

# Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter

## March 2016

### Quiz Night

A fun night was enjoyed by all one cold night in November 2015, with questions set and read by Tim Masling and the funds raised used for the set build for *Murdered to Death*.

Many thanks Tim!

### Let Us Be Merry 2015



2015 finished with a well attended and colourful production of *Let Us Be Merry* which included the costume drama *Messages from Bethlehem* in the first half, followed by local singing groups and readings in the second.

Jewish independence ended in 63 BC with the coming of the Romans. In 37 BC, The Roman Senate recognised Herod the Great as “King of the Jews” but only as a “client” of Rome. Thus Jesus was born into a land under occupation.

We marked 70 years since the end of WWII but the peace left many people “under occupation”. Our re-telling of the Christmas Story underlined this experience by using a WWII setting.



Arco (David Norfolk) Roman army of occupation, addresses an attentive audience



Hannah (Debbie Dundas) reflects on the birth and the help she gave



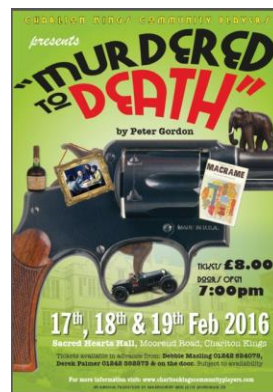
Puzzlejug performing and singing with the audience for the final number.

More pictures may be downloaded from <http://www.charltonkingscommunityplayers.com/wp-content/uploads/lubm2015-1.pdf>

### Carol Singing 2015

Members of The Players met up in December at two Charlton Kings Care Homes to entertain residents with Christmas carols. This is a regular feature of the Players activities and has been so since 2002.

### February 2016



Having directed several musicals for *The Community Players* it was always my ambition to direct a murder mystery. I envisaged that it would be an Agatha Christie but instead discovered

*Murdered To Death*, by Peter Gordon, a play that at first glance would appear to be in the Christie genre. This play, however, was poking fun at the murder mysteries written during the 1920s-1940s. Gordon's play depicted the standard murder mystery plot for authors such as Christie, Patricia Wentworth, Marjorie Allingham, Dorothy L. Sayers, Georgette Hayer or Ngaio Marsh. The Country House; its owner and her companion (in this case her niece); a butler; guests for the weekend that included a Colonel and his wife, an art dealer and a fashionable lady; an amateur lady sleuth; a simple country policeman and an (inept) Inspector from the local constabulary combined to make a wonderful and hilarious comedy spoof.

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Here, it would be appropriate, to praise the cast for bringing the plot and characters to life. They were so well cast that very little direction was needed to bring them together as a team. They developed the characters as rehearsals progressed, adding their own twists and interpretations to their roles and developing perfect comedic timing. There were times during rehearsals when they played 'fast and loose' with the dialogue. I'm not sure in the early stages of leaving the script, off-stage as it were, whether Peter Gordon would have recognised his play! It did, however, add some hilarious incidents to already fun rehearsals. It would not be appropriate here to mention some of the faux pas but Sue will know who and what this applies to. Her portrayal of Margaret developed into the nasty, dissatisfied ex-colonial wife of Craddock, played by Martyn, who was perfect for the role of the Colonel. He came to the rehearsals dressed for the part in plus fours and snazzy socks and then proceeded to keep everyone on their toes with his re-arrangements of his lines in the dialogue. That is not to say that everyone else were innocent by-standers. Much ad-libbing took place and it was noticeable how Tim Blakey, as Constable Thomkins, became more outrageous as the weeks progressed. Debbie, as the bitchy Elizabeth, often made Andy, Inspector Pratt, 'hot under the collar' with her flirting and Andy must be praised for learning all Pratt's nonsensical lines. Tim Masling, as Pierre Marceau, became more flamboyant in dress and character as the weeks progressed. Jane's portrayal of Miss Maple added just the right touch of comedy whilst portraying her as a believable character from the 'Whodunnit' genre. Then there are the three other characters who had particularly difficult roles as they had to set the scene for the production. Jane, as Mildred, had the difficult task of not only saying the opening lines of the play but also had to portray the straight role against all the other comedic twists. Very difficult to achieve. Debbie Dundas, as the put-upon companion Dorothy was not as sweet as she seemed and managed to convey this subtly with looks and body language. John, as Bunting, had to develop a comic character whilst saying so many similar lines and it was interesting to see how much the audience appreciated the humour he brought to this part.

No play can come to fruition without the work that goes on behind the scenes and 'Murdered To

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Death' was no exception. We were fortunate to have an exceptionally hard working and creative back stage team. This was the first production with standard flats which Andy Connor constructed. It was his first involvement in producing a set and he did an incredible job, both with constructing the set and many of the props. He has ensured that *The Players* now have a splendid stage set for future productions. It seems unlikely that he will be able to escape a role with the 'backstage crew' now that his talent has been discovered! The cast were ably supported throughout rehearsals by Sara Kinane, who took on the role of prompt for the first time. Fortunately, she was not needed too much during the performances although the cast did keep her 'on her toes' on several occasions with re-arrangements of the script and action! *The Players* also benefitted from another new discovery, Francesca Woods, who became our excellent and enthusiastic Stage Manager and as usual Peter Ryan worked tirelessly to provide the lighting and sound for the production. Caroline Sparkes, ensured that the props were always available and provided Inspector Pratt with increasingly lavishly decorated fresh 'Cream Fancies' each night.

As director I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those mentioned above and to other members of Charlton Kings Community Players and their families, who supported the production in advertising, selling tickets, front of house roles and decorating the set. Having now read all the plays in the Inspector Pratt trilogy I hope that it will not be too long before Charlton Kings Community Players allows me to direct the second play, 'Secondary Cause of Death', another hilarious 1930s romp.

Andrea Wood, Director 'Murdered To Death'



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### Review of Murdered to Death by (Acting) Inspector Pratt

Acting on a tip off from a local informant I preceded to the Baptist Hall in Charlton Kings, where I found a rough looking bunch of characters waiting outside. I remembered thinking to myself to make a mental note to ask PC Thompson to have a word with the local constabulary about thespians loitering outside public buildings. It can really lower the tone of the community.

On approaching the suspicious group, I soon recognised a few of the individuals as hardened characters from the script (a document that had been delivered to my door by a secret organisation with the codename 'Amazon').

The script was fool proof – it contained the whole plan. The who, the where, the why and even foot notes detailing where to stand when the the who, the where and the why happened.

As we eagerly awaited the arrival of the big boss (simply known as 'The Director') we eyed each other nervously knowing we were about to embark on a magical journey - make up, costumes and fake accents.

The reputation of The Director was legendary. She was a known theatrical master mind, responsible for a spate of other successful shows within the locality.

On her arrival 'The Director' quickly took command and before we knew it we had all been cast into our new identities. Character traits were explored and funny accents refined. Much was made about 'keeping to the script' and 'keeping in character', I could tell this was a professional gang to the last and I hoped I wouldn't be discovered as the odd one out.

The job had been given the code name 'The Show'. A date for the big day had been set, the setting of the scene had been set and the building of the set had been set in motion. Everything was set.

It was decided that it would be best to perpetuate the show to happen after the hours of darkness – apparently this is quite typical of professionals or 'luvvies' when performing. I can only assume that along with the use of make up and funny accents it is to avoid identification of the gang members.

The 'Show' was to be committed over 3 nights in February 2016, this would allow a number of rehearsals allowing the team to learn their words and to get into character.

The fear of 'putting down the books' seemed to prey on the minds of even the most hardened of the gang.

We embarked on our rehearsals at a secret hide out. (The Drama Studio, St Edwards School, Cirencester Road) A custom built room which allowed us to immerse ourselves in our rehearsals and our characters safely away from prying eyes.

Rehearsals were long and hard but always full of laughter, some of which was even scripted.

The cast and crew were a hardened bunch of professionals with great knowledge in the art of fakery, showmanship and character motivational development. They certainly knew their onions. (shallots, pickled or spring.)

Much planning and technical wizardry went into the planning of the show, long discussions about lighting, flats, scenery, fake paintings and ??? much of which went over my head as a mere (Acting) Inspector.

We were even to be 'tooled up'. My initial assumption that this meant we were to be sponsored by B&Q was quickly disproved when a rough diamond from Gloucester called 'Steve the Trigger' appeared brandishing an old starting pistol. He said he'd started many a caper with it.

As the months passed by I managed to blend in with the gang and the rehearsal nights became a friendly social event – having said that at least one person seemed to be murdered each night! Only to return miraculously at the next rehearsal.

Other 'Crew' members began to appear.

The Prompt, (What was in that mysterious book she always carried?), who always seemed to know what you were going to say next.

The Engineer (or 'cable guy'), known for his knowledge of lights, sound and who was rumoured to always carry a deadly sharpened USB lead.

The Driver, (The Directors right hand man), always sitting at the back watching, listening and occasionally laughing.

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The Make Up team, able with a few deft swipes of a sable brush to change a pasty chap into a bronzed hunk.

The Stage Manager, keeping everyone behind the curtain in their place.

The Prop Manager, able to source any item required to complete the show from non-alcoholic sherry to cream topped individual fruit tarts.

There were many others, Derek the ticket, Andy the Splinter and many more. All of whom made the show.

As with any theatrical caper the first night was a nerve racking event, but once on stage and the curtain raised we all fell into our characters and for the main part kept to the plan.

The audience never suspected a thing, taken in by the disguises, transported to the 1930's by the incredible set and mesmerised by the ...

Three nights later and it was all over. All the planning had paid off. All that was left was to enjoy the after show celebrations, well deserved by all those implicated in the show.

After all the time spent in planning, organising and then implementing the Show it seemed sad that all that was left was to pack away and talk about the next big job! I did hear talk of a sequel, which only confirmed my fears that these are a habitual gang

As a mere (Acting) Inspector it was a pleasure and honour to be picked out of the Police line up to come along and be a part of the cast for *Murdered to Death!*

The word on the streets is that there is to be a sequel, as they say 'the criminal always returns to the scene of the crime'!



Accusations fly around!

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### CKCP

**AGM & Committee election**  
**Wednesday April 27th, 2016**

**Baptist Church 7.30pm**

**Come and join us for refreshments and  
share ideas with us**

### *Our next big production*



It is the spring of 1947. The War ended nearly two years ago and the boys and girls have been finally demobbed. The country has just been through the bad winter of 1946-47. The Village (*Charlton St. Mary's*) wants a celebration show in early summer so a Committee has been set up. They want to outdo the neighbouring village of *Little Binding!* We will be eavesdropping on the Committee as they work on the show and remember what they've been through.

"Some Sunny Day" will present songs of the period linked with 'stories' of WW2 and the 40s. Preparation has been on-going for some time with people supplying stories, photographs, offers of loans and help for a 'front of house' exhibition and anecdotes for the script. The stories include the very funny, the serious accounts of men and women who lost their lives, and what people and school children did to support the war effort. There is poetry; there is prose; there are galleries of pictures which tell a story... These will be available from the Players' web site and will be in the exhibition.

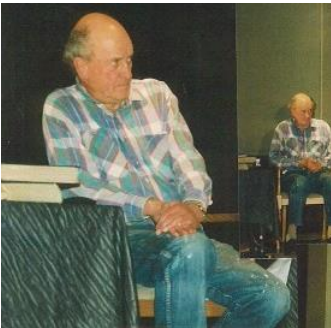
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The Players' extensive costume store, and other sources, will be supplying uniforms and what some of us (civilians) wore in the 40s! The audience will also be invited to dress up. The show is planned for the February half term in 2017 and will be in St. Edward's Performance Hall, Cirencester Road. Auditions will be held after Easter 2016. There will be opportunities for singers (including soloists), actors, readers, 'walk-about' parts, helping with the exhibition and stage crew.

Contact Sandra and Tony Jeans or Martyn Fry for more information.  
[jeanstda@jeanstda.plus.com](mailto:jeanstda@jeanstda.plus.com)

### Obituaries



Derek as he appeared in 'The Vigil' (1994) as the gardener

### Derek Pearce

1930 - 2015

Derek was with Charlton Kings Community Players (CKCP) from the beginning. He set up the administration of our funds as our first treasurer: coping with scraps of paper;

odd membership money coming in at all times of the year; liaison with schools, churches and caretakers; finding appropriate insurances; and handling and banking the ticket money.

He was revered by our accountant for his professional keeping of accounts.

A very popular service he gave us was the supplying of ice-cream for our performances.

He surprised many people when he agreed to take the part of 'the gardener' in 'The Vigil'. He did very well and enjoyed it but said 'never again'.

With June he was a supporter of outings, gatherings and of everything the Players did. We are grateful that he was one of us. We miss him.

Sylvia Fry



Ann (centre) singing in 'Let Us Remember' (2014)

### Ann Cross

The 'Players' have sadly lost one of their foundation stones... Ann Cross, who recently passed away was a member of our first 'Players'

Committee in 1992 and as Secretary was responsible for recording all the vital early decisions. June Pearce, our first properly constituted Chair, well remembers file upon files of Ann's distinctive – and very legible – handwriting!

I was reminded only last week that Ann was also Secretary of the Charlton Kings Churches Committee from its beginnings - I opened another 'down-sized' file and there was that handwriting again! The link between those two initiatives was historically significant.

But she also relaxed from her Committee responsibilities in a pioneering way; she played the first Angel – Gabriel no less! – in our very first production, 'Rock Nativity'. She had a splendid singing voice and I'm sure would have acted again if it had not been for the indelible memories of that silver foil costume!

However she was a memorable member of the Chorus, from Salzberg to Ascot, and a regular at 'Let Us Be Merry'. I am sure she was a great support for George in the galaxy of character parts in which he has excelled. Ann could always be relied upon to maintain the standards that she helped create nearly twenty-five years ago; she will be sorely missed.

Peter Grainger

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### Available on Request

An updated CD Rom is available of the CKCP Performance Record. This consists of pdf format files of the detail of productions and other activities since the earliest roots in the 1980s until the end of 2015. There are selected photographs and digital scans of the programmes for the main productions, and the Christmas Shows 'Let Us Be Merry'. There is a special publication of photographs for 'Let Us Remember' (2014). Contact Sandra & Tony Jeans at [jeanstda@jeanstda.plus.com](mailto:jeanstda@jeanstda.plus.com)

### Informing the Community

The Players are providing people with information about their activities through various electronic and printed publications available.

There is a comprehensive web site and people may make contact by that means. <http://www.charltonkingscommunityplayers.com>

Information is published through the 'Where I Live' supplement produced by the 'Gloucestershire Echo', under the section for 'Charlton Kings'.

The Players are documented, with links to the web site, in the Wikipedia article on 'Charlton Kings'. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlton\\_Kings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlton_Kings)

There is a page about the Players set up on 'Streetlife'. This 'local newssheet' provides a permanent base against which regular postings can be made of up and coming activities. <https://www.streetlife.com/page/charlton-kings-community-players/>