

***Charlton Kings Community Players***

***present***

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SAMUEL FRENCH LTD

Joan Littlewood's Musical Entertainment



***'Oh What A Lovely War'***

composed by fellow artists in Theatre Workshop, London

Research by Gerry Raffles and Charles Chilton

Title suggested by Ted Allen

**on**

**26th, 27th & 28th October 1995**

**at**

**Balcarras School Hall**

**PROGRAMME**

*A donation from the proceeds of this production will be made to Balcarras School Library*



Welcome to another production by Charlton Kings Community Players

After the intense drama of 'The Vigil' we chose '*Oh What A Lovely War*' to involve as many people in the community by taking on something closer to a traditional 'musical'. The play also has a 'message' - or two - and is not inappropriate to this VE/VJ anniversary year.

The size and variety of the cast and the scale of the musical dimension that Frank Wood has had to handle - all his own arrangements by the way! - show what a suitable vehicle for community music and drama '*Oh What A Lovely War*' has become. We are particularly delighted that so many young people have been involved both on stage and in the band.

We are most grateful for the production opportunities which Balcarras' splendid hall has provided and for the support we have had from Dave Thomas, the Governors and staff of Balcarras throughout the long gestation period of this production.

Thanks to Tony Highton and his team we have been able to exploit the potential for sound and lighting effects by the script, and a glance at the cast list will give you an idea of the challenge that Joyce Brooks has been facing in meeting the costume requirements of such a production.

There have been so many people who have 'rallied to the cause' in the last nine months and we are most grateful to them all. It has been a big venture in every sense but one to which the community has responded with real enthusiasm.

The production is very much one of contrasts, as scene follows scene in quick succession. The action moves from jingoism to Music Hall, from personal tragedy to social satire, from trench humour to political obsession, and always at the centre is the 'Tommy' with his inextinguishable spirit. We are delighted to have two British Legion collectors with us at each performance as a small recognition of the real star of tonight's show.

Thank you for your support and have a very enjoyable evening.

Peter Grainger





© Peter Grainger photo montage



*Behind the Scenes from a scrapbook compiled by Jill Muir  
and photographed by Barry Curl*  
© Barry Curl photographs



● There is further news from the production team of Oh What A Lovely War. Jill Richell, of the make-up crew of the Charlton Kings Community Players told about the preparations for the production at Balcarras School in October. A small group of people have been meeting to learn about stage make-up. They formed after an inspiring demonstration in March by Julia Craddock, a make-up artist with the BBC, and now meet regularly to practise applying greasepaint, ageing actors' faces, making beards, moustaches and sideburns. All these skills will help to create an Edwardian look for the play, which is set in the First World War. With a cast of 40 and over 100 characters, they have quite a job.



Corrine, Claire, Alison and Maggie (clockwise) ~ Make-Up Team.

● Oh What a Lovely War being performed at Balcarras School on October 26 and 27 is proving to be a real community event. A team of hairdressers from the village, including two from the John Martin Salon, have got together under the leadership of Sue Travaskis to do the hair for the Charlton Kings Community Players. They will transform the cast of 40 into soldiers, officers, ladies and music hall artists of the First World War.

Sue and Lisa transforming Jill and June







Anne Cross becomes Mrs Pankhurst.



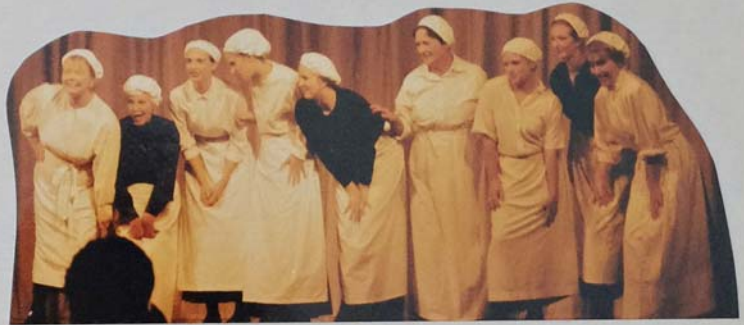
Pam Worth, Erica Hope, Linda Hurl





June leads  
'We Don't Want to  
Lose You'

The girls enjoying  
'Sister Susie'

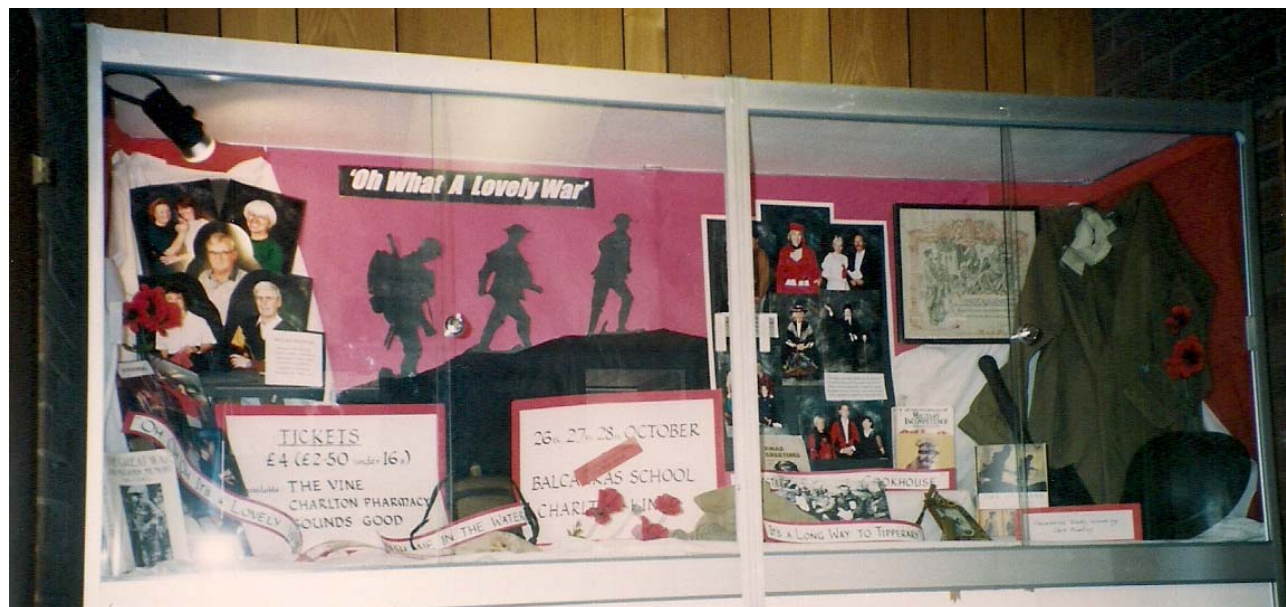


All ready for the ball :  
Anne Anderson, June Pearce, Jill  
Richell, Doreen Fry , Barbara Penney





## Displays in Charlton Kings Library library window and Charlton Kings Post Office







## **'OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR'**

Performed by the Charlton Kings Community Players, Balcarras School,  
Thursday - Saturday 26th - 28th October 1995.

## **A RADICAL VIEWPOINT**

An EVENING of QUESTIONS, DISCUSSION and DEBATE at  
CHARLTON KINGS JUNIOR SCHOOL  
7.30 - 9.30pm TUESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 1995

For cast and audience the Musical will have stirred many of the myths and facts surrounding the Western Front and First World War. Many families, despite the passing generations, still have stories and mementoes of forbears who fought in the trenches.

Colonel GEOFFREY POWELL, M.C., B.A., late The Green Howards and the Parachute Regiment, military historian and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, will suggest that the Generals of that War may have had an unfairly bad press. He will be joined by Councillor JOHN HOWE, Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, who may have a contrary view. David Stanley, alias Field Marshall Sir John French, will be in the chair.

The evening is intended for school and college students who may be studying the War, and for anyone interested - in this week after Remembrance Sunday - in brushing up their knowledge or bringing any specialist contribution to the debate.

Admission by ticket 50p (to include light refreshments) to be purchased at the door or in advance from members of the cast.

## 'OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR' 26-28 OCTOBER 1995.

The preparations for 'Oh What A Lovely War' are going extraordinarily well. Some 40 people came to the audition evening on 12 January, including a welcome number of new members. The play has now been cast with 32 speaking parts and a further six non-speaking crowd members who will support the chorus songs. I am particularly delighted that we have eight young people involved with speaking parts.

We now have a rehearsal schedule for March and April, which has meant breaking the play into linked scenes to make best use of the cast's time. I am very grateful to Lynne Glover for being willing to help with the creative side of the production, and to Tricia Ratcliffe who has already done sterling work in helping me with planning rehearsals and communicating with so many people. It is great to have time on our side - for a change!

Balcarras School has been most helpful in providing us with wonderful theatre facilities, both front-of-house and backstage. It is, as some will recall from two productions there years ago, a splendid stage, and, with a hall capacity of over 300, it gives us the opportunity to create a spectacular production and attract a large and appreciative audience.

It is most encouraging that so many people are also volunteering to help backstage - we have a little list!. Besides Alison Luna as Stage Manager, we are very fortunate to have Tony Highton, Technical Director of the Cathedral Players to take charge of the lighting (smoke, etc), and rumour has it that there may be at least three enthusiasts willing to help with costumes.

For those who know the play, we are planning to have the slides projected on to a screen beside the stage and to bring the action more into the audience with a thrust stage. Ken Venus has already agreed to design a bandstand for Frank Wood's talented musicians, and I would very much like to hear of an artist who would design a number of stylised silhouettes to set against the cyclorama. Publicity of course is going to be very important - any offers?

Peter Grainger.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - 1995

TUESDAY 28th MARCH ..... MAKE UP EVENING.  
MONDAY 24th APRIL ..... ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.  
SUNDAY 4th JUNE ..... CELEBRATION OF PENTECOST.  
26th, 27th AND 28th OCTOBER ..... OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR.

I look forward to seeing you at the events listed above, and thank you all for your help and support.



JUNE PEARCE  
(516953)

***March 1995 Charlton Kings Community Players newsletter***





## CHARLTON KINGS COMMUNITY PLAYERS

OUR SIXTH NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1995

Now that the dust has settled after the recent outbreak of war at Balcarras School, I write on the results of our campaign.

We sold a remarkable 804 tickets and as a result we have made a donation of £700 to Balcarras School Library. In addition the Royal British Legion collected a total of £340.87 at the three performances. From these results I think we judge the show to be a success. We are most grateful to the many people who worked immensely hard to achieve this, but special thanks must go to Peter and Frank for their huge contributions and total commitment to the show.

The main content of this Newsletter is about *The Show* and I make no apology for that. It is a time for reflection and perhaps some lessons for the future. So do please read on.....

June.

### PUBLICITY

Many thanks to all those who helped to publicise OWALW so successfully. Without you, those 800+ tickets would never have been sold. Between us, we had a lot of good ideas; let's hang on to them for the next time:-

The leaflet with booking form seemed to be a useful selling aid. (Nothing beats "personal selling", but a booking form in the hand can clinch the deal.) 11% of the tickets were sold through the booking forms. Keeping records is tedious but, thanks to those who did note down who had bought tickets from them, we now have a circulation list of OWALW supporters. A good basis for a mailshot next time. Remember your personal lists too. Keep them going and bring them out again for the next production. A lot of people were away over this half term, so our pool of supporters is potentially much greater than 800.

We learned quite a lot about dealing with the press too. Village Voice proved to be a great success. Clearly, a lot of local people read it. Perhaps we should consider a regular bulletin to keep local people in touch with our activities?

Finally, have you any ideas? Anything else we could have done and should be doing next time? Do have a think about it and let me know. The Decade of Evangelism is all about publicising a message.

Lynne Glover 01242 524715 / 0378 267063

### GREASEPAINT AND ROLLERS

The '1914 look' created for the show was due, in part, to the skills of the Make-up and Hairdressing teams which evolved from the demonstration by Julia Craddock, a Make-up artist from the BBC, held last March.

The Make-Up team consisting of Alison Mansfield, Mary Perry, Claire Baker, Corrine Hockley, June Pearce, Tricia Ratcliffe and Jill Richell met regularly during the spring and summer to learn more from either Julia or the Lechner video and then practise on one another. Some became experts on 'ageing' while others concentrated on the particular make up ladies of 1914 would use.

The hairdressers, led by Sue Travaskis who is particularly skilled and experienced, studied many hair styles from the First World War and then came to meet the cast. The men's military look was generally achieved with gel, and moustaches were either grown or stuck on using false hair. The ladies were encouraged to grow their hair to help Nicky (an employee of John Martin's salon) and Lisa, set it into Edwardian styles. Not only was this achieved, but styles were changed during the performance to accommodate changes of character and setting. An excellent job by a skilled and dedicated team.

Our thanks to both teams for their time and commitment.

Jill Richell.

### A PLAYERS VIEW

Beginners please....beginners please...we gathered on stage and began the nail biting wait while the band played the overture listening intently for the four bars from the National Anthem which would cue the curtains and lights. We were on.....

Nearly a year earlier we'd auditioned at the school. I didn't get the part I wanted (I'd never have done the MC as well as Gwilym anyway). As a committee member I'd been party to choosing this play and I was having my doubts as to whether we'd done the right thing. I had serious doubts that I would ever learn the words for the five characters I was playing, let alone remember the music. Then there was that unforgettable Friday rehearsal when Peter gathered the whole cast and support people together for prayer - this put the whole thing in context somehow - this was a witness to God and what He could do with a group of His people committed to each other.

Back stage again, you wear this next Martyn, Tony where's your hat? - sorry this is your hat. Act 2: Can I get that mess jacket to stay done up before the words "Sir William Robertson".....where's that French cape? Unbelievably we'd reached the finale.....form fours, right turn (fix poppy - wait till Carol moves - GO)...how will we spend the money we earn - Oh! Oh! Oh! it's a lovely show! It was - thank you - everyone.

John Palmer.

### O.W.A.L.W. - VIDEO EVENING.

CHARLTON KINGS JUNIOR SCHOOL, SATURDAY 6TH JANUARY 1996, 7PM. We are hoping to hire a large screen so that we can all view in comfort and see everybody 'larger than life'. A charge of £1 will be made to include a glass of mulled wine and mince pies, and we promise you an evening of fun. We need to know how many to cater for so please give me a ring to confirm that you are coming.

June (516953)



### IS COMMUNITY DRAMA SPECIAL?

Something special seems to happen with Community Drama. We noticed it when we watched the video of 'The Vigil', but then that was about the first Easter. But this time it was a musical which some feared would be flippant about war. It was about politics and diplomacy, and had some bawdy lines and one or two suggestive songs. So how come this special atmosphere?

Martyn Fry was the first to express it - the wonderful feeling of standing, as Sir Douglas Haig, at the front of the thrust stage suspended between the drama on stage behind him, and the intense silence of the audience in front. Of course it was difficult to put into words, but strangely it wasn't there on Saturday night.....

When we decided to perform "Oh What a Lovely War" I was a little concerned that it would not be the sort of play with a 'message' that the church-based 'Players' tries to put on. We are not after all just another local drama group - we do have those alliterative aims of 'fun, faith, and fellowship'. But with the amazing progression from Dress Rehearsal to First Night I needn't have worried - something special was happening!

There is the delight that everyone experiences when, after months of working together, they finally make it all happen. There is the confidence that young people who have never acted before gain from appearing on stage - and succeeding. There is that extra dimension of acting from people who would never claim to be 'actors' and from singers who have never sung a solo in their lives before.

But it's even more than all of that. We had some serious problems in the course of the last week - poor Alison had flu, we had no one to man the spotlights and the slides were proving unmanageable. On every occasion I am certain we were guided towards a solution. Perhaps I may be forgiven for describing just one example of what I mean.

When sorting the war slides into an empty carousel, I noticed an odd slide left in and put it to one side. Later something - or someone - told me to have a look at that slide and I discovered it was of the 'Garden Tomb' in Jerusalem (and I don't even remember buying it). I later realised it had a row of poppies in the foreground, and was certain that we were intended to use it during the final Poppy Dance as a message of hope in the Resurrection. That scene itself had evolved in the last fortnight as a result of a remarkable series of chances - and we had a message after all!

And finally there was that extraordinary atmosphere at the 'Songs of Praise' service at Holy Apostles on the Sunday after the play - a sense of fellowship and joy amongst people from all the churches who had something special to share. We thank God for it.

Peter Grainger.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Looking ahead, I ask you all to come to the A.G.M. at Charlton Kings Junior School on Thursday 8th February 1996 at 7.30pm. The election of officers and committee members should not take long and the rest of the evening will be spent planning the next major production. As members, we welcome your ideas so please come along and join in the discussion.



### A RADICAL VIEWPOINT.

Some of us taking part in the play were concerned that, in providing an entertainment, the play might have trivialised the immense sacrifices of the First World War. Many of us, from one or two generations back in our families had recollections passed down. Were these, and our play as it outlined the War, fact or myth?

Colonel Geoffrey Powell M.C., a military historian and Arnhem veteran, outlined his "radical view" that the generals had had an unfairly bad press. He referred to the Army's role from 1816-1899 as a Police Force in the colonies and at home. Although the Boer War had been some preparation, as were the 1906-1914 Army reforms - the latter were undertaken despite real cuts in expenditure. Britain also had the lowest defence expenditure of all the major contestants, most of that going to the Navy. Furthermore, only Kitchener and Haig foresaw the implication of the War that the B.E.F. became embroiled in. The B.E.F. itself, the only Regular Army involved, was highly trained particularly in marksmanship. But of its 100,000, in the first few months there were 85,000 casualties, many of those killed should have been the leaders of the army as it expanded.

Following this, John Howe, Senior Lecturer in modern history at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, outlined the diplomatic and political background that made a European War for which we were so ill prepared, almost inevitable. Although Sarajevo was "an excuse not a reason" for War that the German High command thought they could win.

Why were the casualties on all sides so appalling? In the lively question and discussion session both speakers seemed to reluctantly agree, that the only means of achieving victory being to break through the 350 miles line of the Western Front, made these too, inevitable.

David Stanley.

Oh, oh, oh, its a lovely war  
Even with Jamie's marching flair  
And Andy's face that's meant to scare  
Producer Peter won't care  
As long as the lighting is there  
But we're sending our Joycie spare, and  
What about Chris' hair?

Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war  
Derek and Tony missed the duck  
Cos' the cue for the shot was out of luck  
But George's drill will wake them all up  
Will June ever sound as common as muck?  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war.

Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war  
Pat is muttering something for-eign  
Will Martyn's new words drive Alison insane?  
The 'Bells of Hell' give Frank a pain  
And 'cheeky' Daniel is missing again  
Oh, oh, oh, it's a lovely war.

Ann Cross.

### CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT:

Highbury Hall, 6th December.  
Coopers Court, 15 December.  
Nazareth House, 3rd January.

I look forward to seeing you at future events and thank you for your support.

