



## NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2018

### Editorial

I am after something else this month. Over the course of several newsletters I would like to include items sent in by you. Ideally I would like you to submit something about another interest you have outside of Tiverton Dramatic Society or something that you think very few members will know about you. Every single one of you should have something you can send me. It could be a mini biography, an odd hobby, an all consuming interest, a bit of personal history. Anything that shows you in a different light. Please do not be shy. I am really looking forward to hearing from you.

Please also note there will not be a committee meeting next month as it clashes with the show, so there will not be a newsletter until December either.

If you have an ideas or want to make any comments on any matter in this newsletter please contact me by emailing [clare.moughton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:clare.moughton@hotmail.co.uk) or ringing 01884 251958 / 07884 380071.

### Christmas Social

Our Christmas Social will be a quiz with gaps to chat with everyone else in the room. It will take place on **Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2018 at 7:30pm** at our rehearsal rooms. Teams of no more than 6 people please. Teams do not need to be arranged in advance – just turn up and if you have not got a team set up we will find you one! We will be supplying a Ploughmans (at no charge) so we will need to know numbers in advance. **Please let me (Clare) know by Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> November if you will be coming and if you would prefer cheese or pate.** It will be a great chance to catch up and have some relaxed fun before the Christmas rush so looking forward to seeing you all.

Please bring your own choice of tippie.

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If anyone has any other ideas for a social activity for the members of the group or would like to host or organise one, please contact me or any other member of the committee as it would be lovely to have events we can look forward to throughout the year.

## **Animals and Birds in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War**

As our next show is about the 1<sup>st</sup> World War I wanted something in the newsletter to reflect this. Arthur (Moughton) kindly did a bit of research for me and put the following piece together.

“Most people today know of the hundreds of thousands of lives lost during the First World War but fewer know of the creatures killed during the conflict. For them there was no volunteering or conscientious objection; they were simply pressed into the service, willing or not.

Perhaps the most tragic were the horses; 1 million served in the British Army alone, of which 400,000 were killed. Many of the survivors were so broken down they had to be destroyed. At the beginning of the war motor transport was still in its infancy so horses were needed in a variety of roles, apart from providing mounts in obsolete cavalry units. At the front horses had no protection against gunfire and were particularly susceptible to poison gas. Horses were unwillingly tried with primitive gas masks but many simply ate them!

Dogs were used in a number of roles according to their special skills. A number of terriers were used as ratters and other breeds were useful as messenger dogs, notably Airedales, collies, lurchers and whippets. They could carry messages, day or night, quicker than a man; so effective that both sides eventually employed bitches to distract the male dogs on their journeys! Often they would be spoilt and fed by soldiers as they passed through the trenches so that, eventually, it became a military offence to interfere with a messenger dog in the performance of its duties. Some dogs could detect gas or aircraft and many were generally very useful as sentries. They could also find wounded soldiers.

Many stray cats were rounded up in England and set to work as vermin hunters and gas detectors as well as being used as mascots and pets. Cats complained at once at the presence of gas. An estimated 500,000 cats served in the trenches.

100,000 pigeons were used as messengers on the Western Front – a staggering 95% got through with their messages despite being fired at and hunted by enemy birds of prey. Canaries were already used in British mines to detect gas so were a natural choice to detect gas at the Front and particularly in tunnels dug under no-man’s land. As a result they often gave their lives.

Several creatures were used as mascots and pets in the British army; apart from the usual dogs and cats there were donkeys, goats, monkeys, pigs, geese, and even a pair of orang-utans!”

## **Review by Alison Harris**

“Early last month I went to see the TOADS Theatre Company’s production of “It Could Be Any One Of Us” at the Little Theatre in Torquay starring our very own (I’m sure we still all think of him as our very own) Steve Aldridge! Yes, Steve still can’t keep off a stage! Since he sadly left Tiverton (sorry Nichola, but we still miss him) he has appeared in numerous productions in both Brixham and with TOADS, many of which myself and others have been to see.

This latest production was a comedy whodunnit by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Jill Farraut. The action takes place in a windswept country house owned by a very dramatic “arty” composer who rules the roost over his long suffering disparate family and the ensuing chaos over his will and then

subsequent death. All the usual ingredients not helped by a private detective who has never yet solved a crime!

The acting by all was excellent including Steve whose performance truly gained sympathy from the audience as the put-upon downtrodden brother – a very different role from Steve’s usual portrayal of characters ranging from the dominant to – as I know from my own experience – utterly intimidating. Worthy of note was an outstanding performance by Sophie Chamberlain as a dysfunctional sloppy teenage in what I believe was her first ever acting role.

TOADS are lucky enough to have a very deep stage and the set, as always, was brilliant. It was all very convincing, including the costume, the props, even the thunderstorm, et al and all involved can be very proud of a very enjoyable production.

TOADS do 10, yes 10, productions a year and I can thoroughly recommend them as a company and for what they do. Their standards are very high, not least because they own their own theatre (which is a wonderful converted church) and they need to make enough money to keep it going.

You can see what’s coming up in their forthcoming season by looking on their website on [www.toadstheatre.co.uk](http://www.toadstheatre.co.uk) or by telephoning the box office on 01803 299300, which is open Monday to Friday from 10.30am to 1.30pm.

Coming next is “Over My Dead Body” – a comedy thriller running from October 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>.”

### **Training / Workshops**

Sadly we only had one response to the suggested training courses so we will not be arranging anything at present. However, if anyone has any other suggestions or a group of you want the committee to arrange any training or workshops please let us know.

### **Christmas Shopping**

The more observant among you will have noticed a new shop in the precinct where the old Air Ambulance Charity Shop used to be. It is called “Gifts @ Market Walk” and is run by our very own David Keating. It is definitely worth a visit so do drop in.

### **The Tivoli**

Martin Mogford has made me aware of the following:

“Alan Bennett’s new play is being shown live for the West End at Tiverton Tivoli on 01 Nov 18.

The play is called Alleluia, description below. I know this is close to Blackadder but not all TDS members are involved at the early stages so may wish to attend.

The review reads:

'Leaves you bobbing on a wave of happiness' Independent Alan Bennett's sharp and hilarious new play is 'just what the doctor ordered' (Daily Telegraph). Filmed live at London's Bridge Theatre during its limited run, don't miss this 'rousing chorus line for the NHS' (Observer) in your local cinema. The Beth, an old fashioned cradle-to-grave hospital serving a town on the edge of the Pennines, is threatened with closure as part of an efficiency drive. A documentary crew, eager to capture its fight for survival, follows the daily struggle to find beds on the Dusty Springfield Geriatric Ward, and the triumphs of the old people's choir. Alan Bennett's celebrated plays include The History Boys, The Lady in the Van and The Madness of George III, all of which were also seen on film.

Allelujah! is his tenth collaboration with award-winning director Nicholas Hytner.””

### Weekend Course

This information from the Sardines Newsletter was sent to me by Rick Barfoot.

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) is hosting a “Big Backstage Weekend” on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11 November 2018 in Stratford-upon-Avon, which isn't frighteningly good timing for us. All Workshops will take place in RSC rehearsal rooms and auditoriums. The workshops are run by the RSC's team of technicians, stage managers and production managers with guest designers.

The workshops are titled: Sound, Sound Design, Lighting Practical Session, Advanced Lighting Design, Set Design, Set Construction, Stage Management and Production Management.

Please let me know if you want any further information.