



**Forthcoming read-throughs, auditions & other production stuff**

- 'The Thrill of Love': **read-through** Tuesday 8 October, 7.00pm in the bar
- 'The Thrill of Love': **auditions** Sunday 3 November, 2.30pm auditorium
- 'When We Are Married'; **read-through** Monday 11 November, 7.30pm in Hancock House
- 'When We Are Married'; **auditions** Sunday 24 November, 2pm auditorium

**Remember: a read-through is not an audition!**

**DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE:**

Wednesday 16 October

Other diary dates (more info on the website)

COFFEE MORNINGS	Every Saturday, 10.00-12.00
Jazz at the Apollo: Karen Sharp Quartet	Sunday 15 September 3.00pm
Drama workshop	Friday 20 September, 7.00pm
Macmillan Coffee Morning	Saturday 28 September 10.00am
Apollo Theatre Players' AGM	Saturday 30 November 7.30pm

# apollo

The in-house magazine of the Apollo Theatre Players, Newport, Isle of Wight

Issue no. 273

September 2019

## 'Suddenly at Home'

from the director, Evelyn Hicks

With this production it wasn't so much a case of 'who dunnit?', but more a question of 'who'll do it?!' And then having found the cast, the saga began. I was told I'd bumped off more characters than any Durbridge thriller!

Summer Production! Now, let me make it quite clear, I was perfectly aware that there would be absences, but as the play broke down into viable working blocks I considered it was do-able and I had the cast I wanted—incidentally one of the best I've ever worked with! Having co-ordinated revues and concerts in France in an area the size of Wales, when people got together briefly prior to performance, I thought this would be a piece of cake! However, I was not quite prepared for the disappearing pieces of the jigsaw puzzle! Now what can I say about this cast—well, anyone listening in to rehearsals would think they are all bordering on the schizophrenic! They did a fantastic job filling in for absent friends. The most enthusiastic was Garry, our Inspector Appleton, whose female squeak is an absolute delight! And then there was Graham ... We sat with Amy and Mike in a gloomy auditorium. Silence fell as we faced the prospect

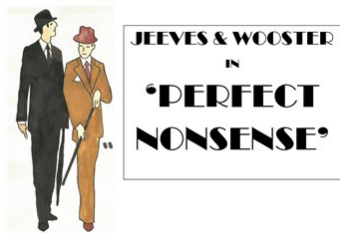
of pulling the show. Helen had encountered Graham the week before when he'd toured the theatre. Amy happened to have his phone number. Yes! He thought he could manage to help us between various commitments. What a privilege it has been for all of us to work with a truly professional actor. It wasn't a case of 'Ask Jeeves' but 'Ask Graham'. When Holly's scream was truly hollow, he suggested the solution. Inexperienced cast made observations about his performance that they could apply to their own role and he enabled more experienced players to draw out more complex layers to their characters.

We all love to sit on the set and we're definitely at home in our zany front room—and how about our orange sofa! Thanks to all the backstage crew who gave us the only completed thing we've got apart from Peggy and team's

**Graham Pountney, Carol Simpson & Helen Reading**



superb wardrobe. How many wardrobe departments have to compete with two changes of male lead, apart from everything else? Well, if nobody else enjoys this show, we will. Too many people have put so much into making the impossible possible. The one constant was dear Mike Crow who took on the duties of prompt and was there rain or shine. His knowledge of the script made him the perfect man for telephone duties—boy, does it ring! He was doomed once he'd announced he'd been a telephone engineer! Another unfortunate, of course, was Ginnie. As soon as I realised she had an eye for the '70s, she was in. Now while I like everything done yesterday, Ginnie likes it done before she's even thought about it. What a whirlwind! Thanks to Mike Whitehead who has been my great link with past and present, and to Roger for simplifying the working light system for me (OK if nobody else comes to turn anything else on!). A great welcome to Nigel Coley who endured hours rehearsing with us as we sorted out tricky business. Luckily nobody murdered anybody in the course of this play, though they might have been tempted. Thanks to all the cast for their great flexibility, good humour, great company and wonderful talent, and weren't they happy at the Tech to find I had laryngitis!



**Fiona Gwinnett, director of the second show in the 2019-20 season, is very pleased to confirm that she has found her cast.**

Rehearsals are well under way and the cast—small but perfectly formed—is as follows:

**Bertram Wooster:** Joel Leverton  
**Jeeves:** Robbie Gwinnett  
**Seppings:** Pete Harris

**Production dates: 25 October-2 November.** And remember—Steve Reading will be looking to fill rotas again!

## Editorial: the view from the Editor's chair

Not long ago I was fortunate enough to see a play at the National Theatre called 'Rutherford & Son', written in the early years of the nineteenth century by a neglected author called Githa Sowerby. Githa was one of a vanishingly small number of female playwrights at that time and her play remained hidden away for decades.

I have a number of reasons for mentioning this play. One is that I long to see more plays on our stage that were regarded as cutting edge at the time they were written, or are perhaps undervalued now. Examples of this might include 'Ghost Train', which most people think of as a dated period piece but which, reading between the lines, has quite a lot to say about

the female experience at that time; or DH Lawrence, whose plays are much less appreciated than his novels but which, when sensitively performed, have a great deal to say about the society of the day—though I do appreciate that Wardrobe may have a view about more period drama on our stage! I just feel that as we approach our 50th anniversary we shouldn't lose sight of the original purpose of the Apollo: to put on good, challenging theatre.

Another reason for mentioning my visit to the NT is that the part of Rutherford was played by Roger Allam ('Mind 'ow you go,' a remark that devotees of 'Endeavour' will immediately recognise), whose performance I can only describe as stonking.

And finally I left the theatre speechless with admiration and envy at the astonishing stage machinery which enabled, among other delights, a real rainstorm to fall between the stage and the front row, the entire stage set to move forward to become effectively a thrust stage, and in the final minutes of the play, the set to turn completely round and move back and away, with one of the characters looking out of the back window of the house. We can but dream ... But on the other hand, I never cease to be amazed at the achievements of our own set-building and design team. You only have to look at the set for 'Suddenly at Home' to see what can be done with talent and enthusiasm (and an orange sofa!).

## News from the Apollo Theatre Trust



Some of you may remember that a couple of years ago we had the front of The Theatre and Hancock House comprehensively refurbished. Sadly some areas are already showing signs of disrepair and last year we went back to the contractors who agreed their work was not up to standard and promised to return to make repairs. After 11 months they have failed to show up and we are now writing to them with an official letter of complaint.

We are still looking for new people who are not directly involved with the theatre to join the Trust in order to provide a better level of independent governance to ensure we adequately satisfy the objectives which earn us our charitable status. A note is to appear in future programmes inviting people

to apply to join us.



The Trust remains concerned at the state of the Unit. Most of the furniture stored at the Theatre has now been moved to the Unit to allow for more space to store properties. The result



is that the Unit can no longer be used for rehearsals or set construction (see pictures taken at the Unit recently). Following a decision at the Players' Committee, Martin Ward is leading a working party to rationalise the furniture we hold and the set building team needs to review what scenic item we need to keep.

Our biggest concern is that we have not yet been able to find anyone to help us to apply for building control approval for the building work to join the Theatre to Hancock House. A number of avenues are being explored but if any member knows someone with architectural or civil engineering experience please let the Trust know.

*Paul Jennings, Chair, Apollo Theatre Trust*



Some members may already know that Louis Lawrence's son sadly died recently. Our thoughts and love go out to Louis and his family. It's now been decided that follow-

ing this and other recent sad losses of members and their families to cancer we will be hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning at the theatre on 28 September at 10am. Please

come along and support this vital charity; bring cake (bake it or fake it) or simply enjoy the efforts of others and remember those we have lost.

# News from your Committee

Notes from the Committee meeting 9 September 2019

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

The reading of Martin's play was well attended and enjoyed by us all. Open Day went smoothly, thanks to everyone's help; a special 'thank you' to Mish and her team for all their hard work with the Youth Theatre, whose performance filled the auditorium! The overall numbers of visitors were down on last year—it was a very hot day and August Bank Holiday—but very positive feedback from those who came. I think we may have to schedule it to either autumn or spring in future years as there is always so much going on during the summer on the Island.

I have been approached by a member to organise a social evening where he can entertain us with some of his own verse. I am looking at dates later on in the year when this can be scheduled in. Michael Arnell is also planning a presentation from the Stagecraft Workshops for a social evening.

We have eight new members, all very experienced in every area of amateur theatre, and I think they are going to be invaluable to the Apollo. We now have 198 members.

## MARKETING

Publicity for 'Suddenly At Home' centred on Graham Pountney's kind support in

stepping in to take the lead role in the show: this was featured in the CP and IW Observer, as well as on social media and local radio, where recordings of an interview with Graham and an excerpt from the play were aired. You may recall we stopped advertising on the IW Radio website a couple of years ago when they started charging for the service; it appears they now allow events to be posted free of charge again so we have resumed using this website.

I am in discussion with Di with the aim of identifying a 'Unique Selling Point' for each show this season, which can provide a focus for marketing each play.

Adverts for the Open Day and 'Suddenly At Home' were placed with the IW Observer, which has been very responsive and supportive, also publishing the press releases for the Open Day and SAH.

## HOUSE MANAGER

The rotas for Suddenly at Home (SaH) were again challenging to complete. Fortunately, volunteers came forward during the last week. Box Office seems to be a problem with recruits and I will be arranging a training session after SaH. Ideally, we need a further 3 or 4 to spread the load.

I have fielded a number of letting requests over recent weeks. Some have been put on hold until our 2020/21 season is agreed. I have been working with the 2-week parameter following a play finishing. I will be putting a lettings policy to the committee for discussion.

The Mitre Players made quite an impact when they hired the theatre in July. It was refreshing to see so many members in their entourage and they integrated so well with our bar! It was a learning experience for us and I hope they seek a return in 2021. Thanks to all committee members who helped support this venture.

Bar prices have been revised. Non-member prices have seen an increase in many alcoholic drinks while members will still benefit from a lower price schedule. Members are reminded that they need to confirm with bar staff that they are on the members list (a copy is behind the bar).

## WARDROBE

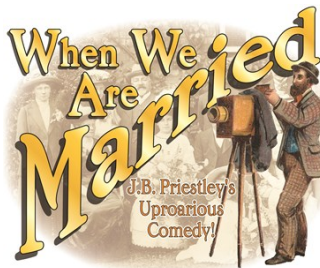
It was a pleasure to welcome the Wardrobe Manager to the Committee and to hear that through the untiring efforts of her and her team the whole 2018-19 season was dressed for the princely sum of £120, once the income from costume hire was taken into account.

## YOUR COMMITTEE

**Theatre Director** & Chair of management committee (elected 3-yearly): **Amy Burns** (2016-19) amy@masexodus.co.uk

<b>Arts Manager</b> (elected annually in Nov for season beginning following Sept)	<b>Di Evans</b> (2019-20) diandclem@hotmail.com	<b>2 Members' Representatives</b> (elected annually)	<b>Tom Hilton</b> (2018-19) thilton1@hotmail.co.uk <b>Mike Crowe</b> (2018-19) mike.crowe1@btopenworld.com
<b>Business Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Ginnie Orrey</b> (2018-20) gginnie@googlemail.com or info@apollo-theatre.org.uk	<b>House Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Steve Reading</b> (co-opted 2018-19) steverreading104@btinternet.com
<b>Marketing Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Maureen Sullivan</b> (2018-20) msullivan58@me.com	<b>Technical Manager</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Dan Burns</b> (2017-19) dan@masexodus.co.uk
<b>Players' Secretary</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Mike Whitehead</b> (2018-20) michaelwhitehead@yahoo.com	<b>LTG rep</b>	<b>Cynara Crump</b> cynara.crump@virgin.net
<b>Membership Secretary</b> (elected biannually)	<b>Carole Crow</b> (2017-19) carolecrow9@gmail.com	<b>Apollo Trust Buildings Manager (co-opted)</b>	<b>Roger Simpson</b> roger.dodger45@yahoo.co.uk

## Casting call



**Read-through:** Monday 11 November, 7.30pm in Hancock House

**Auditions:** Sunday 24 November, 2pm auditorium

**Rehearsals** begin Thursday 2 January

**Production dates:** 3-11 April 2020

The hilarious comedy, 'When We Are Married', was written by JB Priestley in 1938 whilst he was living here on the Isle of Wight. Set in a Yorkshire wool town in 1908, three well-to-do Edwardian couples, each married on the same day in the same chapel by the same preacher, gather to celebrate their silver anniversary. The Helliwells, the Parkers and the Soppitts are highly respected pillars of the community, so when they discover that the vicar wasn't licensed they are horrified! Realisation that they have been living in sin for the last 25 years brings out some stark home truths and an evening of farcical comedy erupts. With a tipsy press photographer, a vindictive housekeeper, a sassy young maid and an unwelcome visitor all adding to the mayhem, while the three couples try to keep a lid on their embarrassing secret. This classic is full of laughs and surprises as the pandemonium switches from horrified social embarrassment to the realisation by some that they are free from the shackles of long, tedious marriages. Bullies get their come-uppance and the hen-pecked are hilariously liberated.

It's a brilliant ensemble piece for a large cast of well-drawn characters totalling 7 women and 7 men which requires total commitment, energy and pace. Do come along to the read-through and find out all about it.

In the meantime, if you would like a script to read contact the director, David Vince on 07760 172818 or [d\\_f\\_vince@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:d_f_vince@yahoo.co.uk)

**Characters** (the ages given are playing ages):

**Alderman Joe Helliwell** (leading role, late 40s-50s. Yorkshire accent) A successful, self-made businessman, well pleased with himself.

**Maria Helliwell** (leading role, late 40s-50s, Yorkshire accent) Joe's wife. Very much the hostess, fully conscious of her status in society.

**Councillor Albert Parker** (leading role, late 40s-50s. Yorkshire accent) A bombastic and ambitious man of business. Extremely pompous and overbearing.

**Annie Parker**, Albert's wife (leading role, late 40s-50s. Less pronounced Yorkshire accent) A gentle, sensitive woman, dominated by her husband until she decides to tell him what she really thinks of him!

**Herbert Soppitt** (leading role, late 40s-50s. Less pronounced Yorkshire accent) A mild, modest, likeable man, a solicitor. Initially brow-beaten by his wife, he undergoes great change as the play progresses.

**Clara Soppitt** Herbert's wife (leading role, late 40s-50s. Yorkshire accent) An aggressive, domineering woman until she receives her come-uppance!

**Gerald Forbes** (supporting role, mid 20s-30. Well educated, middle-class, southern counties accent) The chapel organist and secret fiancé of Nancy Holmes. Somewhat superior in his attitude to northern life.

**Nancy Holmes** (supporting role, early 20s. Well spoken, northern accent, not too pronounced) Niece of the Helliwells and

secret fiancé to Gerald. Attractive in looks and personality.

**Ruby Birtle** Maid to the Helliwells (supporting role, 16-early 20s. Yorkshire accent) A cheeky young lady, full of energy and self-confidence.

**Mrs Northrop** Cook/ Housekeeper to the Helliwells (supporting role, 50s-60s. Yorkshire accent). Aggressively outspoken about her social superiors but humorous. Likes a drink.

**Fred Dyson** (supporting role, 20s -30s. Yorkshire accent) Reporter for the Yorkshire Argus newspaper Cheerful, bright, cheeky.

**Henry Ormonroyd** (supporting role, 40s-60s. Yorkshire accent) Photographer for the Yorkshire Argus He has a beery, philosophical dignity. Gradually becomes more tipsy as the play progresses.

**Lottie Grady** (supporting role, 40s-early 50s. Yorkshire accent) A former bar maid who enjoys a drink and a good time in the company of the opposite sex. Kind-hearted, worldly wise.

**The Reverent Clement Mercer** (supporting role, 40s-60s. Well spoken, English accent) Clergyman. Initially tries to be helpful but soon becomes exasperated.



## MIKE SANTER'S FINAL CURTAIN CALL

As you all must know, dear Mike Santer, a long-time member, died on 9 August. I remember that as soon as he'd joined, Mike demonstrated his intention of becoming an active Player. His unfailingly good-natured energy made him the ideal candidate to become our Bar Manager when a vacancy occurred. In this role he initiated several profitable ventures and organised very successful social events, 'Party Pieces' being one we really should repeat. Mike acted in a variety of productions, and his special talent for comedy led to his being invited to become a regular member of other Island groups: CAODS, Curtain Up and most notably the Pepperpot

Players. This Island-wide popularity and affection was in ample evidence at a totally full house for the celebration of Mike's life at the Isle of Wight Crematorium, where some of us had to sit in the foyer! Sue Edwards was a brilliant mistress of ceremonies and even the undertakers, Bob and Bertie Everson, led us all in singing a Liz 'n' Mike favourite. Everyone then decamped to Trinity clubroom and enjoyed swapping Mike-memories and tucking into a sumptuous buffet. A fitting curtain-call for a truly wonderful gentleman. *Michael Arnell*

### DRAMA WORKSHOP

Friday, 20 Sept. 2019, 7.00-9.30pm: Leader Michael Arnell

In this session I plan to begin rehearsing a short play that the group could perform during a social evening in the winter. Please wear comfortable clothes and sensible shoes. Coffee/tea/biscuits provided. Bring a non-member friend; they could become acting members too!

### CORNER'S LAST CASE: a message from Martin Ward

On Friday, 9 August, members of the Apollo gathered in the bar to read a play called 'Corner's Last Case', a play that I wrote some five or six years ago and my one and only attempt at a comedy 'whodunnit'. It features a variety of exotic characters, including a female private investigator, two Russian gangsters and a police informer who is stuck in the 1970s; and what made it such a fun evening was hearing the various voices, particularly those who attempted the Russian accents of the gangsters. A gold star must be awarded to Joel, who delivered the 1970s informer with gusto. It was wonderful to hear lines that had been committed to paper being spoken for the first time, and gave me food for thought for future projects. My thanks go to Carole Crow for organising the evening, and to everyone who attended. Keep an eye on Apollonius for future reading dates - you have been warned!

**CHRISTMAS—AGAIN!** We've been contacted by Newport & Carisbrooke Parish Council about a 'Day of Christmas' event which they plan to hold in St Thomas' Square in Newport (date not confirmed). They're looking for some Victorian/festive costumed characters to walk about and interact with visitors and wondered whether any of our members might like to be involved. We've said we can't commit to providing people but that we would ask our membership if they're interested; if you are, could you please contact the Deputy Clerk, Linda Molyneux, on either Lucinda.Molyneux@newportwight.org.uk or (01983) 559119.

### Updated access details

#### Members' area of the theatre website

- Go on to the website and hover over 'membership' and the 'members' area' tab should drop down;
- click on that and you'll get the message 'We're sorry, the content you are trying to reach is restricted to members only';
- click on 'member login' and a drop-down box will appear containing the two areas 'username' and 'password';
- in the top area enter your 'username', which is 'firstname.secondname' (remember the dot between the words), and in the bottom box enter your 'password', which is your membership number. Your membership card has your number on it; if you can't find it check with the Membership Secretary;
- once you've done that, you should get straight into the members' area. If not, there's a problem and you need to let Ginie Orrey (webmistress) know, but try these steps first.

#### Theatre wifi

**UniFi (WiFi Administration system) Dan Burns, Amy Burns, Steve Reading** All members are able to access the apollo\_public network without use of a password. The password protected 'apollo\_theatre' network is now for devices owned/used by the Apollo such as the box office PCs, Bar payment tablet and technical equipment. This is to ensure the security of data held on them as required by GDPR.

**Apollo Diary Admin Rights granted to: Dan Burns, Amy Burns, Carole Crow, Mike Whitehead** All members have access to add and edit their OWN entries. The above can over-ride and delete other users' entries and reset passwords.



Aren't we lucky! Yes and in so many ways, but in particular here on the IW to be able to access at a fraction of the cost of actually being there, the next best thing to seeing professional live theatre, the NT Live Screenings at the local cinema. If you've never tried it and are a theatre enthusiast (well why else would you be an Apollo member) then look it up on insta thingy snap whatever or something similar, and try it for yourself.

I was fortunate to see two productions recently, both excellent, thought provoking and wondrously staged, and completely at opposite ends of the performance spectrum.

The Lehman Trilogy, starring the eponymous Simon Rus-

sel Beale, again caged in a box (see my ramblings previously on Richard II), a glass case revolving through different scenes telling the story most effectively of the rise and ultimate collapse of the Lehman Bank. Not a subject that would naturally draw yours truly to the theatre, especially as this production was over 3 hours long, but one forgot the time drawn in by the narrative and clever use of only three actors to tell the tale over four generations of the Lehman family. Gripping and entertaining and ultimately informative of present day mercenary values. The second treat was a rarely performed Measure for Measure, set in 19 century Austria. The move away from traditional Eliza-

bethan dress in this production enhanced the play and made Shakespeare's masterpiece relevant and understandable on many levels, which ultimately is the goal surely of any adaptation undertaken by a director (again Richard II take note!). What was even more striking was how the issues explored within the play and the dilemmas facing the characters were so pertinent to our present day situation in terms of predatory behaviour and female emancipation.

I felt so lucky to be able to access this production without having to cross the water and mortgage the house; I was entertained and educated simultaneously. A worthy aim for us all in the business of Theatre!

## Rambling Rose



I recently discovered, among some old papers, a play I had forgotten that I had written. It was, apparently, a play for radio. I had helpfully included the date: January 1988. It had been written on my old typewriter and evoked memories of a time when Brexit was not a word and politicians did not behave like children (a touch of irony there). [*Shurely not? Ed*]

These days, when constructing the latest magnum opus, I have to think about fonts, line justification, paragraph setting and to bold or not to bold (that was the question). Back in 1988, there was just me and the paper; I had to change the ribbon if I ran out of ink. I also had my trusty bottle of Tippex at the ready for those inevitable mistakes, brushing it on and waiting patiently for it to dry. It took me back to a

simpler, more primeval way of presenting a piece of work. I had a mental image of myself sitting at a table, typewriter before me, surrounded by screwed up pieces of paper. I feel sure that that was a reality in January 1988.

And the play? Not my finest hour, it has to be said. But I like to think it was the catalyst for bigger and better things.

## The Art of Nostalgia

by  
Martin Ward

## ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE AGM OF THE APOLLO THEATRE PLAYERS



[Sorry—no rationale for including this cartoon here—I just couldn't resist it! *Ed.*]

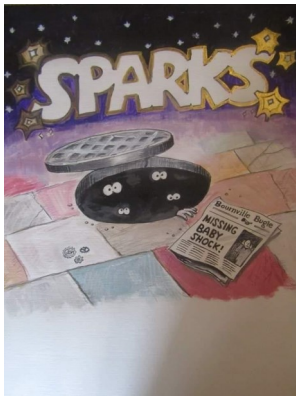
Yes, it's that time again! The AGM will take place on Saturday, 30 November (followed by a social evening in the bar). For those members who aren't familiar with the process, the AGM is the time when some—but not all—posts on the Committee come up for re-election, depending on the date when they were first elected. This year those posts are:

**Artistic director** for the 2020-2021 season (1-year term)  
**Theatre Director** (3-year term)  
**Membership Secretary** (2-year term)  
**Technical Manager** (2-year term)  
**House Manager** (2-year term)  
**2 members' representatives** (1-year term)

For the current incumbents, see the list on page 3. If you would like information on the posts that are coming up for election,

or any other committee posts, please contact Business Manager, Secretary or Theatre Director. Voting this year will once again be online; if you would like a postal vote, please let the Secretary know as soon as possible. The agenda for the AGM will be as follows:

- Points of order
- To agree the minutes of the 2018 AGM
- To ask questions on the 2018-2019 accounts, which will be made available before the meeting
- Reports from all current officers will be circulated before the meeting and questions can be asked of the officers
- To elect the relevant officers



Mish  
Whitmore  
tells us  
about the  
Apollo Youth  
Theatre  
production,  
'Sparks'



When I took over the running of the youth theatre in July last year, the one thing the members were desperate to do was put on a full-scale production. 'Sparks' was born out of a series of unfortunate events and there was a time when we all felt it was cursed, but somehow despite the difficulties we triumphed.

Deciding what to perform wasn't easy—the ten-year age span of the group made it difficult to find something suitable for all, but eventually I got them to agree to adapt the film 'Boxtrolls' for the stage (Boxtrolls—for those of you who don't know!—are mischievous creatures that live underground beneath the city of Cheeseville, where everyone loves cheese). But we had no luck contacting the production company. What should we do? So I looked Karl, my husband, in the eye and said, 'You want to write, write us a play along the lines of 'Boxtrolls', but not.' He looked horrified but after I confirmed I did mean it, he set to work.

Instead of trolls we had elves, instead of cheese we had chocolate, and I couldn't resist using Bourneville as the name of the town. The elves loved engineering so they had names like Cogs, Nuts, Sprocket and of course Sparks. Above ground, the town of Bourneville was ruled by Lord Ferrero who was far more interested in chocolate than the town and even his own family. In all of this was Ms Snickers (who also went in disguise as Mr Marathon), whose aim was to rid the town of the elves in order to become a member of the distinguished chocolate tasting club by convincing everyone that the elves had stolen a baby and the people would never be safe unless the town was elf-free. As Ms Snickers and her henchmen captured the elves, Sparks set off to discover where his family had gone. Along the way he met Rose, daughter of Lord and Lady Ferrero. Rose was desperate for adventure and soon began to help Sparks in his quest. It turned out that Sparks was not an elf at all but the baby that hadn't been stolen but had been

given to the elves for safe-keeping. It all ends when the elves escape and Ms Snickers has a massive allergic reaction to the chocolate that she stole from Lord Ferrero and explodes.

The original dates for the show were in January, in the middle of the stage rebuild for 'Brontë', which would have given us two playing spaces, the stage and the new traverse. We were excited about the prospect of the two separate areas, but then we learned that the traverse would not be built in time and most of the play would have to be on the floor—but these are little children and they couldn't be seen! Off I went to Amy for a new date and instructions to Paul that I needed a stage on top of the stage. He tried to dissuade me but I'm an absolute mule, so the plan began.

I decided that we would spend the Easter holidays working intensively to create 'Sparks'—but then we had our next disaster. The computer ate the script and it was lost forever. Back went Karl to rewrite the whole thing and the children got more holiday than I had intended. By the end of the holiday everything was sorted, but we had lost a lot of time and I was beginning to worry. I needed more little ones; but luckily I run drama lessons for young home-educated children so I drafted them in to be our elves. They were so excited to be taking part! They were determined and worked so hard. They were now having the usual lessons in the morning and rehearsing from 1-5pm. Working with children is always a little slower than with adults, but we made real progress and it all started to come together. There is such a lot of talent in the group, but putting the skills you've learned into practice isn't too easy. I'm not sure that any of us thought it was ever going to happen, but over the weeks our confidence built. Then two weeks before we went up, a lead cast member left. Again came the idea that the play was cursed, but I would have no talk of it. One of the cast stepped in from a smaller part and did an amazing job as Lord Fer-

rero, another cast member became a maid instead of a butler and we were off again.

Rehearsals for the final week took place at the Church on the Roundabout while the amazing set-building team, led by Paul Jennings, created our 'stage on top of a stage'. It went up so fast, and everyone worked so hard and I can't thank them enough for all their hard work. By Thursday it was ready to rehearse on. It gave us time to work out some of the challenges that the set threw our way including getting Hannah, a wheelchair-using member, on and off stage.

On the Friday night we did a dress rehearsal. With Natalia, Ms Snickers, stuffed into a self-inflating sumo suit for the end scene, all was now going to plan. I was in the auditorium with Dan and Amy until the small hours as they set the lights for us. Saturday morning brought us the one and only dress/tech rehearsal, and we were ready for our first audience at 2pm. Each show got better and better.

The cast had an amazing time. We can't thank everyone who helped us enough: Amy for giving us the opportunity, Paul and his team for creating our incredible set, Nigel who became a knight in shining armour backstage at every performance to help with moving Hannah, Gwen and Paul who also helped backstage, Conor for sound and lights, Maureen for the posters, Liz for helping us with the costumes despite her very difficult circumstances and anyone else I may have missed.

While rehearsing at the Church on the Roundabout we met up with the 'larping' group ('larping' is live-action role-playing). The members of the youth theatre watched them as they fought their mock battles, then looked at me and said, 'We want to do that and do 'Peter Pan''. And so next year when the youth theatre takes to the stage the production (thanks to Karl's writing) will be 'Peter Pan'—with a few changes, of course. Get ready Paul, the ideas are wild and a new adventure begins!

Would you hand over your most prized possession to someone else to use? Well, that's what the Apollo did back in July. After our own season came to a close, we handed over the Apollo to the Mitre Theatre players for just over a week. They brought their own version of 'Bugsy Malone', a kids' production in this case played by adults. They also brought 60 members, their own set, some of their own lighting rigs and all of their own costumes, packed neatly into two vans. They also brought their own box office and usher personnel, which made my job a lot easier! Now, as many of you will know, I'm no fan of musicals, especially amateur ones, but I was completely

blown away by them. Those who didn't see it missed a treat.

The Mitre Players are based in Croydon and have been in existence for about the same length of time as ourselves. Each year they take a production 'on tour' alternating between the Minack in Cornwall and another venue in Dawlish, south Devon. This year for a change they chose to come to the Isle of Wight, and we were delighted to welcome them. So to say that we have made a lot a very good friends is a bit of an understatement, but they were a great bunch. It was a pleasure to be able to exchange views and ideas about theatre and just natter away each night in the

theatre bar, which they used extensively! I think we may have set new records for bar takings! It was a shame that audience numbers were not quite what they expected and to be honest it would have been nice to have seen a few more members supporting this event as it has brought in much-needed income for our theatre. And to think that some of their supporters came over to the Island especially to see the show! Wow, that's dedication. Next year they are taking their performance of 'Our House' to the Minack. We wish them well and hope they decide to return to the Apollo in 2021.

*Steve Reading*

## The Mitre Players visit the Apollo

Armed with scripts, notices, milk and cakes I set off towards Newport in bright sunshine. It was a little after 8am and the forecast was good, perhaps a little too good, because there was talk of record-breaking temperatures but at that time of the morning it was perfect. When I arrived at the Theatre, Mike Crowe and Mike Whitehead were already erecting Mike Crowe's gazebo which he kindly loaned us for the day, for which we were to be most grateful!

Before 10am the buzz of excitement started! Mish had held a Summer Camp for the Youth Theatre during the previous week working on a piece for Open Day, and as the young performers arrived so did our first visitors of the day, eager to see the production. They were not disappointed, and as laughter echoed throughout the building I hoped that many of those on stage would be treading the same boards in years to come!

By 11am there were several tours in progress and more helpers arrived: Chris Hicks in the bar and Marylyn Ford and Helen Clinton Pacey just in time to take part in

the reading of 'Murder on the Michael Morrison Show', a delightful short play by Martin Ward giving members and visitors a chance to read a part (see right). An hour of storytelling was enjoyed by everyone.

Ginnie Orrey and David Barnard now joined the band of helpers 'meeting and greeting' and talking about the Theatre. Time flew by and suddenly 2pm was ap-

proaching and a brief respite for some of us.

Thanks to Amy, Dan and Hilary everything was ready by 6pm for the evening BBQ and I suddenly realised I was famished!

I am so grateful to Maureen's husband, Chris, who arranged for his band 'The Hooleys' to entertain us once again this year; they brought a lively atmosphere to the auditorium, bar and forecourt.

A big thank you to everyone (please forgive me if I haven't mentioned you) who worked so hard to make Open Day a success. All our visitors agreed we have a lovely theatre, and we have new members for the Youth Theatre and the Players and more supporters for our productions!

## Another successful Open Day

*by Carole Crow,  
Membership  
Secretary*



Liz and Mary, were busy arranging costumes in the foyer; Cynara positioned herself in the Box Office to answer questions; Paul Jennings, Michael Arnell and Mike Whitehead had their 'tour guide' hats, on assisted by Nigel Coley; Maureen Sullivan, Kate Fysh and Glenys Lloyd Williams were all set to 'meet and greet', Dan was on hand to help where needed and Ian Johnson was on 'picture-taking' duty.





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Bringing good theatre to the Isle of Wight for more than 40 years



## The Apollo Players' next production



**JEEVES & WOOSTER  
IN  
'PERFECT  
NONSENSE'**

**Production dates:  
25 October–  
2 November  
2019**

Jeeves and Wooster in 'Perfect Nonsense' by David and Robert Goodale is based on PG Wodehouse's 1938 novel 'The Code of the Woosters'. Bertie Wooster decides to stage a one-man show, only to discover on the evening that, in typical Wooster fashion, nothing has gone to plan. In desperation, he enlists his valet Jeeves and his butler to help him stage the production, but as you would expect, events quickly spiral out of control, prompting Jeeves to step in to make sure all ends well.

You may well be familiar with the characters of Jeeves and Wooster from the books, films and TV shows featuring them, and you're sure to enjoy this evening of mayhem and vintage-style comedy. The production won the 2014 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy.