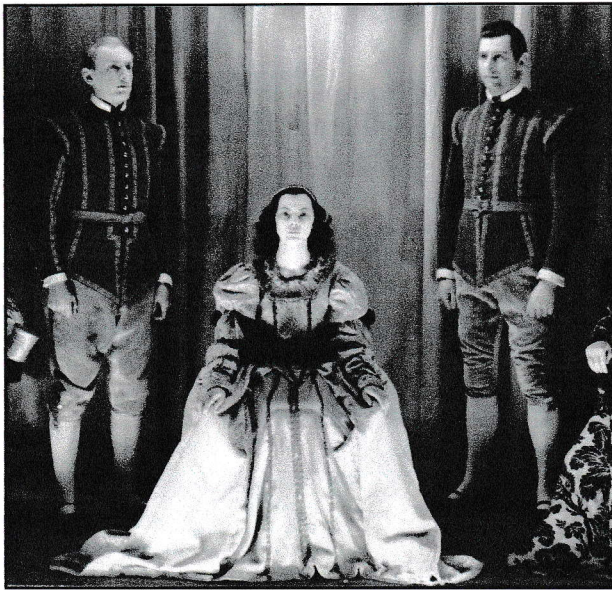
Joy played Suzy Henderson, one of her favourite roles

Excerpt from the Rose Bowl Adjudicator's assessment

The actress in the very difficult part of Suzy Henderson is in complete and authoritative command. Acting a blind person needs much concentration. It is fatally easy to make a wrong move or do something that indicates to the onlooker that you are in fact sighted. Joy Saunders not only avoided all the obvious pitfalls but also created a character in whom one could totally believe. It is a long time since I was so absorbed in a player's work. Fear, suspicion, anger, courage, tenderness and loneliness are some of the things this character has to show in the course of a long evening, and Mrs Saunders was never at a loss with any of these manifestations. In a word, a performance of rare and telling quality.

Excerpt from Western Gazette review, 7 Dec 1979

The success of the production hinged on the portrayal of the flat's blind occupant and Joy Saunders was magnificent. She achieved a high degree of sensitivity in producing a character of indomitable spirit and happy disposition. Her ponderous movements and fixed eyes must have taken considerable self-discipline, but she sustained her performance beautifully and it was easy, if painful, to share her moments of rising panic.



Cyril Copp, Joy Alcock and Jim Saunders in *Spring 1600* (1947). Joy's interpretation of Anne Byrd was described by Edward Stanley, as "lovely and moving and played with a rare and beautiful personality". Jim was not really an actor and it was clear to Fred that he took part in this production just to be near Joy. They were married the following year and remained a devoted couple for over 50 years, until Jim's death in 1998. Needless to say Joy has missed Jim dreadfully during past few years.

Address given by Jeremy Brett at Joy's funeral service in Sherborne Abbey, on August 7th, 2003.

I expect that it's a pretty safe bet that virtually all of us here today know very well that Joy Saunders, throughout nearly all of her life, was a talented and dedicated actress—and when I was thinking about how best I could perhaps summarize her many different qualities, I was tempted to start with a string of theatrical analogies. I could talk about the part she played on the stage of life—you know the sort of thing—but actually that won't do at all. Because I know, and you

Joy Saunders—An Appreciation

It is difficult to imagine the Amateur Players without Joy Saunders, whose presence, support and encouragement was always there for each and every one of us. Joy was a warm and loving friend, not only to the Players but to everybody. She was part of the fabric of Sherborne and it would take her twice as long as anybody else to walk down Cheap Street, due to the number of people who would want to stop and chat—she was always interested in what one had to say and what one was doing.

Next to her family, the APS was the most important thing in Joy's life, and her knowledge of past productions and the players who had appeared in them was prodigious. Whatever the query Joy always came up with the answer. When I was compiling the archives, Joy's help was invaluable; I could not have done it without her. Of course, she loved the professional theatre as well. She and I made many happy excursions to Bath and Salisbury, and how we enjoyed discussing and criticising it all on the journey home.

Joy knew hard times, but she never grumbled, and envy was not in her nature. When her last illness finally overtook her, she faced up to it and fought that battle, too, with her characteristic bravery and optimism.

Dear Joy, how we shall miss you. But your presence will always be with us, your Amateur Players, whose name and standards we will endeavour to preserve as our loving tribute and memorial to you.

Eve Snell

know, that Joy was such a genuine and sincere person, that it was real life, and not make believe, that was most important to her, and that the roles she really valued were the ones she played as a daughter, a wife, a mother, a grandmother and an aunt, and as a friend to everyone who knew her.

Joy's father, Fred Alcock, was a bank clerk, later to become bank manager, and when he moved with his wife to Sherborne in 1927, he was a man with a mission. That mission was an absorbing interest in the theatre, and in due course Fred duly founded the Amateur Players of Sherborne the drama group that continues in such strength today. To Fred's great delight, Joy, and later her sister Judy, inherited all his love of the stage, and while Joy was still a pupil at St Anthony's Convent, in Westbury, she made a stunning debut in the play *Dear Brutus*. This was an ambitious production which was entered for, and which won the drama festival at the Theatre Royal in Bristol! The following year saw the APS back in Bristol again, this time with *Spring 1600*, and it was as the result of another outstanding performance from Joy that she was offered an engagement at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company, and a place in its theatre school. This she absolutely adored. But soon, however, there was a conflict with the other great love of her life, her fiancé Jim—who had incidentally insisted that Joy accepted the opportunity she had earned.

Jean Harrap, Joy Saunders, Meg Whittingdale, Tarn Bradley-Carter and Tony Field, in *Waters of the Moon* (1983). Joy's Helen Lancaster was described as "an outstanding performance of ridiculous extravagance" that demanded "the undivided attention of the audience".





Gaslight (1985): Dod Pearson, Joy Saunders, Lance Salway, Maxine Watts and Jeff Freeman. Joy's performance as Mrs Manningham, the subservient wife of the evil Jack Manningham (Jeff Freeman) was a "well-observed portrayal of the gradual breakdown of spirit under mental torture".



Meg Whittingdale, Lucy Garrett, Joy Saunders, Jennie Ward, Jill Hudson, Meg Hulme and Mandy Kippax in A Murder Is Announced (1989).

It was the love of Jim that proved to be the stronger, and Joy returned to Sherborne to get married, and she and Jim started to raise their family. Jim was a prominent business man in the town, and was active in many organisations such as the Rotary Club, and the urban District Council. Joy, of course, supported him in all that he did, and her charming presence enlivened many a formal function, and helped turn them into fun occasions.

Joy and Jim started their married life in the flat in Digby Road where they ended up, but most of their life together was spent in the charming house called Honeycomb, in Bradford Road—and it is a great testament to both of them that their sons have such a store of happy memories of growing up there. Joy's powerful love of her family extended in equal measure to her grandchildren, her daughters in law, and her nieces, and I'm sure that all of them as well as all of us, have their own particular reason for being thankful to Joy for some special acts of love and kindness that they have received.

All the while, of course, Joy was enthusiastically supporting the Amateur Players. She had stints as Chairman, and ten years as President, and if she wasn't acting in a play, or producing one, she would be involved in some other capacity—selling programmes, or prompting. If you had the good fortune to act in a play alongside Joy, hers was a most reassuring presence. Her acting was immensely sensitive, and technically brilliant, and you had that comfortable feeling that while she was on stage, then nothing would go wrong. Her sense of humour, though, was such that she could never take anything too seriously. My wife Ann recalls being in a costume drama with Joy, when they were both sitting side by side on stage, decorously shielding their faces behind their ornamental fans, and Joy making whispered comments about the quality of the night's audience, where they would meet for coffee the next day, and what they were having for supper tonight.

As a director, or producer as she preferred to be called, she had the happy knack of getting the very best out of all of the cast, and would modestly deflect any credit away from herself, and towards the actors. Above all, being involved in a play with Joy was always a rewarding experience and was great fun. There must be literally hundreds of people who are grateful to Joy for happy times spent with the APS.

As I am sure many of you can testify, Joy—and was anyone more aptly named—Joy was a wonderful person to have as a friend. She belonged to that diminishing group of people, but there are still a few of us left, who have virtually no use whatsoever for such things as fax machines, e-mails and mobile phones. Yet she was a great communicator. Any hospitality she received would be followed the very next day by a hand-written note of thanks. She was a person

who had strongly held opinions on a wide variety of subjects, not least the welfare of her beloved home town. But speaking as one who has known her for the whole of my life, I can never remember her saying a cruel or unkind word about anyone. If you met Joy in the street, and stopped for a five minute chat, you would always go on your way feeling much the better for it, and be looking forward to the next time your paths would cross.

So you can see that Joy was indeed a very special person. She was always keen to help other people, and was a wonderful example of a practising Christian, with a particular fondness for the Evensong Service in this Abbey, which she faithfully attended for so many years. Nothing, I think, better illustrates the *depth* of Joys' faith and the *strength* of her character than her conduct during the last few months of her life, which as you know were sadly spent in hospital.

Ann, my wife, visited Joy 3 or 4 times each week during that period—my role was that of being chauffeur and dealing with the problems of parking a car anywhere near Yeovil Hospital—and Ann would regularly tell me of Joy's inspirational cheerfulness, forbearance and optimism during such a painful and harrowing time. When the end was approaching, Joy was ready and prepared for it—even down to having planned this service—and she had absolutely no fear of death.

So now it is, just briefly, back to the theatrical analogy. Sadly the curtain has fallen on Joy's earthly life, but all of us here, who knew her, and who loved her, can readily imagine Joy, with that lovely smile on her face and the twinkle in her eyes, as she steps out with confidence onto the greater stage of paradise, for which her earthly life so wonderfully prepared her.

Jeremy Brett



Trelawny of The Wells (1996): Natalie Cox, Kieran Millar, Vivian Vale and Joy Saunders