



IN THE WINGS

COBHAM PLAYERS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2008

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the spring issue of "In The Wings" and a very warm welcome to the first edition of our diamond anniversary year. As you know, we have a year packed with fantastic productions starting off with a cast of thousands (well 20 odd which after all is the equivalent of Ben Hur for Cobham Players) in *The Comedy of Errors*. Rehearsals have been going well with the cast getting to grips with the challenge of Shakespeare and yours truly being beaten roundly and used head first as a battering ram. Sitting on a hospital chair was a lot more peaceful! Anyway cast and crew have been working hard to produce a fantastic production and I hope you have all bought your tickets. The Friday night is of course our gala night, free sparkling wine and lots of glitz and glamour (quick reminder: I am in sales and this is the Village Hall in case I'm overdoing it a bit) and we have the honour of welcoming the Mayor of Elmbridge and various councillors who are gracing us with their presence to celebrate 60 years of theatre in Cobham. We do hope you will all join us on one of the evenings and don't forget to put the other anniversary productions in your diary: *Noises Off* and *Cinderella* (latter to be confirmed.)

On the subject of the anniversary, the committee have been undecided whether to hold a social event in the summer to celebrate 60 years. Traditionally our social events rarely attract more than about 30 people and we will have the usual "Back from the Summer" evening (see Dates for Your Diary) and a Christmas event. So I am appealing to you

all to let me know if you are interested and whether you would commit to attending or whether you feel the normal social events are enough. Please find e-mail and telephone number below to leave your feedback.

Finally whilst the future is so exciting, we should take time to remember our recent successes. Alan Wiseman led a wonderful performance of *Beauty and the Beast* which was thoroughly enjoyed by the audiences and cast. It was his first time directing pantomime and took to it like a pro. A special mention to Andrew Mair who was both sound and the band, single handed! Clever huh? This was the first time we used backing tracks and he sourced all the music as well as the sound effects. Also a big thank you to Roger Jones and Hilary Baker, their first time designing and building the sets which included a French market town, a castle that spoke, a sedan chair complete with it's own set of furry dice and a statue of Harry Sadler! It was a wonderful set and truly lifted the performance. Thank you to Alan, Roger, Hilary, Andrew and all the many people who help get panto on stage every year.

I look forward to seeing you all at *The Comedy of Errors* and speaking to everyone over this anniversary year. As a final reminder the AGM is on 3rd June. Please do attend and let me have any nominations for people who would like to join the committee.

Mary Taylor

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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

Well, the show is now truly on the road and what an exhilarating ride it has proved to be. Not that I anticipated anything less.

It does seem strange to be writing this when at least a third of the membership is actively involved either in the cast or as part of the production team, not to mention those who will take responsibility for FOH and bar duties. Other halves, you have been warned. Your help will be sought.

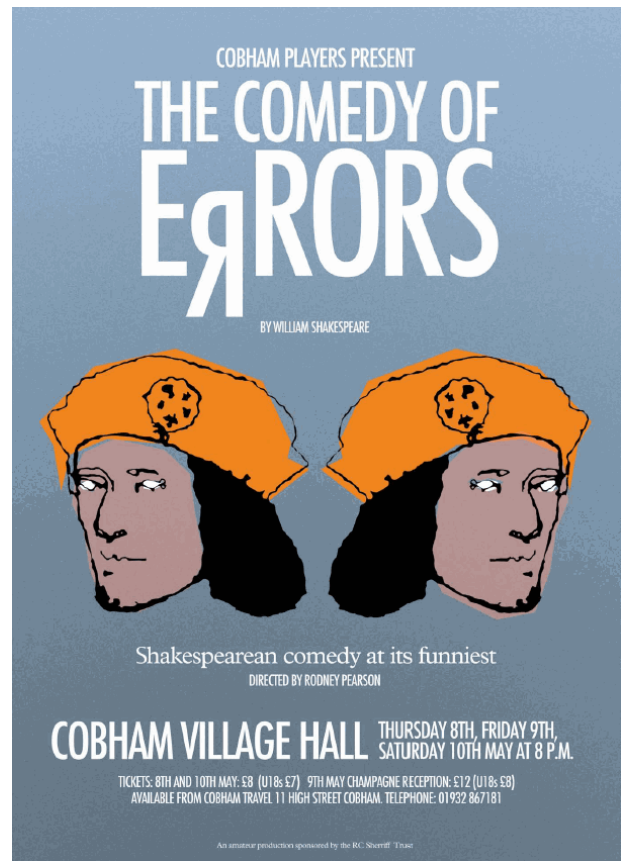
Due to the size of the cast – 18 in total – and the way the play is structured, rehearsals here initially concentrated on the central sections of the play with the beginning and end - which involve crowd scenes - not starting until a month later. This seems to have worked well for the purposes of maintaining interest and not wasting time.



The Comedy of Errors has the potential to be an extremely funny play if presented in the right manner. We have therefore approached it in a way that will extract the maximum amount of humour from both some very clever

wordplay and great opportunities for physical comedy. The play has its roots in commedia dell'arte which in turn gave birth to pantomime and there is a huge amount of stage business that should keep audiences of all ages well entertained. As Shakespeare's shortest play with a running time of no more than two hours, it is believed to have been written as an after dinner entertainment for a special occasion, a night of revelry at Gray's Inn.

For anyone not in the know, *The Comedy of Errors* revolves around the farcical mishaps that result from the mistaken identities of two sets of identical twins that coincidentally happen to be in the port of Ephesus on the same day. Add to this a neurotic wife, her jealous spinster sister, a witch doctor, a courtesan, a goldsmith, a gaoler and a very angry creditor and hilarity unavoidably ensues. However, it is



not all mirth and mayhem. The story has a dramatic beginning with the father of one of the sets of twins under sentence of death, where he remains for the duration of the play. Happily, it all ends with a joyful family reunion. On the way, Shakespeare makes a number of telling points about relationships and the position that men and women find themselves in society.

We have also raised the production standards for this play with costumes hired mainly from either the RSC or the Royal National Theatre and the construction by virtue of Roger Jones of an 8ft wide thrust that runs across the front of the stage, extending it out towards the audience. This will accommodate both the requirements for this play and lend flexibility for staging future productions.

The Comedy of Errors is very accessible for audiences as a Shakespearean play and is great entertainment for young and old. Please do come along yourselves but also bring your friends and families to mark a special production as part of Cobham Players' diamond year. There is likely to be a big demand for tickets and so book early to avoid disappointment.

Rodney Pearson

THE EDITOR ASKS... MARY WORSFOLD AND ALAN WISEMAN

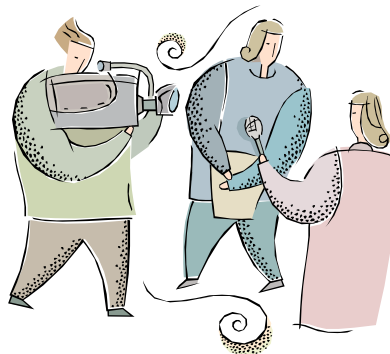
E. What are your early recollections of St. Andrew's Players?

M. These really go back to before the formation of St. Andrew's' Players. As part of the Young People's Fellowship I was asked to play the angel Gabriel in a Christmas Nativity to be done in St. John's Church in Copse Road (I was a very blonde teenager at the time!) and the Reverend Anido, the rather rotund curate at the time, played Herod. I remember he literally threw himself into a chair and nearly off it in a rage - all part of the plot. It was the Reverend who posed the question to the local papers "Why was there no dramatic society in a village the size of Cobham?" Alice Forder went on to write our first pantomime *Aladdin* which is where Alan came in!

A. The first proper production under the name St. Andrew's Players was the pantomime, *Aladdin* in 1949 and my task, as little brother of Mary, the Princess, aged eight, was to run across the stage in Chinese costume (and the incriminating photographs still exist in the archives.) This was my first ever appearance on any stage.

E. Which production, in which you have been involved, means the most to you? Why and what was your role?

M. This is the really difficult question. I suppose the production which I am most proud of is *The Lion in Winter*. I had a perfect cast - they were even reading up on the Plantagenets in their spare time! Wonderful set from son Mark, son David on the lights and daughter Penny doing the box office - it was a family affair! I directed and Alan shaved off his beard to play Henry - our Queen Eleanor had foot operations and we did all rehearsals at her home as she could hardly move from her chair but she was superb on opening night as were they all!



A. Firstly, as Director for *The Crucible*' (1970). Up to that time, the Players' diet had consisted basically of comedies, farces and thrillers, in common with the style of most companies. I wanted to do something more ambitious and the committee asked to me present Arthur Miller's play which, with our facilities and membership at the time, seemed, initially, impossible. However, one lunchtime session in a pub produced about twelve new members, including an experienced stage manager, set builder, designer, wardrobe mistress and several new actors, and the production eventually played to packed houses and was hugely successful.

As an actor, my favourite part was Henry II in *The Lion in Winter* (1992), directed by Mary, in which, possibly for the first time, I was given the chance to play a really classic "lead".

E. What has changed most over the years in terms of facilities (on and off-stage) and technical support?

M. I have now done productions in three halls - the original School Hall in Cedar Road (really terrible acoustics), to the old Village Hall in Anyards Road and our new Village Hall. I thoroughly concur with Alan's comments on halls (see below - Ed.) and I do not think I can add anything.

A. The old Victorian Village Hall in Anyards Road was decrepit, battered and potentially dangerous - but we could do anything with it, although we had to install our own lights and even lighting board each time. The acoustics were good, there were several useful back rooms, access to the stage from both sides, and beams above the stage from which scenery could be suspended. When our venue was replaced in 1987, we looked forward to a new hall and stage, with better space and facilities but our Chairman, the great Myra Leatherdale, warned us "you will hate it!"

The new Village Hall, while larger and cleaner, presented us then (and still does) with enormous problems, with inadequate changing rooms, poor lighting, uncomfortable seats for the audience, no method of supporting scenery (so all our flats had to be rebuilt) and poor acoustics.

Despite the inadequacies of our theatre, I have been delighted with the much, much higher standards of acting, production and ambition over the years - our overall standard, which needed to improve with much greater competition from other companies, the media and the expectations and sophistication of our audiences, is now very high indeed and I am proud to be a member when we have so much talent around .

E. What is/are, for you, the most memorable episode(s) in your experience with St. Andrew's Players/Cobham Players? Why?

M. The most memorable for me I suppose has to be 'Cowardy Custard' a compilation taken from the Mermaid Theatre's production. This was our first "musical" play, the first to have a gala night with supper and the last to be done at the old Village Hall. This should have had a cast of twelve but we managed with nine. We couldn't do it now I suppose as it required a great deal of running around backstage with very quick changes and exiting stage left only to re-appear almost immediately stage right. The only scenery required was a cocktail bar, two stools and a London cut-out backdrop which Mark was still painting on Thursday afternoon! I remember it especially for the fact that many people did things they never thought they could - and believe me never let anyone tell you that Noel Coward's music is easy (on checking I find that we did over 50 musical pieces and 21 pieces of prose or excerpts).. I was also lucky enough to have the wonderful Barry Jackson on a lovely white baby grand piano hired from Sheargold's, and Barry and Marigold let us do all rehearsals at their home in Send – yes, quite a way to go for rehearsals. By the way, I was the

Director or should I say the person who put it all together.

A. Knowing, for so many years, the redoubtable Myra Leatherdale who, with her lorgnettes, long cigarette holder, acute upper-class accent, had nevertheless, forgotten more about drama than most of us will ever learn and single handedly kept the old company together for so many years, even though she scared the living daylight out of me most of the time.

Dying on stage in 'The Hollow' and never, not having read the rest of the play, finding out who had murdered me

In the role of a policeman at the end of 'Ghost Train,' handcuffing the villain and not being able to release the handcuffs off stage so that she had to take her bow still in manacles.

Jan Petman going into the kitchen to prepare coffee, switching on the gas, going off to find some matches, returning to the kitchen and striking a match- the resultant explosion wrecked the kitchen and nearly demolished the Hall, Jan herself, incredibly, was unhurt having been blown about twenty feet through two doors.

E. How has the society changed overall since you have known it?

M. I have not been so involved over the past few years and I think the main difference I notice is the movement of some of our members from one company to another. I can understand, though, that if you are burning to act and you do not have a part in a current play you will look elsewhere but do wonder where loyalties lie! Alan's comments are probably more relevant than mine.

A. We have so much more talent and enthusiasm to work with. When I joined, we were a bunch of people living in what was the still a village who went on stage. because our friends were there and it was something to do.

Now we attract folk who are really keen and knowledgeable about theatre and yet we have succeeded in maintaining the

"family" atmosphere. Because we are all so mobile these days and Cobham has often such a transitory audience, the old family connections are few and far between, but it is lovely to see a regular influx of new, talented actors and (most importantly) technical experts in set building, design, lighting and sound, and so many people with ambition and ideas.

But what has not changed, thankfully, is the good nature of the company and the welcome offered to newcomers and the loyalty and willingness of virtually everyone to "muck in" for the benefit of the Players. Believe me, this is a rare attribute in many of the amateur dramatic companies I have known.

E. What would you like to see as the future for Cobham Players?

M. Carry on producing plays - good plays. From audience comments I find that fairly traditional plays of all kinds are most welcome and please, - NO REPEATS. Do

some more Christmas plays or perhaps an occasional Musical Hall - always a money spinner!!

A. Keep up the good work - and stay friends. But let's, please, avoid repeating plays we have performed before - it rarely works - and concentrate on full-scale plays as I find that audiences don't much like a compilation of short plays and sketches.

We have a duty, however, to our own members to put their talents to good use and stretch their abilities, and to give everyone the chance to experiment and perhaps play against type, not forgetting, though, Myra Leatherdale's famous dictum "Remember that you are the only people who ask their friends to pay good money to see them carry out their hobby".

Mary Worsfold


Alan Wiseman

Mike Dawes



FROM PAST MEMBERS

♥ On the occasion of our 60th anniversary, two past members have written in.

♥ "Dec" Cleary, now living in Cowes, Isle of Wight, writes:
Dear Nan,

I was delighted to receive a copy of the Christmas 2007 newsletter – and it was with great interest that I note that the players are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year.

I had the pleasure of being a member of St. Andrew's Players between 1959 and 1963 – and it was with some pride that I looked back at the 'photos and news clippings of the shows I was associated with. My first appearance was in 1959 in *Fools Rush In*, playing opposite Ann

Burley and with such stalwarts as Bill Nichols and Ruth Geldart. I believe Mary Fitzgerald and Minnie Christmas were also in that production. Then there was *The Paragon* and *Doctor in the House* in 1960 and *Sabrina Fair* in 1961. In 1962 there was *The Brides of March* and in 1963 I appeared in *The Amorous Prawn*.

It was in 1963 that a new member of St. Andrew's Players, Hohn Morgan, asked the committee if the society would present the (then) very controversial play *Look Back in Anger*. The committee decided against it and there was formed a company (made up of St. Andrew's Players) called The Elizabethans. We performed the controversial play at the school in Ross Road. It was well supported – but I recall that what passes now for acceptable theatre was at that time quite groundbreaking. John Morgan was superb in the role of Jimmy Porter

and his wife Valerie played Alison. I played Cliff, the Welsh friend of the couple, and the production also featured Alan Wiseman.

All of that was some 45 years ago and I now look back with great affection to my association with the company. I learned a great deal about stagecraft and directing under the guidance of Myra Leatherdale. And I recall with affection other members of the society who were active at that time: Jack Leatherdale, Bill and Martin Nichols, Ruth Geldart, Dougie Williams, Maryt Worsfold, Mary Fitzgerald, John Deal, Sylvia Burley, Kendal Horitz... and so many others.

I look forward to hearing about the plans for the celebration of the 60th anniversary and would hope to attend whatever show is planned to celebrate that milestone.

Patrick Irving writes:

I joined St Andrew's Players as a teenage schoolboy in 1963 and left the group in 1974 when my wife and I moved to London. Myra Leatherdale was the Chairman through out my membership and I served on the committee for five years including two as the Treasurer. In 1965 I played my first part as Jan Warwick in *The Unexpected Guest* and my final appearance in 1974 was as Commander Frencham in *Not now, Darling*.

There were many roles over the years but my particular love and talent was for the slapstick comedy in the pantomimes and the pace and timing of farce. This led to my being asked to direct *Stand by your Bedouin* in 1972, which has many fond memories for me. The first night was a catalogue of mistakes which though they achieved much laughter from the audience it was not what the playwright had intended. Prior to the next performance I got the cast together and gave them an honest appraisal and pep talk. Well, it worked and the production was a huge success with notable performances from every member of the cast. During this production little did I know that one of the

cast was to become my ex girlfriend and another member was to become my wife. Fortunately this happened the following year!

My future wife was Annabel Walter who joined St. Andrew's Players in 1971. Her first role was Mrs Lutz in *Johnny Belinda* and her final part was Polly Flinders in *Babes in the Wood*.

The pantomimes were not only great fun to do but were very popular and used to get our largest audiences. My late mother was one of our two pianists for these shows. It soon became a tradition for the cast to celebrate the last performance in the Plough at Downside including a loud rendition of the songs from the show to the amusement of the pub other customers.

I thoroughly enjoyed my involvement with St. Andrew's Players and will never forget the camaraderie of a truly diverse group of people who shared a passion for the stage. Annabel and I regularly see Sue Gibbs (née Russell) and Andrew Bouldin and St. Andrew's Players memories will never fade for any of us.

(I met Patrick on a course at Harvard Business School in 1988, not knowing then his previous association with St. Andrew's Players – Ed.)

MEMBERSHIP

We say in Cobham Players that we always welcome new members – and that is no hollow statement. A society such as ours will continue to thrive if it attracts, through its good name and reputation, people of all ages and talents to become involved in our activities.

You will find with this mailing of In The Wings a leaflet which may be of use in telling people about Cobham Players. So please give it to anyone you know who may be interested in being part of amateur dramatics.

Mike Dawes

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
2008**

If you know anyone who would be interested in joining Cobham Players please ask them to complete the form opposite!

28 April – 3 May

Mack & Mabel

Music and Lyrics by Jerry Herman
Walton and Weybridge Amateur

Dramatic Society

The Playhouse, Walton-on-Thames
Box Office 01483 770130

8 – 10 May

The Comedy of Errors

by William Shakespeare

Directed by Rodney Pearson

3 June

Cobham Players AGM

Cobham Village Hall 8 p.m.

8 July

Audition for *Noises Off*

Directed by Ian Ganderton

Cobham Village Hall 8 p.m.

5 September

Welcome back from Summer party

30 October – 1 November

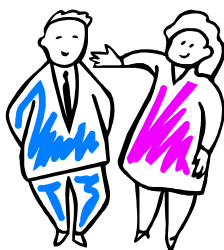
Noises Off

by Michael Frayn

Directed by Ian Ganderton

Cobham Village Hall 8 p.m.

AVE ATQUE VALE



We welcome Louise Myson as a Gold Member and Jenny Shaw and Lizzi O'Mahony as Junior Members

COBHAM PLAYERS

Renewal/Membership Application

I/we wish to renew/apply for membership of

Cobham Players

Names(s).....

.....
.....
.....

Address

.....
.....

Postcode

Email

.....

Phone

(Day)

(Eve)

If you do not wish your name and telephone number to be distributed to the members, please tick here:

	Subscription	No required
Gold	£12	
Silver	£ 6	
Junior	£ 2.50	
Patron	£25	

I enclose payment of £.....

Gold membership includes newsletter, performing rights, voting rights, a free drink per production, and social events.

Silver membership includes newsletter & social events, but does not permit holders to perform on stage.

Junior membership includes newsletter and performing rights for those under 16 years.

Patron membership includes all Gold membership benefits, name on patron page in all programmes. Minimum patron level: £25.

Please return this form with cheque payable to Cobham Players to:

Nancy Sadler

**Cobham Players Membership
2 York Gardens, Walton on Thames
Surrey KT12 3ER**

AND FINALLY...

Since 1948 St. Andrew's Players and Cobham Players have put on over 200 shows for the local community.

Have a look at the clues below regarding the productions that have been staged and arrange the letters into a word that is particularly relevant to our society now in 2008!

- 1 Two identical aircraft companies? (3rd letter)
- 2 Future mayor of London (8th letter)
- 3 He of the lamp (7th letter)
- 4 Deck of non-truths (2nd letter)
- 5 A Medic at Home (5th letter)
- 6 Friday's friend (3rd letter)
- 7 10x furniture (12th letter)
- 8 Dormant belle (3rd letter)
- 9 Wendy's friend (5th letter)
- 10 Book by Joe Masteroff, lyrics by Fred Ebb (1st letter)
- 11 Shod feline (5th letter)

E-mail your answers to mike@aviation1st.co.uk by 30th April 2008.

There are no prizes – just the accolade of being mentioned in the autumn edition of ITW. What more could you want?