

TDATE SPECIAL!

NOISES OFF

THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR

Our Autumn production has notched up yet another big hit for the Players. *The Day After the Fair*, an adaptation of a Thomas Hardy short story, played last week to sell-out houses on four out of six nights; even on Monday and Tuesday, we were over half-full. The wonderful set, designed and created, as ever, by John Crabtree and his colleagues, provided the background for powerful and moving performances by the small and talented cast. The audience was gripped by the intriguing and unpredictable story, and left full of pity for the participants in the two doomed marriages.

The APS are rightly proud of this, our latest success. With such a small auditorium, the financial return can never be huge, but such as it is, we remain able to continue our little-by-little developments and improvements. (We were able to make use, for the first time, of the new drinks cooler, and the disabled access ramp, whilst in the green room, the

cast benefited from improved preparation areas and lighting). We remain ever aware that audience members sitting at the back of the auditorium get a raw deal, and one of our next plans is to examine the feasibility of raising the back rows.

This will be a costly project, and brings us back to the subject of ticket sales. Ever since starting to perform in the studio theatre, we have lost hundreds of pounds through potential audience members leaving it too late to get tickets for sold-out shows. So PLEASE help us to get the message out there: if you are coming to an APS show, get your tickets early! The increased sales will have the happy effect of filling those houses early in the week, too! On a related theme, we do have to make it clear that, under no circumstances can we "squeeze in" further seats once a show is sold out. Unfortunately it quite often happens that people assume that "one more can't hurt", but this is absolutely not the case.

A PENNY FOR A SONG

For the final event of last season, we held a play-reading on Tuesday August 27th of John Whiting's *A Penny for a Song*. Although rarely performed now, the play premiered (after several re-writes) in 1962, featuring a very youthful Judi Dench, and subsequently became noted for its parallels with TV's *Dad's Army*, taking a satirical and hugely funny view of parochial preparations for warfare.

A most enjoyable evening was spent by those who had not come across this script before. Equally enjoyable were the discussions about how, if ever we were to attempt to stage the play at the SST, we would overcome minor challenges like having an air balloon fly across the stage and disappear into a well, explosions and flying cannon-balls!

QUIZ NIGHT

Wednesday 16th October,
7.30pm

General knowledge pub-style quiz!

We are keen to establish a regular pattern of social get-togethers, and hope that a monthly pub quiz will prove popular. This is the first one - if it's well supported, we'll do more, and look into the possibility of making some form of supper part of the occasion. So please come along on the 16th, have fun, and help get something established! £1.50 entry, or £5.00 for a full team of four.

So get your thinking-caps on, and see if you can raise a team of four. Don't worry if you can't- come along and you'll be teamed-up with others. Entry is not restricted to APS members - all are welcome.

Light refreshments provided, but please bring your own drink - we're not licensed on this occasion. Please let us know if you're coming - newsletter@aps-sherborne.co.uk, or 07585 278722

JIM SCHOFIELD

It is with much sadness that we have learned of the death of Jim Schofield. Jim preferred to stay out of the limelight (hence the fact that I have no photo of him to go with this obituary) and he never appeared on stage, but from the time he joined The Players in the early 70s, he became a stalwart member of the backstage crew. His name first appears on the programme for *A Hundred Years Old* in 1974 and he is credited as either Set Designer, Stage Manager or as a member of the set construction/backstage team in many productions of the 70s, 80s and 90s. In the programme for the 1985 production of *Gaslight* he is listed as the sound technician. And in 1995 he produced our Dorset Drama League entry of *Still Life*.

Jim was an engineer by profession and he devoted his talents to designing and building sets for APS, some of which were highly ingenious. One of his most memorable sets was for *Trelawny of the Wells* in 1996, which involved movable flats on castors and an almost total change of set three times during the play. Jim often painted huge backdrops for his sets - a notable example being the alpine scene that he created by hand from a photograph for *Arms and the Man* in 2001.

Jim served as a Committee Member from 1980 to 1983, as Chairman from 1987 to 1989 and Secretary from 2000 to

2001. He became very keen on video recording and in 2006 proposed making a film of *The Woodlanders* using APS actors. Sadly that project never got off the ground, but I know that Jim subsequently recorded videos of several productions, copies of which must still exist somewhere.

Jim and his wife Gwyneth, who died a few years ago, always sought to further the interests of APS and constantly looked for ways to enhance the society's reputation. And there were several occasions on which they opened their house and garden to us for our AGM and Summer Party. Underneath a slightly gruff exterior Jim was a warm-hearted, generous man who will be sadly missed.

Mark Lambert



**An example of Jim's work -
the backdrop for "Arms
and the Man" (2001)**

OPENING NIGHT

Our Opening Night of the new season took place on Friday 13th September (the date not, fortunately, proving as inauspicious as it might appear!) It was great to see the session so well supported. As well as eating, drinking and making merry, members were entertained by performances of a number of sketches written by the late, great Victoria Wood, and by a version of *Audition Anxiety* by Robert Scott, superbly realised by Adrian Harding and by two of our newer members, Marie Field and Kate Mulvey - all of them fresh from this summer's highly successful *Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*.



THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR - THE CRITICS' VIEW

Adapted by Frank Harvey from a little-known Thomas Hardy short story, the performance had the audience gripped from start to finish, and there was fun to be had in spotting echoes of the great man's later works, both in the events of the story, and in the themes and issues addressed. Anna, a simple, uneducated country girl has a brief romantic liaison with Charles, a London barrister. Little or no judgement is passed on either party - the girl does not consider herself badly-used, even after discovering her pregnancy, as she is more than happy with the prospect of marriage and an imagined social life among elite society. Her employers too, on the basis, we imagine, of plenty of experience, readily accept that she will either be sacked, or cut loose with a pitifully meagre payment from the father of her child. There is little time, however, to reflect on Anna's marital and social prospects, nor on the chilling assumptions of the employers (both of whom generally treat her with kindness), as it slowly becomes clear that the romantic relationship is not between Charles and Anna at all - indeed they hardly even appear to meet between the afternoon of the seduction and the day of their marriage. Their entire courtship is carried out through a process of letter-writing. However, Anna's illiteracy means she is dependent upon the help of Edith, her kindly mistress, who, initially reluctant and conscious of the potential problems, is



persuaded by Anna to play the part of go-between. Edith is herself trapped in a marriage which appears to be sterile, boring and increasingly loveless - her husband wrapped up in his business affairs, self-absorbed and blind to her frustrations. So, as time goes by, the letter-writing becomes a form of erotic escapism, as if Edith is indulging in an adulterous affair by proxy.



Ultimately, on the day of the marriage, Charles discovers the truth. What might we expect - that Charles is so captivated by Anna's charms that he doesn't mind? - that Edith's husband is enraged and turns her out onto the streets? - that Charles and Edith run away together, leaving heartbroken Anna to commit suicide? It's difficult not to think of similar scenarios from Hardy's later works, inevitably with tragic endings. On this occasion, the tragedy lies in both Charles and Edith accepting that theirs are marriages which, for different reasons, will be unbearable. The moment of greatest pathos came in contrasting Anna's wedding-day happiness with her new husband's shockingly bitter realisation that he has, as he sees it, been tricked into tying himself to "a peasant".

The cast of the APS did a magnificent job of bringing to life this long and quite "wordy" play. The sense of involvement and sympathy within the audience was palpable, people during the interval genuinely absorbed and wrapped-up in what would happen next. Edith (Sarah Easterbrook) delivered her many lines in a suitably refined, clipped manner, which served both to contrast with the local accents and simple sentences of the two serving girls (Rachael Alexander and Sara Sadegh-Tehrani), and to serve as a veil over her inner passion and frustrations. Edith's husband (Patrick Knox) was a genial patriarch, unaware of his wife's unhappiness as he was busy relishing the demise of his business rival. His sister (Jessica Colson), poised and proper, also did much to bring life to the characters' formal prose; while Charles (Richard Jones), ramrod-



straight in posture, brimming-over with suppressed anger, chillingly provided the shocking denouement.

The set, costumes, lighting and sound were perfect; the APS have another hit on their hands, and are grateful to Kerry Gardner, the guest director, for this, his first work with the company.

Statler & Waldorf