

Obituaries for active members of the Players

**Kate Alger, Fiona Mead, Tim Masling, Ann Cross,
Derek Pearce, Michelle Grainger, Yvonne Brawn,
Margaret 'Maggie' Scrivens, Sue Dyson,
Alison Luna and Ken Venus**

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2019)**

Kate Alger



Kate in 1940s costume selling programmes for 'Some Sunny Day'

It is with great sadness we write of the loss of Kate who died at the end of November 2018. Kate (with her husband Bob) were loyal supporters of Players' productions and in recent years was involved with a variety of activities for the Players.

Kate was often part of the Front of House teams including our 2017 WW2 commemoration production 'Some Sunny Day'; she was part of the team delivering the WW2 History Workshops and a leading member of the 'Open the Book' team at Charlton Kings Junior School. At Easter 2018, in our 'Walk of Witness' Street theatre, Kate was one of the 'Women of Jerusalem'. This was one of her last engagements with the Players before she became ill.

Kate was a strong and determined person who made a significant contribution to everything with which she was involved. Her son-in-law, Andrew Wise, provided a poetic eulogy for her funeral including these lines.

"An amazing lady who walked tall, was loved and respected by all."

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Fiona Mead

We are very sad at the death of Fiona Mead. The Mead family has been part of the Charlton Kings Community Players from the very beginning.

Fiona shared her home, for choir rehearsals, and her family: Keith our Director of Music and Richard with his involvement with acting, music, lighting and sound.

She supported our shows and plays and was background support for Keith in his commitment to The Players through the many varied and ambitious productions we have undertaken over the years.

At the Memorial Service held on 9th November in the Charlton Kings Baptist Church, Richard spoke of the book she researched and wrote, ***'Pigs, Peas, and Poetry – How a Gloucestershire Village School gained International Recognition'***.

It was through that book that Fiona put together a number of smaller stories for a Players publication of local stories from WW2 and the 40s. This provided material for the script which was developed for the production ***'Some Sunny Day'***, performed in 2017. The stories described boosting food production, blackout arrangements, air raid shelters, gas mask practice, helping on farms, fund raising for the war effort, the important taking-in of evacuees with the V1 and V2 threats and that most important activity in communities – *'the local pig and poultry clubs'* so essential to survival and good health at a time of war.

Fiona was a volunteer at the Gloucestershire Archives and came across the story of Maisemore school, the achievements of the headmaster and the children when undertaking some particular research on the village school's logbooks.

Sylvia Fry and Sandra Jeans

'Pigs, Peas, and Poetry – How a Gloucestershire Village School gained International Recognition' is published by Amberley Publishing, Stroud (2011).
ISBN 978-1-4456-0455-8

The book is out of stock on the Publishers web site, but copies may be found through Amazon.

Tim Masling



Tim on stage during 'Let Us Remember' (2014)
and with Debbie in 'The Rivals' (2013)

It is with great sadness that I write about Tim who was such a character and who will be greatly missed by the Players. Tim was involved with the Players in a variety of disguises – taking roles in productions including '**Let Us Be Merry**' (notably as a gorilla), '**Let Us Remember**', '**The Rivals**', '**Ghost Train**' and '**Murdered to Death**'. His roles usually had a comic element, which he played to the full – who will forget his portrayal of the Frenchman Pierre Marceau in his last performance, with his exaggerated French accent, or his sinister Station Master with his hurricane lamp in Ghost Train.

Tim was also able to learn his lines with great ease – enabling him to develop his character and movement around the stage while the rest of us were still at the stage of juggling books and forgetting our lines.

Tim did not only perform with the Players, but he also supported Debbie, his wife, as she took on the arduous role of Chairman of the Players, and he was always there to help when staging was being moved, erected or dismantled. He also masterminded some really enjoyable quizzes which raised valuable funds for the Players to buy new lighting and sound equipment.

His sense of humour, comedy and ebullient personality were the outward appearances of a sensitive and thoughtful man. He will be greatly missed, and not only by Debbie and his children, but also by the wider community, including the Charlton Kings Community Players. I am so grateful to have known and worked with him.

Jane Jones

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(March 2016)**

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



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

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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.

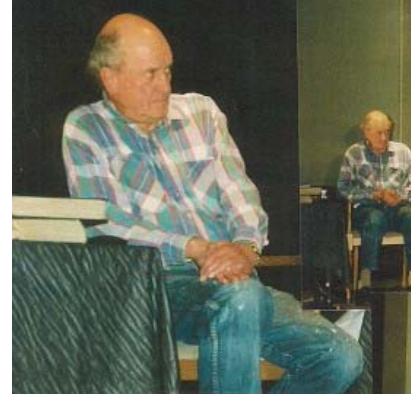
He was revered by our accountant for his professional keeping of accounts.

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



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

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Michelle Grainger

My main memory of Michelle will be her warm and inviting smile and her ready welcome to her and Peter's home and her enthusiastic support she gave to the Players. I shall never forget those early meetings at "Kings House" where we were able to set up the Players and the wonderful reception and hosting Michelle offered us. If anyone epitomised the 'faith, fun and fellowship' which the Players aimed to provide it was Michelle.

Thank you Michelle for that.

With her exquisite voice one wonders why she never 'strutted the stage'. Apparently this was because of two setbacks: one whilst playing Elizabeth Bennett in an extract from "Pride and Prejudice" in Herefordshire and it was the high notes in "Who Will Buy" that finished her dramatic career! These are just light-hearted memories - Peter thinks she was glad of an excuse not to appear again.

However, her total support of Peter whilst he was all consumed with the directing of so many wonderful productions can only be admired. She never complained or groaned about Peter being out night after night with rehearsals, backstage meetings and his living and breathing every aspect of the particular production he was on.



Michelle 'at home'

Behind the scenes Peter says that Michelle was never anything less than supportive with good suggestions and ideas which he could use. Her displays in the Library and elsewhere concerning the plays were excellent, and who could forget those wonderful big stones for the set of "Whose Birthday", which she managed to make to look like loaves! Michelle did quite a lot of 'touching up' for specific bits of set in her time as well as artistic displays.

As well as her time spent on the Players Michelle was very much involved in the ecumenical movement of the local churches where she was able to encourage them to come together. In this way Michelle had important contacts with all the Churches within Charlton Kings which was immensely useful in the setting up of the Players.

Michelle will be missed in many ways by many people but I think it is the Players who will miss her not being there when a new production is performed.

Martyn Fry

Published in the Commemorative Programme for *'Let Us Remember'*
(October 2014)

Yvonne Brawn

It was a huge shock to hear of Yvonne's sudden and unexpected death in early July. Always very active in the Community Players, at St Mary's Church and in the wider community she is sorely missed and will still be looked for in all the expected places for a long time.

Until retirement, she was a teacher at St Edward's Senior School and this background gave her an empathy with young people and a straightforward directness that made her a joy to work with. She never sought a leading role in productions but strengthened and brought character to the crowd scenes in the larger musical dramas, notably and most recently in *'My Fair Lady'*. She was also memorably involved in *'The Sound of Music'*, *'Whose Birthday Did You Say?'* and many of the Christmas productions, *'Let Us Be Merry'*.

The Players will miss her willingness to take part, not only on stage or as a singer, but also in front of house – in fact, where ever she was needed. Yvonne enjoyed it all so much and will be missed so much but would be first to say *'The show must go on.'* It is fitting that this tribute should rest in the programme for a production held in the hall of the school where she spent so much of her time and into which she put so much of her life.

David Brawn, Viv Garland and Lynne Glover



'My Fair Lady' (2010) The 'notorious' Ascot scene where 'Eliza Doolittle' reverts to her original character as she urges the horse 'Dover' on to win in no uncertain terms! Yvonne registers her shock (2nd from left)

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(October 2014)

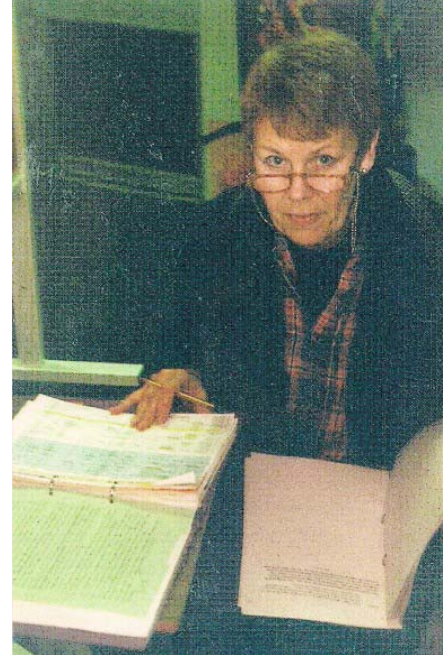
Margaret 'Maggie' Scrivens

We were very sad to hear that our dear friend Maggie passed away at home in Bourton-on-the-Water on 20th March, after a prolonged illness. Maggie was involved with all the Players major productions from the early Nineties as costume maker, designer and dresser. Her creativity in costume design shone through in all our major productions. She had the wonderful gift of creating the right style and colour for an individual and, if in doubt, would research information for accuracy – she was meticulous. Maggie had the ability to produce something from nothing.

An example of her skill was our production of *'Oh What a Lovely War'* in 1995. We had great difficulty in hiring uniforms, caps and hats for the soldiers but Maggie came to the rescue. She arrived for a rehearsal with a case full of fabrics and by the end of the evening had hand made three French soldiers caps with appropriate trimmings. All this work completed in a quiet and unflappable manner.

I visited Maggie at home when she was confined to bed and she accepted her illness with great dignity. She was the epitome of love and kindness and will be greatly missed.

June Pearce



Maggie consulting costume catalogues

**Press release to the Gloucestershire Echo (November 2009)
Summary published in the Charlton Kings Players Newsletter
(November 2009)**

Sue Dyson - An Appreciation

We were very sad to read in the 'Echo' last week of the circumstances of Sue Dyson's sudden death. Sue was well-known as a writer and singer, but Charlton Kings Community Players would like to recognise her talents in a less well-known role, as an amateur actress.

No-one who saw - and particularly, heard - Sue as the Abbess in our production of 'The Sound of Music' in 1998 will ever forget the range and beauty of her '*Climb Every Mountain*'. She was the consummate abbess, caring but firm, smiling but concerned.

Although she never talked with us about her life as a fiction writer, she wrote an insightful wartime sketch, '*A Lovely Day Tomorrow*' for our Double Bill in 1999, and was then prepared to play the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the play I wrote for the new millennium, '*Whose Birthday Did You Say?*' Her warmth and sincerity shone through that gentle performance, and included her singing of two lovely original songs by Malcolm Dunbar.

Despite all the pressures of her life Sue found the time to run a Singing Workshop for us, and, because of her debilitating illness, we lost touch with her. Then memorably she returned unexpectedly to sing with Helen Wright in the entertainment part of our AGM last year. With Musical Direction in mind we invited her to join our 'Directors' Workshops' last Autumn; she replied at once with real enthusiasm and characteristic modesty, "*I would love to have a go...if you think I'm up to it... it would be lovely to see you all again.*"

But her relentless illness took her once more into hospital and she was unable to be with us. We heard no more until the shocking news of her sudden death, and then the tragedy recounted in the 'Echo'. Those who knew her in local drama will be grateful for the experience of working with such a lovely person, but mourn with deep sadness the manner of her departing. We remain frustrated with the thought of 'What might have been...'

Peter Grainger



'The Sound of Music' (1998)
Sue Dyson as the Mother
Abbess

Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(February 2004)



Alison as Judith in *'Hay Fever'* (2001)

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2004

ALISON LUNA

A deafening 'QUI-ET is how many past members of the Players will remember Alison Luna, and those memories go back to 1984 when Alison began her amateur career as Stage Manager. We knew she had been a professional Stage Manager once upon a time and could imagine her at the Everyman. But it was many years later that we realised what illustrious circles she had moved in, when she received a note of good wishes from Albert Finney for her role as Judith Bliss in our 2001 production of 'Hay Fever'- they had apparently worked together years ago on a tour of Scotland.

Alison was involved in all our productions from the beginning, and was a founder of our first 'committee' in 1992- she later admitted it was not really her scene! As Stage Manager she laid down and maintained the high standards of organisation and efficiency that became a feature of the Players backstage. But it was much more than that; she was an enthusiastic member of the group who created 'House upon the Rock' for St Mary's Octocentennial, a long-term committee member and latterly our Treasurer. She was always keen to help young Stage Managers to develop their skills backstage, and some will remember with a smile the diminutive (at that time!) Phil Bevan dashing around the stage with his trusty microphone.

But in 1994 we persuaded her to appear on the stage as the Prosecuting Counsel in 'The Vigil', a challenging part even for an experienced actor, but Martyn still talks about their duel on stage and who really won! My favourite memory is her playing the icy 'Tempter' in 'Whose Birthday?' (it was the very first scene written) and despite not feeling well enough to appear on stage, she had the courage to have her lines specially recorded at the University for 'Players Please'. She also insisted on sharing the prompting for that anniversary production, another backstage role she had miraculously managed to carry out as S.M.! But she always said that one of her happiest moments was to play Judith in 'Hay Fever', and it was wonderful that she was able to have such a triumph before her illness began to take hold.

So we all owe Alison so much, not only for all she did, but for the qualities she brought to the development of the Players and so many friendships that were built on its foundations. She insured we never took easy options and yet was realistic about the challenges. She cared deeply about the group and despite being confined to bed, always wanted to be involved and to know how things were going. As director, you knew once she'd agreed to be Stage Manager your job was half done; as an actress she was always professional, talented and totally reliable. Having her there in the centre of the village, even when confined to bed, was strangely re-assuring. Alison, thank you.

Peter Grainger

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(April 1997)**



Ken Venus

Now that the Community Players sweatshirts have been established so successfully in the group, it seems right to remember Ken, who played such an important part in the design of the logo. His sudden death last January came as a tremendous shock to his friends and has caused an enormous sense of loss to all who knew him.

He was a lovely man, gentle, kind, modest and endlessly willing to put himself to great trouble for all who asked his help. His skills as an artist will long be remembered in Charlton Kings. God bless you Ken, we will miss you.