



## From the Editor



'Tis the season when we all look back at the year that was. And what a year! Thanks to all your support and involvement that has helped increase the size of the club significantly and draw bigger crowds with each performance. We have also moved to three performances a year: a bold but very successful venture.

So, as things seem to be getting bigger and better, I hope you enjoy this "bumper" issue of the newsletter – it's biggest yet.

I hope you, your families and friends all have a wonderful Christmas and look forward to seeing many more of you in the New Year.

## Jane Eyre – some more comments (and "the backstage pass")

I had the great fortune to join the cast of Jane Eyre, taking a couple of minor roles, sharing the stage (and the limelight) with 18 other cast members (yes – 19).

It is amazing just how important organisation was, stuck in that tiny area at the back of the Commemoration Hall. So too were the very good friendships and the cheerful dispositions that helped when times were getting frantic. I've seen teams work together in an office and in sports and I feel Huntingdon Drama Club has one of the best.

The number of costumes that were superbly put together for this production, as they hung on the two large racks (leaving little room for any other movement) was astonishing to the eye. For an amateur production this was superb!

If you haven't seen Michael Black's write-up, as well as that from the National Operatic and Dramatic Association, then please visit the website by clicking <http://www.huntingdondramaclub.org.uk/>

We also received a letter, on behalf of the Mayor of Huntingdon, thanking us for making available one performance for the benefit of the Mayor's Charities and stating the "evening was a great success...It was obvious that everyone in the Drama Club had put a great deal of hard work into the production" and gave "everyone a thoroughly enjoyable evening"

To keep this short, the next page has some of the backstage shots – the ones you never usually see.

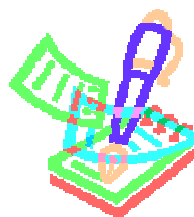
It was tremendous fun, yet again; a joy to be part of such a great social and performing group.

The editor

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# Dramatic News Dramatic News

[www.huntingdondramaclub.org.uk](http://www.huntingdondramaclub.org.uk)

Oct/Nov/Dec 2007

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In Our 63rd Year

## Some of the cast – captured by ... some of the cast



Caroline



Darren



John



Louise



Jacqui



Louise & Mark



Anwen & Caroline



Carol & Timur



Ann and Kevin



Louise, Mark, Ann & Kevin



Anwen & Timur



Lyn, Amanda & Trish



Bob



Kat, Jacqui, Jeanette & Daisy



Caroline & Anwen



Bob & Louise



Amanda & Chris



Kevin, Anwen & John



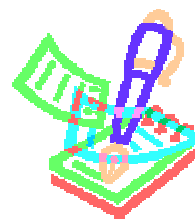
Timur, Louise, Amanda, Chris & Mark

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## Spring Production – “Cold Comfort Farm”

By Paul Doust, after the classic novel by Stella Gibbons

Auditions will be held at 7.30 on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> December at the **Commemoration Hall, Huntingdon** (in the Minerva Room). The format will be a reading of selected scenes. Please come prepared to audition for 1 or more parts. In summary the parts are:

- Flora Poste**, recently orphaned young (or youngish!) woman. She is purposeful, well educated and intelligent. This is a very large part and requires charm as well as authority.
- Judith Starkadder**, Mother of the clan. Barking mad, but with moments of lucidity. Obsessed with her son, Seth. English rustic accent.
- Elfine Starkadder**, daughter of Judith. Young rustic who's unaccountably become mixed up with poetry and the arts and crafts movement. Must be able to do a rustic but charming accent and one 'awfully posh' bit. In love with Richard, but promised to Urk
- Aunt Ada Doom** grandmother to the clan. Confined herself to her room as a child (after seeing something nasty in the woodshed) and has ever since exerted a malign influence on the family
- Poor Daft Rennet** he name says it all! Flora cures her of some of her unappealing habits, such as throwing herself in the well. Obsessed with an unseen character called Mark Delour, who for some reason cannot satisfy her
- Mrs Hawk Monitor** mother of Richard. Upper crust lady. Strong willed but reasonable. Must be able to lust after Seth!
- Reuben Starkadder** Rustic and the only man on cold comfort farm who can farm. Suspicious and moody
- Amos Starkadder** father of clan and husband of Judith. No interest in anything apart from the religious sect, the Quivering Brethren. Rustic again, but with the intonation of Ian Paisley!
- Sneller** butler for the Hawk Monitors
- Urk Starkadder** extremely loathsome character promised at birth to Elfine
- Richard Hawk Monitor** upper crust, probably rather dim. In love with Elfine

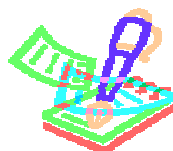
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In Our 63rd Year

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## Spring Production – “Cold Comfort Farm” (continued)

**Adam Lambsbreath** charming old rustic, dedicated to the very small herd and to Elfine. General farm hand

**Mr Neck Holywood** producer on the look out for new talent. Brash and upfront

**Seth Starkadder** son of Judith. Matinee idol looks\*. Must be able to waltz! Only really interested in the 'talkies', but has women throwing themselves at him

**Charles** upper crust suitor to Flora

\* I am prepared to be flexible on this! But not on rustic accents.

There are also crowd scenes – church congregation, speaking chorus and party guests. I may use the cast for these, but a few extras will help. The play is set in Sussex in the 1930's

If people can be thinking of the parts they are interested we will read from selected sections of the play. I may also suggest people try other parts on the night. Good luck!

Mark Hebert

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

### **Last of the Summer Wine**

Back when the sun was shining and the temperature was somewhere in the double digits, we were delighted to be able to enjoy the brilliance that was (once again) Ronald Stevenson garden party.

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September we sat in Ronald's garden and savoured the wonderful creations that he had put together; a true summer feast like no other. We do not know how he does it but cooking seems to come naturally to this actor/chef. Flavours seemed to come from all the right places in the things he cooks.

It was a very relaxing afternoon enjoyed by all those who were able to attend. Many thanks, Ronald. Spectacular yet again!

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## RECENT ACTIVITIES (continued)



Alan Ayckbourn

### Not so much a play-reading...

Think 'play-reading' and you'll probably think of a group of people sitting in a circle, some reading from scripts while the others keep glancing at their watches. There's little or no sense of relationships, action or settings. Well, think again: our 'play-reading' of Alan Ayckbourn's *Bedroom Farce* on 5 December, under the expert guidance of **Carol Wadey**, was more a semi-staged production.

As the audience of Club members arrived at Brampton Church Hall, we were greeted by a set consisting of three improvised beds and other furniture, and this really helped bring the reading to life. Add to that the costumes and sound effects, and it was a real treat to watch.

Most important of all, the acting was of a very high standard. The cast of eight had had allocated parts and scripts in advance, but had had no rehearsals. An hour spent talking through practicalities with Carol immediately before the performance was the only time they spent together. And yet the characters were totally believable. The quality of the acting made it almost irrelevant that the cast were holding scripts.

One great thing about a play-reading is that it's low-risk. So people who are new to the Club have a chance to show what they're capable of. And **Kevin Tuohy** and **Roy Bellass**, who both debuted with the Club in *Jane Eyre*, certainly showed their talents as Trevor, unwittingly trailing disaster in his wake, and his father Ernest, who in his very different way is equally disengaged from the world around him.

Others with only two or three performances under their belt were **Louise Nicholls** and **John Morgan**, as a thoroughly convincing couple whose games show the tenuous nature of their relationship. Louise conveyed subtle changes of mood extremely effectively, and John demonstrated an anger and obstinacy that I'm pleased to say he's never shown at home!

Playing the sophisticated Jan of course came naturally to **Caroline Harbord**, and **Mark Lamberth** threw himself into his antics on the bed and the floor, and really seemed to be in pain. **Jeanette Brown**, as always, made her character fully rounded – this time as Trevor's mother. And **Kelly Mason** gave a memorable performance as Trevor's wife Suzannah, whose emotional suffering gives the lie to Ayckbourn's description of the play as a 'comedy'.

The pleasures of the evening were completed by tea, coffee and homemade cakes and cheese straws, organised by **Ann Monk**, and most of the cast and audience celebrated by repairing to a local pub afterwards.

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## RECENT ACTIVITIES (continued)

### Not so much a play-reading... (continued)

Congratulations to the director and all the cast on doing so well, and thanks to Ann and everyone who helped, for example by baking or washing up. Events like this are an important part of what the Club is all about.

Maybe we should perform *Bedroom Farce* to a wider audience in a year or two's time.

Michael Black

#### Some of the photos from the "performance"



## Christmas meal

On 11<sup>th</sup> December, 24 of us got together at the Black Bull in Brampton for a sumptuous Christmas dinner. It was an evening of fun, laughter and variety. Long-standing club members mingled with new joiners and even those who have yet to join. Secret Santa gifts were exchanged, crackers pulled and wine was quaffed. And then, the surprise star turns of the evening were Ann Monk and Michael Black treating us all to their 'Fanny and Bidy' sketch (Michael makes a very convincing lady!) and Roy Bellass giving us a romp through fifties and sixties classics on his trusty guitar.



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## Christmas meal (continued)

What an evening! A great time was had by all and they practically had to eject us all bodily from the bar at the end of the evening. The spirit of Christmas was most definitely captured and I for one have come away full of festive cheer and hoping to hear sleigh bells in the snow!

Caroline Harbord

## Forthcoming events

### Summer Production – Hay Fever

Following the success of this year's touring production of *A Murder is Announced* in the Summer, the club has decided to hit the road again in 2008. This time we will be performing Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*, a classic comedy and a well-loved crowd-pleaser.

*Hay Fever* is set in the hall of the Bliss family home. The eccentric Blisses - Judith, a recently retired stage actress, David, a self-absorbed novelist, and their two equally unconventional children - live in a world where reality slides easily into fiction. Upon entering this world, the unfortunate weekend guests - a proper diplomat, a shy flapper, an athletic boxer, and a fashionable sophisticate - are repeatedly thrown into melodramatic scenes wherein their hosts profess emotions and react to situations that do not really exist. The resulting comedic chaos ends only when the tortured visitors tip-toe out the door.

Anyone who was a Club member two years ago will remember that an excerpt from *Hay Fever* was performed by the club in the 2005 production *From Mafeking to the Millennium*. Two years on, we're ready to tackle the whole play!

We are busy looking for venues (we already have one night agreed for the Commemoration Hall on the 13<sup>th</sup> July, and we're hoping that Warboys WI will have us back again. But if you know of anyone with a venue and an enthusiasm for getting bums on seats for us, please get in touch with one of the committee. The remaining dates are 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July.

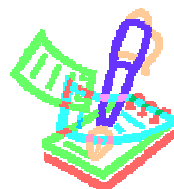
Of course we'll also be looking for actors and backstage crew so watch this space for details of the read-through which will be some time in the Spring.

Caroline Harbord

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## Forthcoming events (continued)

### What some of our members are up to - Shakespeare at the George

Next year, Shakespeare at the George is putting on *The Winter's Tale* and the club is delighted that several of our members will be performing in it. Caroline Harbord is playing Hermione, Ronald Stevenson is playing Polixenes, Ray Livermore is playing both a lord and a shepherd and one of our newest members, Kevin Tuohy, is playing Archidamus. Mark Hebert, who is directing our Spring production, *Cold Comfort Farm*, will also be appearing as Camillo.

*The Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's later plays. It contains powerful drama with themes of jealousy and abandonment echoing some of the darkest moments of *Othello*, but is lightened by the comic scenes, the themes of repentance and reconciliation and ultimately, a happy ending. Plus of course, the infamous stage direction 'Exit, pursued by a bear', which must be one of theatre's greatest challenges for a director!

The production is on in the last week of June and the first week of July 2008. It is always a terrific night out and although *The Winter's Tale* is one of Shakespeare's lesser-known and less performed plays, it is sure to be a sell-out.

Caroline Harbord

### Voice Coaching Workshop

A voice coaching workshop is due to be held in January. More details to follow very soon!

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