

The header features a grey background with two theatrical masks (one sad, one happy) on either side, each with a diamond and colorful rays emanating from it. The title 'IN THE WINGS' is written in large, bold, serif letters across the top. Below it, 'Diamond Jubilee edition' is written in a smaller font. The main title of the newsletter, 'COBHAM PLAYERS NEWSLETTER', is in a bold, italicized serif font, followed by 'AUTUMN 2008' in a similar font.

IN THE WINGS

Diamond Jubilee edition

COBHAM PLAYERS NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2008

FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN

Well, it seems like a lot has happened since our last communication! Our 60th anniversary year got off to a storming start with the Cobham Players' debut into Shakespeare. I think there were a lot of people who felt we were biting off a bit more than we could chew, but I am glad to say it was a huge success, with audience feedback being some of the best I have heard. Personally for me, it was great to see so many Players involved in a single production, with over 20 people on stage and backstage and also to see so many old Players return to join us in celebrating our anniversary. A very big thank you to Rodney Pearson for taking on the enormous challenge and bringing it to life and fruition; as ever he committed heart and soul to the project and the results reflected this commitment.

And on to the next one... Rehearsals are under way for *Noises Off* and it promises to be a sparkling production under Ian Ganderton's professional guidance. We have decided to run another gala night on Friday to keep our celebrations going and after the great success of the last one. However, we will be going back to tables and chairs so book your seats early if you want the best seats. The staging of *Noises Off* presents us with some significant challenges and we are very pleased to welcome back Mark Worsfold as set designer. He is busy creating the split level double sided set. Naturally a set like this requires a huge amount of back stage help and if you are available to help back stage please get in touch with Mel Cook who is

trying to get a team together. Also I know Karen Budd and Millie Hart on front of house are looking for extra support, so please let them know if you can help there.

It was lovely to see a good turn-out at the AGM in June. We had much discussion around membership and we have passed small increases in the membership charges from May next year. Also sadly Lorraine Mears has resigned as Treasurer; thanks to her for all her work and support in the past year. Happily Andrew Mair was voted in as new Treasurer - thank you, Andrew. Also we welcomed Brian Hulme as a new committee member. As always I would like to thank the committee on behalf of the society for the enormous amount of work they do for the Cobham Players and keeping the cogs of our society well oiled.

At the beginning of September we had a "Back from Summer" party which was well attended and it was great to see drama friends again after a break. On that note we are in the process of organising a Christmas party and if anyone has ideas or suggestions or would like to offer to help please get in touch with myself or Karen Budd (see Karen's article in this newsletter.)

Finally, it was with great sadness that we heard recently of the death of Zene Graham; our thoughts and prayers are with her family and friends. (See obituary on the next page).

Mary Taylor

Mary.desausmarez@kcom.com

01372 841550

ZENOBIA (ZENE) JOAN GRAHAM 1923-2008

Cobham Players announce, with regret, the death of one their favourite members, Zene Graham.

Zene was born, brought up and married in London. Her unusual Christian Name, Zenobia, derived from a queen of Asia Minor who fought against the invading Roman armies. The name was traditional in her family and has so far gone through five generations. Zene only use the full version of her name on programmes.

Following Zene's first stage appearance at the age of eight, she was thereafter never far from her favourite milieu and was awarded a Gold Medal at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. For some time she was a member of Michael Flanders's (remember *At the Drop of a Hat, More Hat, etc.*) company in Highgate, and became locally famous for her monologues and poetry readings, the latter becoming a lifetime devotion.

She moved to Oxshott in 1975 where she joined St. Andrew's Church. In due course she became secretary to the Parochial Church Council, the local Women's Institute and, of course, St. Andrew's (later Cobham) Players. Until her final illness she never missed a production, and appeared in about 15 shows herself.

Among her greatest parts with the Players were Judith Bliss in *Hay Fever* (1975), Madame Desmortes in *Ring Round the Moon* (1976), Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit* (1980), Catherine Petkoff in *Arms and the Man* (1985), Fraulein Blumenblatt in *On The Razzle* (1986) and a magnificent Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Ernest* (1990). Her last appearance was as Grandma in *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* (1993) and she was also an originator, writer and performer in *Adam's Apple*, a theatrical review we held in St. Andrew's Church, Cobham in 2000.



Zene in *Ring Round the Moon*

We will miss her, not only for her stage skills, but for her ever-present smiling face and pertinent but generous advice and comment on all our productions. Our

thoughts, of course, go to her husband, Bob, and her extensive family who attended her funeral on 18th September. This was conducted by Revd. Valerie Pitt, and included a poem by her late great friend, Barbara Garner, who had also been a member of our company.

Zene - rest in peace.

Alan Wiseman

NOISES OFF IS OFF AND RUNNING...

Noises Off is a glorious comic romp, which offers two plays for the price of one! Whilst the traditional British comedy *Nothing On* is being performed, a real life charade unfolds backstage during the show's final rehearsal and the ensuing disastrous tour. Watch as the actors make their exits from one play only to find themselves making entrances in the other - and back again!

Noises Off is one of the funniest nights you'll spend in the theatre, about the theatre! It was a huge critical and audience triumph when it first opened in 1982, winning both the Evening Standard and Olivier Awards for Best Comedy.

Cobham Players was the first amateur company ever to perform *Noises Off* and in my 32nd year with the Society I was delighted to be given the opportunity to revive it for the 60th Anniversary of Cobham Players.

As a professional actor I am used to working under pressure and using high levels of concentration and commitment to achieve quick results. I am asking no less from my cast and I am delighted to say that they are giving me 100%. I am stunned by their commitment to the very tight rehearsal schedule and to the demands of physicality and speed required in this professional level of

production. I am pushing them hard and they are responding magnificently to the challenge.

Melanie Cook, who has kindly stepped in as Producer, is proving invaluable and I am delighted to have Mark Worsfold (ex Stage Manager of Theatre Royal, Basingstoke) to design the set.

After a fiercely competitive audition I have put together what I believe to be the strongest cast I could have wished for (see below). Many of them are regulars on the Cobham Stage, but new to us is Richard Johnson, an actor who will be a great asset to the society and I am delighted that my wife Jenny is returning to the stage after an absence of six years.

By the time you read this we will be well into the rehearsal process and the demands of three Acts, split level staging, mime, physical comedy, fast paced farce, props and playing two characters each will probably be taking their toll but I promise you it will be a show to remember.

Over a million people have wept with laughter at Michael Frayn's sharp and witty multi-award winning comedy, so don't miss the chance to get your hands on the hottest tickets in town!

Ian Ganderton

***Noises Off* cast in order of appearance:**

Dotty Otley / Mrs Clackett
Lloyd Dallas
Garry Lejeune / Roger
Brooke Ashton / Vicki
Poppy Norton-Taylor
Frederick Fellowes / Philip
Belinda Blair /Flavia
Tim Allgood
Selsdon Mowbray / Burglar

Kim Groom
Graham Budd
Ian Ganderton
Jenny Ganderton
Melanie Cook
Richard Johnson
Mary Taylor
Brian Hulme
Harry Sadler

COBHAM HERITAGE DAY

On a bright Saturday morning (September 13th) a group of Cobham Players volunteers gathered at the corner of Church Street with an unimaginable quantity of books, CDs and videos to offer for sale for the benefit of the Shooting Star Hospice. Dressed in costume I think we certainly attracted attention and took the opportunity to advertise our next production, *Noises Off*.

Business was brisk and Andrew Mair reports that we were able to donate £164 to the charity. We were visited by the local press in the afternoon and you may have seen the front page picture in the News and Mail on 17th September!



Yours truly being licked by a real dog

I just managed to NOT get myself arrested when I was joking with someone I thought was in costume (as I was in the cat costume) and then realised that no, he was not in costume but was a real policeman. He jokingly (?) threatened to handcuff me to a lamp post. When we carried on walking down Church Street I thought it a good idea to take off the cat costume in the hope that he wouldn't recognise me should he come past the

stall again. However, when he did pass again he had a good look at all of us and said "It's you, isn't it?" I live to tell the tale. All in all, an excellent day, good money for the hospice and good publicity for our society.

Millie Hart



NOMADS EVENTS

Alan Wiseman will be directing Tom Stoppard's classic existential play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the Nomads Theatre from 18th November – 22nd November. Tickets are £9 and can be obtained from the Box Office (01483 284747) or from Alan.

Our own Victoria Franklin is playing the part of Lettice in extracts from *Lettice and Lovage* by Peter Schaffer as part of a club night on Saturday 25th October at the Nomads Theatre in East Horsley. It is a wonderfully English and eccentric comedy with the wildly theatrical Lettice sparring hilariously with her less flamboyant counterpart, the indomitable Lotte. Alan Wiseman and Elaine Burns are also performing a scene from *Visiting Hour* called *Plaster*, which is the scene we entered recently at the Leatherhead Drama Festival, with Melanie Cook and Phil Paul. The Nomads Club evening is informal and fun – no need to book in advance and no formal admission charge – people may be asked just to make contributions.

CINDERELLA

This year's panto is *Cinderella* by Stephen Duckham, and I'm happy to say it's a fantastic script with some great characters and lots of audience participation, so I know Cobham Players will make it one to remember! The story starts with our Fairy Godmother 'Dot' on the phone to her boss (this is the age where a Fairy's mobile phone is also her wand) being given the job to help Cinderella find her Prince Charming. Despite keeping house for her father Baron Hardup and being at the beck and call of her stepsisters Gorgan and Zola, with the help of the faithful Buttons, Cinders goes to the ball and meets her Prince Charming, whom she thinks is actually the prince's valet Dandini. With me so far? In the meantime there are plenty of antics by the henchmen Snatchit



and Grabbit who are trying to evict Baron Hardup for not keeping up with his rent. As you know, I love panto and encourage as many members as possible, both young and old, to get involved. Auditions are on Wednesday 8th October at the Village Hall, so even if you don't want to tread the boards, please pop down to say 'Hello'. I can guarantee a few laughs. I look forward to seeing you there and cracking on with Cinderella.

Melanie Cook

CAN YOU HELP?



CAN YOU PLAY OR DO YOU KNOW
ANYONE WHO CAN PLAY THE PIANO?

If you do then
COBHAM PLAYERS NEEDS YOU!

I would very much like a pianist for this year's panto,
So if you know anyone, please, PLEASE contact Mel for more
Information on 07793 884908.

OUR SHED

An apocryphal story.

Last summer, there was erected on the car park at the back of the Village Hall a long overdue replacement storage facility to house the society's costumes, props and flats. The contractors proudly described it as a purpose built, free standing timber framed structure. Much to their chagrin, we immediately referred to it as 'The Shed' and the name has stuck.

Not so long afterwards, Millie and I spent a very enjoyable weekend in Stratford-Upon-Avon. We visited the RSC's Costume Warehouse, their Archive Library and saw a production of Richard III at the newly built 'The Courtyard Theatre'. We also booked a backstage guided tour.

Many of you will know that the RSC is spending over £100m redeveloping the riverside area around and including the Royal Shakespeare and Swan Theatres, which are closed for the duration of the work. In order not to lose audiences and also to see how the new theatre would work in practice, a prototype theatre, 'The Courtyard,' was constructed of 'Corten A' steel sheets, red in colour, on the site of the nearby car park and RSC studio venue 'The Other Place'. The cost was £6m. Although on the outside it looks like an enormous container, not dissimilar to the one in which we housed our costumes, inside it has a large thrust stage and a galleried auditorium that seats 1,100. 'The Courtyard', which is built of completely recyclable materials, will be demolished once the redevelopment work has been completed.

On our tour of the theatre, the guide proudly explained that this £6m temporary structure, much to the architect's dismay, is known locally and fondly as 'The Rusty Shed'. Does that ring any bells?

Rodney Pearson



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We are sorry to announce the death of Zene Graham, who was a long-time member and enthusiastic supporter of St. Andrew's and Cobham Players. Alan Wiseman has written a tribute separately in this newsletter.

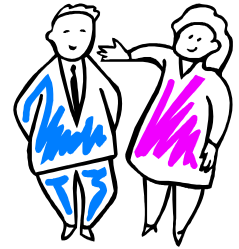
We welcome new Gold members:

Jason Lambert

Linda Birchall

Richard Johnson.

It's great to have you with us and we look forward to the pleasure of your company.



Nan Sadler



SOCIAL

On Saturday 9th August a group from the Players went to Polesden Lacey for their Edwardian Gala Evening. Due to the relentless rain and wind we managed a tour of the house, but then had to leave the gardens and ended up at Bob and Caz Marshalls's house with picnics spread out across their dining table to continue the evening in the dry!

The "welcome Back from Summer" party at our Chairman Mary's home was an outstanding success with a large number of members and a superb array of comestibles.

The even better news is that I am arranging a Christmas get together again this year. Details will be posted as soon as confirmed.

Karen Budd



TECHNICAL TALK

Have you noticed that our web site www.cobhamplayers.org.uk has a new look? Maintaining a web site and keeping it fresh can be something of a chore once the initial enthusiasm that gave rise to its creation has subsided. As a

consequence, sites can become dated in appearance with content out of date. With those dangers in mind we decided to take advantage of newer web site tools to make our site easier on the eye and more informative. We are now able to add words, pictures and even videos quickly. Even committee members could do it! The overall appearance can be changed readily should we tire of the current look. Navigation around the site is straightforward (we hope) and there are links to a number of external sites including a range of our photos on Flickr.

One of our challenges is to publicise our activities to attract audiences and members. We produce plays to a high standard and have lots of fun doing so. A well conceived web site can get that across with considerable clarity to the benefit, we hope, of audience numbers and interest from aspiring actors. It should be a show case; but it is work in progress and if you have ideas for content just shout. You could even use the enquiry link on the 'Join us' page of the site!

We are also advancing on other fronts. The truly discerning may have noticed our new loudspeakers and the greater sonic clarity enjoyed by this year's productions. Perhaps even more importantly, there are moves afoot to upgrade the stage lighting in Cobham Village Hall. One of the problems we encounter is that many of the hall's principal lights are set too close to the stage with the result that coverage is less than ideal. We hope to install new, more robust lighting bars further back in the hall to improve the angles and permit more lamps to be fitted when required.

However, as Newton's Third Law reminds us - actions have reactions. More lamps in use will demand more power from the Hall's already stretched supply. If we are to avoid the unpredictable tripping-out of lights mid production as more lamps are switched on there may be a need to upgrade the Village Hall's electricity supply. All of that will keep the 'techies' busy between productions.

Andrew Mair

THE EDITOR ASKS....HILARY BAKER AND ROGER JONES

Ed: How did you first become involved with Cobham Players?

H: After about five years of having nothing to do with amateur dramatics, I auditioned for *Last Panto in Little Grimley* at Claygate and met Millie and Rodney. They asked me to come to a Cobham "Sausage Sizzle" night where everyone was very friendly.

R: For *Last Panto in Little Grimley* they needed some plaster bandage props and I obliged. Millie invited us to a Cobham Players party at Rodney's and we ended up making Millie's Milky White Cow mask for the panto. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ed: What are your other experiences in amateur dramatics or the theatre generally?

H: I got involved when my son was at the infants' school in Kingston and my first venture on stage was in *Aladdin* where I played the genie as Maggie Thatcher. I loved the set builds as much as the acting and longed for each year to pass so that we could start the next production.

R: I started at school and in the Cubs but seriously became involved at eighteen when I was working in the National Health Service. We did a panto each year with a fortnight run: one week in one hospital with a wide shallow stage and one in a hospital with a narrow deep stage. Re-rigging on the middle Sunday was "fun". We became bored with the gap between productions and started doing summer plays as well. I acted and constructed the sets and props. We started with just a backdrop but became more ambitious and added wings and ceiling traps. We ended up doing pantos with six scenes with a different box set for each including one "Magic Garden" scene with working fountain and growing flowers. I had quite a gap after my wife died, as my son was very young, and I only picked up the reins

after I met Hilary. She belonged to Stagefright and I was soon building sets again as well as acting, working as Stage Manager and directing. We left after someone's ego got too big to bear!

Ed: As Set Construction Managers, when given a play/script, how do you go about the job?

H: This is an easy question. I let Roger do all of the hard work in planning and wait for him or the director to tell me what they want. I'm not an ideas person but can usually manage to produce from someone else's ideas.

R: The first thing to do is to read the script thoroughly to get a clear idea of layout, exits and sightlines. Also to provide enough room for movement of props and set changes. Then we take on board the director's ideas and sometimes those of the cast. Then WE do what WE want to do!

Ed: Tell me about the most challenging tasks you have faced in amateur dramatic productions.

H: I think that the most challenging task was my first appearance with Cobham. After playing Vera in *Stepping Out* for Stagefright I was completely overawed by the superb actors at Cobham and muffed every one of my six lines. I think I must have given poor Sam quite a few headaches!

R: Without a doubt, when it comes to sets, the building of a three tier apron stage at Vera Fletcher Hall, for a production of *Chess*. I had been told that the most actors on any one tier any time would be eight. I was horrified at the dress rehearsal to see sixteen of the cast doing an American drum majorettes routine on the same tier. I missed most of the action as my eyes were fixed firmly on the flexing of the stage at every stamp. Thankfully the stage lasted the week. As regards acting, it must be playing Bill in *It Runs in the Family*, which I also directed. Acting

in a wheelchair puts you eyeball to eyeball with the audience and any comfort zones disappear.

Ed: Which is your favourite play and film of all time and why?

H: My favourite theatre visit, though not really a play, has been *Les Misérables*. I adore the music and the tracks are probably the most played on my iPod. I don't have an actual favourite film of all time but films I can watch over and over again are *Dragonfly* and *The Horse Whisperers*. Why? I love the ending of *Dragonfly* and Robert Redford is the horse whisperer – say no more!

R: Without question a magical performance of *Shadowlands* with Nigel Hawthorne. He could hardly move at the end and the audience was stunned into silence. Then the applause began softly, slowly, rising to a massive crescendo and a standing ovation which went on and on. I am also a great fan of the Bard, particularly *Twelfth Night* and *Henry V*. Also musicals for their sets and effects as much as their music.

Ed: What is the most embarrassing situation you have ever been in?

H: This was far away from amateur dramatics. Many years ago in professional practice, a patient, who was a charming and usually light-hearted man, came out of the test room after a sight test to be greeted by me saying "So what is it then, a white stick or a dog?" My optometrist colleague glared at me and later told me that my comments were not appropriate as sadly the gentleman was slowly going blind.

R: I try to forget these and in trying to answer this it seems that I have been successful. It was nearly the erection of the thrust stage for the first night of *The Comedy of Errors* but I think probably it would be a 25 minute scene change when we experimented with paper flats with drawing pins on wooden frames (not my

idea I hasten to add). If the delay in the action was not bad enough, the cast were finding drawing pins the hard way for the remainder of the performance.

Ed: Tell me something about yourself that most people don't know

H: I'm happier in B & Q or Homebase than in a clothes shop! Yes, I like to dress smartly but I'm happy as a pig in muck when covered with paint, plaster, cement or sawdust – shall I go on? (No, please, don't – Ed.)

R: Difficult. What do people know? I'm a self-employed accountant who doesn't like doing tax. I have held qualifications as a fork lift driver, Class 3 football referee and small bore rifle instructor. I spent 4 years helping with the restoration of the Basingstoke Canal. In my teens I ran my own football team and cycle club. Is that enough? (Wow! - Ed.)

Ed: What is your favourite leisure activity?

H: DIY and gardening – see above!

R: I used to play most sports before my back problems: football, badminton, tennis and rifle shooting were my favourites. I also used to paint in oil but now work gets in the way. These days it's the odd game of golf, reading, DIY and walking whilst on holiday. The reason is simple – escapism from the daily grind.

Ed: What would be your number one holiday destination and why?

H: Anywhere with three metres of snow in the mountains! I'm passionate about my skiing and take two winter holidays to ski each year. I ski with a large group of equally fanatic skiers, sometimes 40 in the group. Where we ski is not that important to me!

R: Easiest question of the lot – the Scottish Highlands. It is my spiritual home. I have tears in my eyes as I cross the border (for different reasons each way). I love the countryside, the people and the pace of life, also that mobile reception is generally non-existent!

Ed: How would you describe Cobham Players?

H: Cobham Players? Well, I mentioned the Sausage Sizzle party and after chatting all that night with a room full of friendly strangers, on leaving I said to Roger "I can't believe I just did that." Normally I can be very shy but everybody made me feel very relaxed and at home. Of course Millie's kind shepherding us around made it much easier.

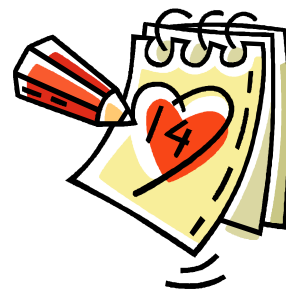
R: Without question the nicest group I have ever worked with. There are no prima donnas despite an amazing wealth of talent. The group is friendly, welcoming, encouraging and appreciative. It's a pleasure to work with you all (even a certain sound person.) Thank you all.

*Hilary Baker
Roger Jones
Mike Dawes*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2008/9

8 October

Audition for *Cinderella*
Cobham Village Hall
Juniors 7.30pm
Adults 8.00pm



25 October

Nomads Club Night
Nomads Theatre 8 p.m.
East Horsley

30 October – 1 November

Noises Off
By Michael Frayn
Directed by Ian Ganderton
Cobham Village Hall 8 p.m.

18 – 22 November

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead
By Tom Stoppard
Directed by Alan Wiseman
Nomads Theatre 8 p.m.

8 – 10 January 2009

Cinderella
By Stephen Duckham
Directed by Melanie Cook
Cobham Village Hall 7.30 p.m.
(Saturday matinée 2.30 p.m.)

SPRING QUIZ WINNERS

The answer to the Spring Quiz celebrating the 60th anniversary of St Andrews/Cobham Players, was "CELEBRATION".

The joint winners were Alan Wiseman and Rodney Pearson. As I said there are no prizes – just the accolade of being mentioned! (Ed)

AND FINALLY...A QUIZ

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 the name of a famous playwright!

- 1 Comedy where you wear nightclothes (2nd letter)
- 2 Children make them on the beach (6th letter)
- 3 Getting rid of the cadaver (3rd Letter)
- 4 Nick the state flowers of Mississippi, we hear (4th letter)
- 5 Walking forth (1st letter)
- 6 The recollection of H₂O (2nd letter)
- 7 E. R. G. Baldhead (anag.) (play) (7th letter)
- 8 Oscar Wilde's 1895 play featuring Lady Bracknell (6th letter)
- 9 A parachute freefall team based at Old Trafford? (2nd letter)
- 10 Leo in the coldest season (15th letter)
- 11 Laughter in the dark? (5th letter)

E-mail your answers to mike@aviation1st.co.uk by 31 October 2008. First correct answer wins!

As before, there are no prizes – just the pleasure of being mentioned in the Christmas edition of ITW. What more could you want?

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, 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**

