

THE CHELSFIELD PLAYERS NEWSLETTER

Editor

Ann Blatcher

editor@chelsfieldplayers.org

Chelsfield Players

E mail

info@chelsfieldplayers.org

Phone

Tel: 01689 835 089

Website

www.chelsfieldplayers.org

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SALT



Patrick Neylan, Cynthia Hearing and the amazing working kitchen. The large fridge freezer was donated to a local charity Give2give at the end of the performances.

The play received very good reviews and gave rise to much discussion amongst the playgoers at the end of each performance. First time Players director Marie Hurding should be well pleased with the result of her hard work.



Jo East Philippa Rooke, Patrick Neylan, Cynthia Hearing

Autumn Production

'Feed the Beast' by Steve Thompson directed by Jeremy Walls

The play shows the very difficult relations between the press and politicians in today's world of spin doctors and inquiries. Funny, sad and vitriolic.

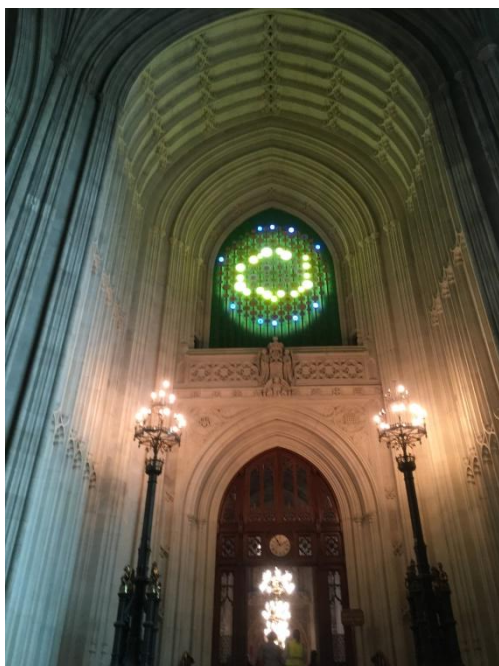
In preparation for the production some of the cast and crew visited the Houses of Parliament.



On Friday 13th some of the cast and crew of Feed the Beast went on a research visit to the Houses of Parliament brilliantly organised by Jeremy via our local MP Jo Johnson. Most of us caught the 7.57 a.m. from Orpington, the rest of us meeting up outside the Houses of Parliament ready for the 10.00 a.m. guided visit. Our guide was Chris who was one of the Doorkeepers of the house and we later discovered a very important person. They count the votes when there is a vote in the house, they lock the doors of the Aye and No chambers once the members are in and then count them through the correct channel back to their benches. So much more to it than I imagined. They are also the only people that the police and security inside The House, cannot stop. Their uniform is beautiful with white shirts, black trousers, very shiny black shoes and a fitted tailcoat. All finished off with a gold insignia which is part of the crown jewels and valued at about £40,000. Needless to say they are not allowed to take it home. Chris's insignia is dated

1901, but we were introduced to Karen whose insignia was dated 1798 if I remember correctly. Each insignia is numbered depending on its age and Karen's was number 2. Because of his role in the House, Chris was a walking encyclopaedia on British History and Politics.

We started in the main hall where monarchs lay in state after their death; from there we were led through the lobby of the House of Commons into the House of Lords. Forgive my ignorance but despite having seen the Opening of Parliament on TV, I did not realise they were both in the same building and next to each other. We started in the Monarchs Robing Room where Queen Victoria's throne sits in prominent position but has not been sat on since she died. It is very ornate and adorned with precious stones. From there we entered the chamber of the House of Lords and Chris related some historical facts and figures and explained where people sat. We moved on through a corridor into a beautiful room where other Heads of State make speeches to our Parliament, there is a specific black line they stand on and the room is dominated by a huge painting of the Battle of Waterloo on one side and the Battle of Trafalgar on the other.



We moved on to the Chamber of the House of Commons, much smaller than you would expect. Here we were informed that no-one has a specific seat and you can only reserve a seat by putting a prayer card in the slot on the back of the bench. This means that you must attend prayers which take place before each sitting. Chris informed us that if the member put in a prayer card and failed to appear it was the doorkeepers job to in his words 'whip it out before the prayers started'. There are plaques round the wall in

memory of those serving members who fell in battles and the latest one is to Jo Cox.

We moved on through to the Lobby where some of us were surprised to learn that anyone can come into the house and lobby their MP without being impeded. It is British Law. We were shown where media interviews take place, also in the Lobby. Again the area is much smaller than you imagine.

We ended up back at the Main Hall where many people have made speeches, including our own Queen, Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. There is a newly commissioned sculpture, commemorating the Suffragette movement. It is a series of swirls set in a circle. The swirls light up in sequence with the rise and fall of the tide on the Thames, the higher the tide the more lights are on.

Following this brilliant tour, we crossed the road to have an included visit to the Jewel Tower, which many of us did not know existed - despite it being the only piece left of the original Palace of Westminster.

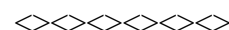
I would urge anyone to go on this tour. I can't begin to do justice to what I learnt and I feel guilty that I have got to 70 years of age and knew so little about our Parliamentary traditions and history.

Needless to say some of us ended up with The Chelsfield Players tradition of a liquid lunch.

Thank you Jeremy for a great day out.

Maddy McCubbin

Feed the Beast. Thursday 30th November to Saturday 2nd December
Remember performances start at 7.45pm



Tom Blatcher

Tom was one of life's gentlemen. It took a lot to provoke him into showing his true feelings. I first met Tom when I was a very young man and Tom was well experienced in set building.

I don't know if Tom ever acted with the Players, I never saw him do so but I trust someone will update this tribute if he did. Actor or not, I believe that Tom 'trod the boards' in those days more often than any of his contemporaries. Tom was at every set build (how many actors can boast that!) and was usually accompanied by his pet Airedale. Tom was also on time at every get-out (unless there was a Grand Prix on that day).

Back then we only had a single garage in which to store our set. The concrete footprint is

still visible. When we set build, the priority has always been to get a set in place in time for the final rehearsals and the performances. Scant regard was given to keeping the garage tidy and by the time we had finished, the interior of the garage looked like a bomb had gone off.

Tom would take it upon himself at the get-out to clear the garage, sweep it out and painstakingly return the usable but discarded pieces of set to their rightful place. Tom knew from experience that at any moment there would be a flood of flats, doors, doorframes, windows, work surfaces etc. and if the garage wasn't tidy it wouldn't pack away.



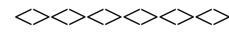
I dropped into the habit of working with Tom during get-outs to keep away from the manic set destruction. Tom was calm, Tom talked when the mood took him but he didn't have the need to chatter on. I don't know if Tom welcomed my presence or not, as I say, he didn't show his true feelings. He did insist that things were stored in the right place ... 'so we know where to find them next time', an expression I have found myself using to others.

When it came to my turn to lead a set build it was good to have Tom in the team, as someone to rely on, someone who would get on and do. On one occasion, I didn't take into account Tom's use of initiative when I gave inadequate guidance about the positioning of a door frame. Tom ended up fitting the frame in the wrong place and had hung the wrong door. I was very tentative about asking him to re-position it. Inside he must have

been seething but as I say Tom was one of life's gentlemen. It took a lot to provoke him into showing his true feelings.

Jeremy Walls

I can assure you that once back home the true feelings were not held back!!!! Editor



SPOTLIGHT ON Patrick Neylan



I got the acting bug early: playing 3rd Child in a Sunday school production at Kenley Methodist Church in about 1971. So enthused was I by the experience, it took me a mere 33 years to get back on stage. Admittedly, they did do theatre at my secondary school but it was tacitly understood that drama was only for boys of a questionable bent who couldn't play rugby. So, one fine evening in 2004, I trotted along to Orpington Rep to see if they needed a man in his 40s, such creatures apparently being in short supply in amateur theatre. Orpington Rep's supply, as it turned out, was quite adequate. But as I prepared to trot away again, a member called Keith Wishart suggested I try my luck at another society he was involved with: Chelsfield Players.

A few days later, I made my way to the auditions being held in the Parish Room. Half an hour later, I made my way home again, having been entirely unable to find any such building and pondering whether to take up the ukulele instead. But Cynthia Crabtree was still one gentleman short of a cast, so the following week I was summoned to the more easily located Village Hall and found myself cast in a play called Lucky Sods.



Lucky Sods. Emily Kindley and Patrick Neylan
All efforts to get rid of me in the intervening 13 years have proved futile, although I have put

myself about a bit. I've done over a dozen plays at Bromley Little Theatre – most recently exposing myself to the Mayor of Bromley in Four Nights in Knaresborough – while doing a few shows for Orpington Rep, no doubt hastening that company's demise. I've also darkened the doors of the Geoffrey Whitworth Theatre and been a film extra, and will be performing at the Edward Alderton Theatre next April.

Why do I do it? Partly it's for the post-rehearsal pub, although vanity plays a major part. But there's something more. There's a communion on stage. Every night is different. Every audience is different. They see things you don't and surprise you every night, even if it's sitting in stony silence. In their own way, they speak to you, and you respond. Theatre is living art. Despite the weeks of preparation, it's art made in the moment – a collaboration between performer and audience. Even the (thankfully rare) mediocre plays are fun if the audience enjoys them. And then there's the pub afterwards.



Lady Windermere's Fan
Patrick Neylan Judy Ives

Prominent lead roles such as Scrooge and Basil Fawltly naturally stick in the memory, as does the stunned silence in the auditorium as Major Ross terrorised the prisoners in Our Country's Good. I should probably be ashamed of accepting Del's challenge to slip "one of those weird German bands you like" into a performance of The Country Wife – final count: 12; though to be fair, Can was already in the script. Tangerine Dream was more of a challenge and Einstürzende Neubauten will have to wait for another time: maybe the next show.

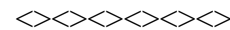
Directing Six Characters In Search of an Author, with live and recorded film and even a director's commentary, was a unique experience. Some of the audience were certainly baffled by it, but if you don't risk alienating some of your audience, you're not trying hard enough.



Visiting Hour

And I still can't play the ukulele.

Patrick Neylan



Diary Dates for 2018

Sunday 14th January Provisional date for Physical Theatre Workshop 2pm-6pm in the Village Hall

Friday 6th – Sunday 15th Spring Production
'Animal Farm' directed by Cynthia Hearing

Friday 27th July – Sunday August 5th
Summer Production

Friday 16th November – Sunday 25th November
Autumn Production



TICKETS FOR SALE

THE BOX OFFICE IS OPEN

Feed the Beast

Tickets £8.50

Nov. 30th – Dec. 2nd

PERFORMANCES START AT 7.45PM

Book on line

www.ticketsource.co.uk/chelsfieldplayers

or

**The Chelsfield Players dedicated phone number
for the Box Office**

Chelsfield Players

07816 505448

If you have any news or information for the

Newsletter please contact me –

Ann Blatcher editor@chelsfieldplayers.org

Visit our website at

www.chelsfieldplayers.org