

# Lympstone Players' NEWSLETTER

## AUGUST 2024

[www.lympstoneplayers.co.uk](http://www.lympstoneplayers.co.uk)  
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Our Mission:

*To entertain local audiences with a variety of quality theatrical productions by sharing our skills, passions and knowledge and working together in a friendly, supportive and fun environment*

Our Core Values:

*Respect – Integrity – Community - Excellence*

## Shirley Wilkes – a Tribute

*Clive Wilson pays tribute to the significant role that Shirley Wilkes played in the history of the Players, and Harland Walshaw remembers her part in the creation of Café Theatre.*

I think that Shirley's first stage appearance with the Players was in the first production I directed, Alan Ayckbourn's comedy thriller *It Could Be Anyone of Us* in 2003. The play required someone able to play a piano on stage, so, for me, she was the answer to my prayers at the time. She soon became a stalwart member of the Players' Committee and my vice-chair for several years, until succeeding me as chair in 2010.

Shirley had a leading role as the Pussy Cat in my production of *The Owl and the Pussy Cat* (2005). She was a passionate advocate for reviving traditional Christmas pantomimes. After



several years of other seasonal productions such as *Narnia* and versions of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*, Shirley took over and directed some very successful pantos, including *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella* and *A Very Merry Christmas Ding Dong*. She also had a leading role in Mary Blair's production of Priestley's classic comedy *When We Are Married* (2009).

Shirley seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of energy and made huge efforts with all her productions, particularly in

helping to coax good performances from young inexperienced children. She also found time to organise theatre visits for members, which included a gourmet pre-theatre supper cooked by Shirley herself of course.

Shirley will be sorely missed. The Players were lucky to have benefited so much from her contribution.

### **Clive Wilson**

Shirley's willingness to cook a 3-course meal to accompany a one-act play made the idea of Café Theatre possible. The first two courses were served before the performance, and dessert after it. This gave the audience an opportunity to digest and discuss the play they had watched while they enjoyed their pudding. Café tables were set up around three sides of the stage, which was erected along a side wall of the hall, between the bar and the kitchen.

It was, of course, Shirley's food which attracted sell-out audiences every time. That gave me the opportunity to present European plays by Molière, Goldoni, Chekov (directed by John Eaton-Terry), Feydeau (directed by Clive) and Noel Coward. Whatever we did, it was worth coming for the meal, which was appropriate to the nationality of the play. It was a chance to sample Shirley's cooking at a bargain price. The popular restaurant that she and Michael ran in Lymptstone was highly rated in the prestigious Good Food Guide. But she charged nothing for being the chef for

Café Theatre, apart from the cost of the ingredients.



Shirley loved cooking as much as she loved theatre – and both were performances. Indeed, she took the part of a fritter seller in *Il Campiello*, an 18th century Venetian comedy, as well as cooking a full Venetian supper for the audience

for 3 nights. She was a triumph in both roles.

As a performer, Shirley was a natural. Who could forget her singing Marie Lloyd's, 'The Boy I Love is up in the Gallery' at the Village Concert, or leading the audience in a music hall singalong at the end? Character parts were her speciality in productions but pantomime was her love; inherited from her father who had written and directed them when he was in the army. Shirley would take the basic script of her chosen fairy story and ask her great friend Terry Dowrick to re-write and adapt it for Lymptstone; adaptations full of comedy and music a selection of her favourite pop songs.

As Chair of the Players, Shirley moulded the group in her own image. Her drive and enthusiasm, and her innate theatricality, made for a vigorous and dramatic period in our history.

### **Harland Walshaw**

## A Play in a Day 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> June

Over a June weekend, a group of us were fortunate enough to take part in a workshop in devised theatre, skilfully led by the wonderful Sara Osborne.



Taking in a broad range of aspects of acting, we were introduced to techniques in physical theatre, use of voice, character development and more. These then became the building blocks for a devised piece based on old Devon legend- The Curious Case of the Devils Footprints.

Sara inspired us to be playful and imaginative while working as a cohesive and supportive team, leaving us all feeling lucky to have been part of such a rich learning experience. Thanks to Sara for sharing your expertise and to the committee for making it happen!

**Bruce Ellis**



## A Night of Crime 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Rehearsals will start next month for our café-theatre style production of two one-act plays.

The first is *Personal Call* by Agatha Christie and will be directed by Sharon Wayland. The second features Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in *Hidden Meanings* written by Michael Snelgrove and directed by Bruce Ellis; his directorial debut with the Lypstone Players.

Players 'members get priority booking and ticket sales will be on-line and in person on Saturdays in November.

## “Beside the Seaside”



On a sunny (ish) Sunday in mid-July a charabanc of day trippers descended on Judy Eaton’s garden for an afternoon of readings on the theme “Beside the Seaside”. Nearly 20 of us listened with pleasure to stories of day trips and longer holidays, as well as the stirring tale of Moby Duck (not a typo). Particular delights included pieces read by their authors (take a bow Judy Stutchbury and Malcolm Lyons), Harland Walshaw’s inimitable renditions of *The Walrus and the Carpenter* and Mary Burman singing John Ireland’s setting of *Sea Fever*.

The afternoon was rounded off by a potluck picnic, then the trippers folded their chairs, gathered their sun hats and returned well satisfied with their outing.

**Grace Packman**

## Northcott Theatre 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October

I am in the ensemble for ‘The Commotion Time’ at The Northcott Theatre in Exeter. It’s about the Western Rising/‘Prayer Book Rebellion’ that extended to Exeter, Clyst St Mary and Woodbury in 1549 and is written by a playwright who is local to and lives in Poundstock, north Cornwall, where the rebellion started. It’s dramatic, humorous and tragic (!) and should be fun to watch.

Some of my co-ensemble players have played in the Cygnet productions in Lypstone.

[Click to read more](#)

Tickets are on sale now. Please put my surname into the **Friends and Family Cast Code** at the ‘Additional Details’ prompt when ordering because it puts me into a draw to win vouchers for The Northcott!

*Andrew Minter*

## Play-Reading Group

Our long-established Play-Reading Group continues to meet once a month, hosted by different members in the Village.

The most recent one was on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August where 17 Players gathered in Clive and Jill Wilson's garden to read Agatha Christie's *The Patient* and then for refreshments afterwards.

These play readings are not only very enjoyable social occasions but provide an excellent opportunity to engage with play scripts without the pressure of performance on stage. If you would like to get notifications about the play readings and want to take part as a reader or as part of the audience please contact Clive Wilson at [clivewilson264@gmail.com](mailto:clivewilson264@gmail.com)

## Update on Graham Banks

Graham came home for a short while following a stay in hospital after suffering a stroke in June. He was back just in time for the Furry Dance and was able to say hello to friends as he sat watching outside our house. He would welcome visitors in hospital but please check with me first on [louisealive@outlook.com](mailto:louisealive@outlook.com) that it's a convenient time to visit.

<https://aphasiatavistocktrust.org/top-tips/conversations/>

This link has a few simple points that may be useful when visiting Graham. The stroke has left him with aphasia and damaged part of the left, language, side of his brain. When lucid and not tired, he can understand what is said to him and despite struggling to find the right words, can engage in conversation. Often some of the old humour and twinkle comes through. Also he enjoys being read to. This is best done with pauses between sentences (or mid-sentence if it is a long one) so that he can process the information. At times though, he appears confused and may be going through a phase when you visit, in which case we can play it by ear.

Thank you all for the lovely cards and words of support which have helped carry us through this difficult time.

*Louise Banks*

## Membership subs

Thank you to all members who have paid their subs already for 2024/25. If you haven't paid them yet, it would be great if you could! They are still only £10 a year.

We need our members' subs cover our standing costs like insurance and NODA. If you're not sure if you have or not paid, then email me on [judyday200@outlook.com](mailto:judyday200@outlook.com) to check.

Bank account – TSB, 30-93-15, 22185060

*Judy Eaton*

## **Rotterdam at The Blackmore Theatre**

This intelligent production of Jon Brittain's play exploring the relationships between a group of lesbian and transgender young people was funny, painful and above all thought-provoking.

All four roles were played by young actors from Lympstone and Exmouth who had first appeared on stage with The Lympstone Players. The production, which was directed by Cathy Turner, was very deservedly nominated for a NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association) Award. Let's keep our fingers crossed for Luca and Jay Billington, Lauren Moxon and Beth Cordy at the awards ceremony next May when they'll find out if they have won.

### **Theatre trips & social events**

Anyone interested in organising or attending a social event, such as a theatre visit or a themed event, please contact a committee member (see list at end of newsletter) or email us on [lympstoneplayers@gmail.com](mailto:lympstoneplayers@gmail.com)

### **OUR COMMITTEE**

Emma Bushell (Vice-Chair)  
Judy Eaton (Treasurer)  
Heather Redding (Secretary)  
Tim Askew  
Simon Ellis  
Judy Stutchbury  
Greg Crum

Doreen Murray  
Bernice Fynn  
Greg Crum  
Sue Pritchard  
Sharon Wayland

We are currently without a chairperson.

### **CONTACT US**

Should you wish to contact the committee, please email us at: [lympstoneplayers@gmail.com](mailto:lympstoneplayers@gmail.com). Sharon and Emma review the inbox regularly and will forward emails as required.