



# *Players Matters*\*

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## President's Piece

Hello everyone. Here I am on my day off, writing to you, on what should be a beautiful spring day. However, my tapping of the keyboard is being drowned out by the heavy sleety rain on the Velux windows and I am watching the trees and bushes being bent by the wind. Oh well here's to a better summer!!!!

I have a bit of an update from our Chairman-David Burns on our theatre going forward. Due to Covid restrictions still being very much in place thus continuing to prevent us from being able stage any performances safely and responsibly, the Executive Committee have made the decision **not** to put on any plays for the remainder of **this** season. It is, however, hopeful that we can get into rehearsal in August in order to enable us to open for our first play in September. Auditions will be held as usual, though obviously at date later in the calendar than is usual.

With some of our members in particular suffering more than most, these last months have been very hard on all of us. Sadly, ill health, redundancy and loneliness have been a feature of all our lives since the pandemic started, but for some ill health is, and has been, an everyday battle for even longer. On behalf of us all we wish you a better 12 months ahead and please be aware that the Players family is always here to help and support in any way we can. By now most should have had their first Covid vaccine dose and be looking forward to the second. This has given everyone an air of confidence and has lifted their spirits. It has brought a sense of optimism and relief to many and I for one, can't wait. I'm due my jab this coming Saturday at the Rugby club, Grove Lane. (I'm hoping for a hunky rugby player to administer the injection!!!!). Then, of course, we will be allowed to have people in our gardens from Monday. Yippee!!!! A step closer to being able to hug our loved ones. I just hope the weather is kind and not like today!!!! But whatever and however we see our families, we can be assured that we are close to emerging from this dark tunnel into the light! All that remains for me to do in this epistle is to wish you all a safe and Happy Easter.

Take care. Love Anne Wint.

#### Join Val as she reflects on Yesteryear

I'd like to take you back to September 1971. But, before I begin, just a little background information.

I had always been keen on "the stage" from the age of 9, ever since Primary School- which must have been quite a progressive one- where the Year 6 children {4<sup>th</sup> year juniors in old money} performed a Gilbert and Sullivan Operetta each year. From this I got the bug!!!!

At my Secondary school, we had a really good drama department and it was my English teacher who suggested *AmDram* to me. At the tender age of 16, I joined Droylsden and Clayton Amateur Dramatic Society.

I went on to study Drama at college under the tutelage of Derek Slater and *the die was cast*. But back to 1971 -----

I contacted a lady called Jean Simpson, who I think was secretary at the time and invited to attend the first Social gathering, which took place in the auditorium, long before we had the seating we now have.

What a friendly, family run Society it was. The seating was all around the auditorium leaving the centre as an open space. The bar was where the boiler room is now. There were lots of members present and a gentleman by the name of Jim

Williamson took me by the hand and “paraded” me around the gathered throng and introduced me to everyone. I was amazed that Jim knew each of the many members by name, but then that was the ethic of the Executive Committee, they took the trouble to “know” everybody. What a cheerful fun-loving bunch of folks they were! The theatre was run by a number of families; Williamson, Sant, Clough and Goodwin to mention just a few. Of course, I couldn’t remember everyone that I was introduced to, but they ALL took the time and trouble to talk to me. It wasn’t long after that that they had to close the membership and create a waiting list. If I remember correctly there were 120 members, with fierce competition for roles.

New members at that time were encouraged to take an active role in theatre activities, and, just a few weeks on from that first social I had a very small role in “Waltz of the Toreadors”. I was “Pamela”-the downstairs maid and all I had to say was “Oh Sir, what will madam say?” -the last line of the play. Just 6 words. No other lines to learn, but I religiously attended all rehearsals and in doing so learnt a lot about theatre craft from the Director and more experienced cast members who were very encouraging and full of advice.

I was also introduced to a lovely chap, Mike Rhodes, who welcomed me onto the staging team. The first job he gave me, was to paint the black border around the set- *a baptism of fire*. But, I did it and he rewarded my efforts by letting me have one of his favourite biscuits, Gingernuts”

I was *IN* and did many jobs over the ensuing 48 years, culminating in my becoming President of PDS. A role I loved because I made it my purpose to keep in touch with members.

It was the overriding friendliness in those days, the camaraderie, the family feeling, the encouragement that made “Cheadle Hulme Players” a joy to be a member of.

*Happy memories*-Val Middleton-Egan

#### Down on the Farm with Anne Wint

In the last newsletter I described my new role as a postie, my main job. However, when I became redundant from my horticultural job back in July 2020, I decided that I would use this as an opportunity to get back into the industry that I really loved, ie. Agriculture, or to be more precise- Dairy farming. Having been out of the business for over 20 years, made me realise that it would be unlikely that anyone would employ me. This set me thinking about the need to get some work experience. I wrote a letter, with my CV attached and sent it out to approximately 25 farms in the area. I got 5 replies, mostly saying *Sorry* but they only had enough work for themselves. However, I did get a call from a farmer who lived over near Jodrell Bank inviting me to come over and look around the farm. That I did, and during our conversation, he revealed his plan to start up some kind of educational facility on the farm. Upon learning I had done this sort of thing before, he then asked me if this would be something I would consider being part of. Well naturally, this is **right up my street**. It is not happening *yet* but is definitely in the pipeline. They are building a proper farm shop and a coffee and cake café where they will sell all their own

produce such as milk, cream, butter, ice cream, yogurt and local produce. So watch this space for me working at Bidlea Dairies.

In the meantime, there still remained the problem of gaining hands- on experience. So I enrolled on some agricultural practical courses with a firm called Embryonics who do all sorts of practical management courses all over the country. I took a course on cattle foot trimming and had a great 3 days out on a farm in Monks Heath- trimming cows feet. *(Not the most glamorous thing in the world for a lass to do, I hear you say, but it takes all sorts!!!)*. The outcome of this was I was asked by the farmer if I would like to do some part time milking of his herd of Mixed Holstein Friesian and Jersey cows. He didn't initially realise that the person who had sent him that letter requesting working experience early on and now there training to trim his cows' feet, was actually one and the same. Consequently, I now work on this farm, Birttles Hill Fam, on my days off from postal duties, and am gaining more experience with every day I'm there. I milk the cows in the parlour and at the moment help feed the newly-born calves. Next time, should you be interested, I can tell you more about how I do the milking and about the Block Calving system this farm operates.



### **My Secret Stash of Wool**

I've got this lovely stash of wool  
And I don't quite know what for  
But I'm sure I'll find a use for it  
I really don't want more.

Perhaps I should learn to crochet, the internet says 'it's in'  
So with No 5 crochet hook in my hand I'm ready to begin  
I've always wanted to crochet but never found the time  
Now is the golden opportunity to see if I can shine.  
iPad and Youtube now sit waiting on my lap  
No chance this afternoon for a cosy little nap  
'You're going too fast' I shout at the screen  
'I know it's not red' - 'I much prefer green'.

Chains, single crochets keep me awake at night  
Will I ever learn to crochet, well I'm trying with all my might  
I've done a granny square which nearly took all day  
But if I keep on trying then the terminology may stay!

One, two, three, four, I've really got to crochet more  
How many hours does one need to crochet a hundred and fifty four?  
At last my blanket is finished and I'm feeling rightly proud  
But others might quite like one, so I don't say it out too loud!

Now it's onto my hat  
With curly tassles hanging down the back  
My family are simply well impressed  
In my 'Crochet Company' they may decide to invest.



Other projects quickly follow, a bag, a cat, a dinosaur  
Surely, you can't want to do any more?  
I've finished my pumpkin and my mini toadstools too  
With lockdown coming to an end, I'll have to find something else to do.

Finally, I have to tell you my 'stash' hasn't got any smaller  
In fact it's grown much, much taller  
Because you see, I've now been to the shop  
And jolly well gone and bought the lot!!

## **Judy Rodwell**

### Pam Lambert's Pork Recipe

*Pork Tenderloin, also known as Pork Fillet, is a very tasty, reasonable meat. Here is one recipe which I find very easy.*

Take the Fillet and "seal" it in a hot frying pan without any oil. Make sure you do the ends as well.

Lightly oil a piece of foil and place the fillet on it, brush with a little oil and sprinkle lightly with Chinese Five Spice. Loosely wrap the meat.

Cook at 180 for 20-25 minutes.

Cut into approx 1 inch slices to serve. Note: you can experiment with various seasonings.

### Pam's Panna Cotta

*This is a delicious dessert to follow my pork dish. Again, so easy to make.*

Take 300 ml of Double Cream, add the same amount of milk and add 60 g sugar.  
Soften a couple of sheets of gelatine in cold water for about 5 minutes and squeeze the water out. Add these to the liquid in a pan and heat until almost boiling. Add Vanilla Extract to taste and pour into ramekins before putting in fridge to set.

Easy peasy! (Note: If you prefer a richer flavour reduce the amount of milk) For a delicious topping use Black Cherry Pie Filling

**THE RESTAURANT SKETCH by David Burns -(Warning: this sketch is not entirely COVID secure**

*Two couples sitting at socially-distanced tables in a restaurant. At one is an American couple, **Herb and Garlic Dipp**. At the other, **Sir Battery Scrappage** and his companion **Mammalia**.*

**HERB** Don't to eat with your fingers, Garlic, the Brits use this metal stuff on the side here.

**GARLIC** I ain't gonna use them: I already cleaned my nails with the pronged thing.

**HERB** Clean it off with your napkin.

**GARLIC** I already cleaned my shoe...

**SIR BATTERY** Well, what happened my little darling?

**MAMMALIA** Oh, Batty, I was sleep-walking again and the Night Porter woke me up. It was awful.

**SIR BATTERY** Where were you?

**MAMMALIA** I found myself at the front desk and he said something about wearing a mask.

**SIR BATTERY** Were you not wearing your mask, my dear?

**MAMMALIA** Yes, but I wasn't wearing anything else.

**SIR BATTERY** Oh, dear!

**MAMMALIA** He asked me which room I was in.

**SIR BATTERY** Oh, dear. Did you tell him what I told you to?

**MAMMALIA** Yes, I told him I was your daughter, but he didn't believe me. (she starts to cry)

**SIR BATTERY** That's probably because I said you were my niece!

**GARLIC** Hey Herb, what's that old guy saying to the girl? Look, he's made her cry.

**HERB** How would I know? Maybe I should go over.

**GARLIC** You gotta remember that socially distinction stuff. He's sure burst her bubble.

**HERB** Yeah, well I'd sure like to be in her bubble! She's a doll.

**SIR BATTERY** Now, now my dear. Calm down, calm down; big breaths now, big breaths.



**MAMMALIA** Yes and I'm only seventeen...

*Two men rush in and confront Sir Battery and Mammalia*

**HALTER** Okay, that's enough! I am stopping this sketch under Section 5 of the SNAS Act 2010 as amended under the Covid regulations 2020.

**SIR BATTERY** (*dropping the posh accent*) What?

**HALTER** You heard: this sketch stops now.

**HERB** (*Herb and Garlic rush over – also dropping the fake accents*) Who the hell are you?

**HALTER** I am Special Agent Halter, and this is Trainee Agent Breakdance.

**MAMMALIA** What's this SNAS Act, anyway? I never heard of it.

**HALTER** (Wearily) Tell 'em, Breakdance.

**BREAKDANCE** We are empowered under the SILLY NAMES AND AWFUL SKETCHES ACT 2010 to intervene where we believe there to be a breach of Section 5, Clause B (7)'Suspected undue frivolity'.

**SIR BATTERY** Okay, Okay, so it's not exactly Shaw or Becket...

**BREAKDANCE** Down on your knees, all of you, now! Hands on head!

**GARLIC** What is this? NCIS?

**HALTER** Pack it in, Breakdance and stick to Antiques Roadshow, will you.

**BREAKDANCE** Sorry Gov.

**HALTER** Listen, the stupid character names are one thing, but you were about to do the 'Big Breaths' gag: no lisp from the young lady - bit of disguise there but we spotted it, so

clear off!

*The four sketch players go into a huddle upstage*

**BREAKDANCE** What do we do now, then, Gov?

**HALTER** Didn't they teach you anything in Basic Training? Usual routine, Breakdance, grab the scripts – don't forget the Green Room – and any copy on memory sticks. Oh, and the audio or anything else on mobile phones.

**BREAKDANCE** (*Picking up a script and laughing*) Hey Gov, this a good one: 'Enter a seedy-looking pickpocket called Itchy Scrotum'.

**HALTER** That's enough from you, Breakdance! Remember why we're here. These things get out of hand very easily. Next, you'll have Priti Patel telling Jewish jokes and Boris...well he's been on the silly spectrum for years.

**BREAKDANCE** Just a minute, Gov, there's an alert coming through on the mobile. It says it's a Section 6 'So am I', category 1. What's that?

**HALTER** (*Grabbing the mobile phone*) I'll have to speak to Basic Training about you, Breakdance. It's an old saucy postcard joke: bloke under the bonnet of a car; drunk comes up and says "what's the matter, mate?": bloke says "piston broke"; drunk says "so am I, mate, so am I".

**BREAKDANCE** Where's the shout, Gov? Heald Green?

**HALTER** Worse than that, Breakdance! It's Brookdale... again. So, we'd better... THIS SKETCH HAS BEEN SUSPENDED UNDER SECTION 8, SNAS ACT Para (2, b): 'Suspicion that the author is under the influence of certain substances not excluding alcohol'.

### Audience Participation & Hecklers-How times have changed or have they?

Crinkly candy wrappers. Cellphones and iPads. Audience members coming and going with apparently severe bladder control problems. We've all experienced rude or annoying behaviour from our fellow theatre patrons, usually (of course!) during the most intense and quiet moments of a performance. And for those of us performing *ONSTAGE*, it's even worse. *Talkers*. Lines repeated for the hard of hearing. Picture-takers. People coughing from colds or flus or major tubercular issues we hope will prove fatal. Sometimes the behaviour that's the least intrusive to the audience can be the *most* distracting to the actors, like: *Sleepers*. People with their chins in their hands, bored out of their minds, or (even worse) in the front row reading their programme during a scene *right where we can see them!* Oh, the distractions we actors have to endure in the modern theatre!.....

.....Elizabethan audiences clapped and booed whenever they felt like it. Sometimes they threw fruit. Groundlings paid a penny to stand and watch performances, and to gawk at their betters, the fine rich people who paid the most expensive ticket price *to actually sit on the stage*. The place was full of pickpockets and prostitutes, and people came and went to relieve themselves of the massive quantities of beer they've consumed. Theatre was not only a major social occasion; it could often feel like a competition for attention. Audiences came from every class, and their only other entertainment options were bear-baiting and public executions — and William Shakespeare wrote for them all.

Theatre-going today can be a largely passive and observational experience: You arrive, you sit down, you applaud, you leave. But the art of theatre *requires* an audience, preferably an engaged, responsive, demonstrative audience. From an actor's perspective, it does no-one any good to perform for an audience that's too cowed by society to laugh; at the same time an actor has been known to address an audience member with *Hey who gave you a speaking part ?.....*

### .....Oh Lady Redgrave how could you!

Take Rachel Kempson. We are all familiar with Vanessa Redgrave, who in her prime, gained renown not merely for her acting ability but also for her political activism. However, there are also some surprising revelations to learn about **Rachel Kempson**, her mother, whose distinguished career playing classical roles on the

stage and screen, was often overshadowed by that of her husband Sir Michael Redgrave together with the volatile behaviour of their illustrious brood (Corin, Lynn and Vanessa who made up the dynasty).

Rachel too was a brave and flexible actress who embraced unafraid the rising new wave of theatre which came with *John Osborne's Look Back in Anger* in 1956.

Notably this transition was not without mishap, as one notorious performance of another of his plays- *A Sense of Detachment*- proved.

Almost all its reviews were disastrous when it opened at the Court on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1972. Osborne wrote it on amphetamines. In form it resembled a stream of consciousness speeding along as it swirls plotlessly like a racing state of mind- its purpose to provoke and outrage and raise the roof. It was pilloried for daring to lampoon graphic pornography a generation before the onset of global internet porn.

Osborne even used a plant - a boozy soccer hooligan in a box to heckle his own play. "Load of rubbish!" "Get it off!" For good measure, he had another heckler among the audience yelling: "Couldn't agree more! Bloody awful!" "What we want is family entertainment!" "Will this never end?"

The trouble began when real members of the audience joined in the heckling with "Hear! Hear!" -Uproar greeted courageous Kempson as a proselytiser of porn- with a "Oh Lady Redgrave - how could you?" uttered in shock from the stalls. Indeed the barracking grew so loud that the 62-year-old Kempson leapt off the stage and attacked two men in the third row.- *slapping one and pulling the hair of the other.*

To quote Frank Marcus of the Sunday Telegraph - who seemed to enjoy the show without quite saying why - *the "ineffably English" Kempson read "the most explicitly worded accounts of sexual perversions yet uttered on the London stage, thus driving a large number of shocked theatregoers to the exits"* He wrote that *at the curtain call the audience booed and cheered and they threw things at the cast from the gods - a pair of old boots once, sometimes coins.*

#### Living off the Land by Bernie Heanue

I'm taking advantage of the slightly milder weather this weekend and putting in few hours on my allotment plot. I've had the plot 7 years now. I usually grow the basics but have become slightly more adventurous over the last 2, adding in artichokes and asparagus.

In anticipation of a return to the chaos of the journeying back and forth to work once more and fitting all the necessary tasks in between, I'm determined whilst I can, to keep one step ahead and take advantage of the slower pace of life now- whilst I can- by sowing spring onion and parsnip seeds today. Parsnips are a particular favourite of mine as they rarely need any tending to. Lazy gardener that I am! However, there is still a while to go before the last frost and it can be lethal to many young plants and seeds! But both my Parsnips and spring onions usually survive

If these were normal times, no doubt I would be distracted by a message or call from a friend for a coffee and catch up, though I must confess sometimes I am actually the distractor. No excuses for me now- with two extra days off work, I'm

already planning to get digging over the Easter weekend off. Saying that though folks, digging trenches for my potatoes, I tend to lose concentration after a while. When I eventually stand back to admire my handiwork, I am forced to admit that they are crooked and slightly off track!

I confess, I am looking forward to a research project I have been invited to join a University of Sheffield project focusing on the effects of Brexit, choices of foods we buy and grow plus our experiences of the differences in how we cook. I think that's something that should keep me occupied for a fair while and I will be interested to see the outcome of the research gathered.

### CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Helen & Dave Ward on the birth of their granddaughter *Isabel* born to daughter Emma and husband on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> February, coinciding with the occasion of our first online Playreading.

**Our best wishes and love** to those who are still struggling with poor health and finding things generally difficult in this second year of lockdown.

**BIRTHDAY GREETINGS** to one and all who have had another birthday. Let's hope you will be able to celebrate those special occasions in a big way in the not too distant future

### Tailormade for Kids

I love cherries, as does my granddaughter Charlotte, aged seven. We used to take care to limit to five the number of discarded stones remaining in her fruit salad bowl afterwards so as to ensure when counting up and chanting the familiar words *Tinker Tailor Soldier Sailor, Rich Man. Poor Man, Beggarman, Thief*, we would be sure to land on *Rich Man*. *For little girls* to go beyond that point or to stop earlier in the verse spelt *the end to their dreams of wealth and ease and future happiness*.

However she changed tack recently and only kept 2 on her plate. When I voiced my surprise, she declared she thought *swapping a **Rich man** for a **Tailor** would be no bad thing as a Rich Man might well lose all his money whereas a Tailor could easily do well and makes lots of money if he made clothes that were a good brand!* I think, with that philosophy at her age, she'll go far.

### Go on Smile-I dare you!

*Greetings all from the Bide-A-Wee Retirement Home for distressed gentlefolk. During lockdown I have been searching for Enlightenment but have failed miserably to locate any. I have, however, unearthed the following old one liners:-*

*A jump lead walks into a bar. The barman says, "I'll serve you, just don't start anything."*

*Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.*

*I saw a documentary on how ships are made. Riveting.*

I used to have a job as a pantomime horse, *but I quit whilst I was a head.*

Donald Trump feels a strong connection to Scotland. *He gets his skin tone from Irn-Bru.*

Trump's nothing like Hitler. *There's no way he could write a book.*

Why did the golfer change his pants? *Because he got a hole in one.*

How many ears does Spock have? 3. *The left ear, the right ear and the final front-ear.*

A ham sandwich walks into a bar. *The barman says, "We don't serve food here."*

I was interrogated over the theft of a cheese toastie. *They really grilled me.*

Cosmetic surgery used to be a taboo subject. *Now you can talk about Botox and nobody raises an eyebrow.*

Why did Adele cross the road? *To say hello from the other side.*

Local man killed by falling piano. *It will be a low key funeral.*

I like what mechanics wear, *overall.*

There's a fine line *between hyphenated words.*

I used to be a trampoline salesman. *It had its ups and downs.*

If quizzes are quizzical, *what are tests?*

I hate sitting in traffic. *I always get run over.*

I lost my job as a cricket commentator for saying: *"I don't want to bore you with the details."*

My job as a photographer *was a bit of a blur.*

My school had a big problem with drugs.....*especially Class A.*

Black Beauty. *There's a dark horse.*

Velcro. *What a rip off.*

Exit signs. *They're on the way out.*

Ed: A series of Cracking Golden Oldies courtesy of Ian Pearson.

### When London theatre takes to the stage again

Globe Theatre's CEO has announced that, when it re-opens in May, there will be no interval during the 2 hour long performances, so they expect the audience to come and go. Seating will be brought in- no more standing room for 700- and its capacity will be cut to 500. But as for an insight into *how the actors will kiss when you can't kiss and how they will fight when you can't fight?* Ah, well now, you will just have to come along and see.....

### Radio Reviews.

*Christine Bottomley* cropped up again recently in a somewhat bizarre radio drama. *The Ventriloquist's Dummy*-or perhaps more appropriately, *Tummy*- purporting to be exploring the history of ventriloquism and the relationship between *the mind and body and the wisdom of the gut*. CB played Jess (the owner of said *upset gut*)

Adapted for Radio 4 around Women's Day by Katherine Jakeways, as part of a Hardy's Women series, *The Hand of Ethelberta* offered a much better listening option. *Thomas Hardy* wrote this novel, published in 1876, after *Far from the Madding Crowd* and it appeared in serial form as ***A Comedy in Chapters*** in the *Cornhill Magazine* edited by his friend and mentor, Leslie Stephen. Unlike the majority of Hardy's fiction, the novel is a comedy, with both humour and a happy ending for the major characters and no suicides or tragic deaths. The late nineteenth century novelist George Gissing, who knew Hardy, considered it 'surely old Hardy's poorest book. It is, in my view however, an entertaining listen and still available from the Radio Drama 4 Transcripts Online listings for those interested.

### And the Visual

Nostalgia seems to be creeping into the BBC schedule lately. I caught a part of the re-run of the very first *Fawlty Towers* episode featuring Robin Ellis as a plain-clothed detective. It confirmed my opinion, that his dark good looks in the role of Ross Poldark in the original 1970s series knocked those of Aidan Quinn -deemed as his heartthrob successor- into a cocked hat. But that's just me. *Fawlty Towers* may be a comedy of its time but I am glad it retains its position as a *Comedy Great* and thankfully there's been no remake. I just can just imagine John Cleese's reaction at the mere hint of such a suggestion, and I mean- who else could possibly replace Andrew Sachs as Manuel- Qué?

### Players Online

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> online Quiz held in March was good fun and Margaret Williams was Quizmaster this time. She asked a good mix of questions-some of which had us scratching our heads and some, we made valiant attempts to guess at, plus others which we thankfully we could answer. An enjoyable session.

Debbie Burnett was the brainbox on this occasion and she, as is the rule, will be asking the questions next time. Date of Quiz no.3 is yet to be confirmed.

There is to be a **Playreading** of *Hobsons Choice* on **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April**. All interested parties-Please keep a look-out for an email soon from Elaine Thorburn listing available parts and the chance to put your name forward to take a part in the performance.

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Sign off from Editor

Well, that's it for now. Hope you have found this issue an interesting read. As ever thanks to my happy band of contributors. Until the next time, have a Happy Easter and let's all look forward to getting out and about soon and opening up that theatre again.

Don't forget to save up those snippets for the next issue. No news of when that will be at the moment but I will be in touch soon

Jo Moor.