



# The Club News

## Play Selection

Happy New Year to you all. Have you made any resolutions and, if you have, are they still being kept.

The play selection committee are working hard choosing next season's plays. We try to give a varied programme over the season, although some productions might not appeal to everyone. Judging from the letters we receive

after each play we are on the right track. If you know of a play you think might be suitable for consideration please let the play selection committee know about it.

Many of you already know about the rebuilding of part of the theatre in 1984 to provide the bar, rehearsal room and enlarged wardrobe room (more about that in future

newsletter). The good news about this is that the original loan of £129,000 is down to just over £8,000 and should be paid off by Christmas next year around 7 years early thanks to hard work by all members especially the 3 treasurers that have handled this mortgage so well.

## Dust Devils Needed

Are you handy with a Hoover? A devil with a duster? Someone who swears on 'Mr Sheen' as the polish of polishes? If so we need YOU. If not we STILL need YOU!! We put out a plea for help in the last newsletter that sadly has brought one response. The theatre has to be spotless every time it is used either for our plays or other people's productions. It is hard work and time consuming when it is left to two or three people. Sadly the only ideal time is on a Saturday after 'Club Drama'. The tutors already help to clean, after a morning's teaching, but a few more hands would enable it to be done a lot quicker.

**Next date is SAT 24th JAN at 12.30.**



## 400 Club Winners

The 400 Club was drawn on 3rd December 2003. The winners were

£50	Mr S Smith	£5	Mrs E Leighton
			Mrs J Copley
			Mrs H Davies
			Mrs M Smith
£30	Mrs B Brooker		Mrs M Baker
			Mr M Granger-Brown
			Mrs M Sissons
£10	Mr W D Bannister		Mrs M E B Griffiths
	Mrs M Waterall		Mrs M Hardern
	Mrs J Blinkhorn		Mrs J A Cooper
	Mrs J S Gregory		Mrs J Copley
	Mrs S M Phillips		Mrs L Sykes
	Mr R A Lucas		

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**£50 Winner**

**Mr S. Smith**

## Plucked from the Past



In this series I was hoping to include write-ups from the corresponding plays in the seasons of a century ago and fifty years ago. But of course everything depends on whether the local press actually saw the plays and wrote reports on them. I know what all the plays were, but if the press didn't write about them, I don't know much more. In fact the report I quoted last time, of "Time and the Hour" was by far the most comprehensive of a hundred years ago.

So let's just have a dip in the archives, and start at the very beginning, with the building of St Margaret's Institute. By January 1896 they had raised over £1000 towards its construction, and hoped to start building soon, because "To a large number of young men and women, winter is but a time of dullness, and time hangs heavily on their hands. The new club will be a much-needed addition to their resources." Things don't change much, do they?

The Foundation Stone was laid on 30th April 1896, and by October "On the ground floor is a large hall measuring 68 feet by 30 feet. At one end there is to be a fixed stage, so that the room will be admirably adapted for concerts, dramatic entertainments and dances."

I get the impression that the first production "Poor Pillicoldy" (February 1897) was just a touch amateurish! Any way, a few weeks later they advertised "several dramatic pieces have been put into

commission for next winter, and under the direction of the Rev E. J. Trevitt, a large number of young members are receiving instruction in the art of elocution and the principles of deportment."

By chance I am writing this on Remembrance Sunday, so it's appropriate to look at the Institute in the First World War. The Junior Bible Class was providing a strong contingent for the Dramatic Society, and fifty of them joined up in the Forces straight away. In spite of this, two one act plays were put on in November 1914, "The Harvest Storm", and a farce "Boots at the Swan".

By January 1915 75 members were on active service, but there were still 400 to attend the annual reunion. Gilbert & Sullivan addicts will recognise their early effort of "Cox and Box".

Now let's jump forward fifty years to January 1953, to a play for which we have a very informative write-up. John Blunt saw "They Fly by Twilight" and was not impressed. It tells the unhappy story of a respective London grocer who commits a particular grisly murder, and Mr Blunt claimed to be deeply saddened by it. He asked his friend Mr J. Habakuk Litehead, MA (Hons) Oxon why he had left feeling so unhappy.

"My dear Blunt" replied Mr Litehead, "your lachrymosity

is due to the play's lack of the essential Aristotelian catharsis. Real tragedy should purge one's psyche of melancholy and leave one with a feeling of quiet elation. This play leaves one merely depressed."

With these wise words, when translated, in mind, Mr Blunt praised the actors, Alex Alexander the grocer, Irene Alexander his wife (was she in real life as well I wonder?), Nora Langley, Geoffrey Price, Ron Wilson, and Elaine Cornwall who took her part at short notice. As a good reviewer he had to prove that he had sat through it, and somehow I can't quite believe in Mr J. Habakuk Litehead. But Mr Blunt didn't like the play at all!

All this goes to prove that when you sit down in your new upholstered seat to watch a play, it is the final part of a very long process. Even the rehearsals aren't the beginning. That actually starts with Play Selection, and soon we'll start thinking about the five productions for the season 2004/5! You may, we hope you will, see acting of a high standard. But as Mr Blunt was hinting, no amount of good acting can compensate for a truly bad play, and sometimes, just rarely, a real turkey sneaks through! Please relax, however. We won't even consider repeating "They Fly by Twilight".

*David Eastwood*

### The essential Aristotelian catharsis

## Bric & Brac Please

Our Bric & Brac stall has been very successful over the years but is suffering from a lack of items at present. If you have any books or good quality bits and pieces that you would like to donate to this stall and help the theatre at the same time please drop them in to us. Every little bit helps, thank you.

*Christine Heath*

## Scrooge Success

It has taken nearly a year from writing the first word to hearing the last musical note echo away in the theatre. On the first night, just five minutes from curtain, my nerves and emotions went briefly into freefall as it hit me just how big a task it has been and how many people have supported me. I want to thank the many people who have worked so hard in helping to bring this piece of theatre magic alive. Many of them were mentioned in the programme. You did buy one didn't you? Why not? Shame on you! Well I do not have room to list them all here. I did name names on the last night but there were some who were not there so I wish to thank them here. They are, of course, that small but faithfully band of Front of House people. THANK YOU for being there, for you are just as important to all our productions as any other department. May I also thank those who have expressed their appreciation of the play in different ways. For the Christmas production is a play not a show. I know only too well that we cannot please everyone all the time but we are, after all, a theatre. One that strives to offer variety to our members and audiences whilst also giving our actors, young and old, new, different and fresh challenges.

*John F. Banks*



## Film Society



Here are the dates for the next few films.

**'Central Station'** 17th January: Brazil 1998 Cert 15.

This captivating Brazilian road movie picked up awards all around the world, as well as a deserved Oscar for 69 year old Fernanda Montenegro. Initially shown as selfish and uncaring, her character's gradual softening as she accompanies a young boy on a quest to find his Father makes for compelling viewing.

On February 14th we are having a **Charity Film Night** to raise funds for the Genesis Project to help them in their effort to raise 10 Million Pounds to build Europe's first purpose built Breast Cancer Prevention centre at Wythenshawe Hospital. The first Million has already been raised. The ticket price will be £5.00 and are available from John Grieve 0161 864 2151 (Day) or 0161 928 7472 (Eve). The film has yet to be chosen but it will be a classic of its kind in English language.

February 21st **'Lone Star'**: USA 1966 Cert 15 135 mins.

Sheriff Sam deeds discovers a skeleton buried in the desert outskirts of his Mexican border town and launches a murder investigation. So begins a multi-generation mosaic of family ties, local legend, interracial romance and political tinkering as he discovers the murky past of his father who was also a cop.

*John Grieve*

## Security and Safety

Stella was surprised recently to be told by a member that the tickets are always checked upstairs. They can't have visited the theatre for some time!

We introduced, quite a while ago now, the system where upon your tickets are checked and the end slip removed in the downstairs foyer. This was so that no one could easily slip into the theatre and it also relieved

the congestion that used to occur on a regular basis on the stairs. No only did we have people queuing on the stairs but if there was a ticket problem patrons would have to go back down to see Stella to sort it out. On occasion they would leave their party waiting on the upper landing thus causing further blockages.

We also appreciate that the stairs are not easy for some of

our patrons but are grateful and admire them for being to patient and faithful in their support of us by tackling them to attend the plays. Another reason for keeping them clear.

**Therefore please have your tickets ready for checking when you enter the theatre door.**

**It helps a lot more people than you think.**

**Your Tickets  
Please!**



## THE CLUB THEATRE

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## Useful Numbers

There is always someone who will be able to help or put you in touch with the right person if you have any questions or queries about any aspect of the theatre. Feel free to call.

<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Mr Ian Bowden</b>	<b>0161 980 2551</b>
<b>Acting , Front of House</b>	<b>Val Harris</b>	<b>0161 928 2277</b>
<b>Sponsorship</b>	<b>Val Harris</b>	<b>0161 928 2277</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Roy Burman</b>	<b>0161 928 1477</b>
<b>Stage Director</b>	<b>Steve Smith</b>	<b>0161 941 2116</b>
<b>Costumes</b>	<b>Enid Holt</b>	<b>0161 928 1113</b>
<b>'Thursday Club'</b>	<b>Barry Swithenbank</b>	<b>0161 980 7743</b>
<b>Secretary/Press Officer</b>	<b>John Banks</b>	<b>0161 486 1843</b>
<b>Ticket Secretary</b>	<b>Stella Blackburn</b>	<b>0161 980 8572</b>
<b>Club Drama</b>	<b>Val Harris</b>	<b>0161 928 2277</b>
<b>Club Theatre Office</b>		<b>0161 928 1113</b>

## Recycling Our Bits

Our Treasurer takes considerable trouble to recycle all the empty tins and bottles from the bar. He can be seen on Mondays walking round to Sainsbury's car park with various sacks. On Stage, apart from standard construction units, we also "recycle" major purpose built components. How many of you notice this? The bedroom rostrum from "Move Over Mrs Markham" became the entrance rostrum to Truvy's salon for "Steel Magnolia's". The dividing wall used in "Plaza Suite" is again seen in "Pack of Lies". A small part of the set from "Mr Scrooge" and from "Pack of Lies" will reappear in "Without Trace". Other parts of the "Plaza Suite" set will be used in "Pardon Me Prime Minister". These parts may be camouflaged but can you spot what we are up to?

Our Wardrobe Mistress makes many new costumes, but far more are unpicked, modified and recycled, so as to fit different performers and suit various styles and periods. These are only a few examples of how we mix and match, make do and mend and hence by saving materials, save money, construction time and also contribute to the green economy.

If this article has aroused your curiosity just ask any of the stewards on duty to point you in the direction of stage crew members many of whom are usually around during the interval.

*Barry Swithenbank*

## The End Bit



In 1904, at the age of just 22 yrs, Winston Churchill wrote the following words. If you replace the word 'orator' with 'actor' one can see just how it can so easily be pertinent to acting. Actors and actresses may find

this of great interest as it rings so true.

" Before an orator can inspire with an emotion, he must be swayed by it himself. When he would rouse their indignation, his heart is filled with anger. Before he can

move their tears, his own must flow. To convince them, he must himself believe.. Every orator means what he says at the moment he says it. He may be often inconsistent. He is never consciously insincere."

