



*New Mills & District*  
*Amateur Operatic*  
*&*  
*Dramatic Society*

*News and  
Views*

**May 2002**

**No. 47**

## **CHAIRMANS ADDRESS**

At the 2001 A.G.M. in my review of the coming year I expressed a view that the society needed to change direction a little to focus more attention on the theatre as a building and to raise its profile in the community.

Recently, informal discussions between the General Committee and Friends of the Art Theatre have produced some broad views which now require the General Membership to consider and possibly improve.

To enable everyone to establish some opinions, the following paragraphs are my own thoughts on what is needed to ensure the societies future. I emphasize 'my own'! there are others. There is no better time than the A.G.M. to enable the members to express there opinions. Please consider the situation carefully and come along to tell us what you think.

Historically New Mills A.O.D.S. was formed like most other Societies to enable stage enthusiasts to present public entertainment on an annual basis, with additional social and fund raising events organised to augment Members programme.

This changed a great deal in 1959 when to survive, the Society had to first rent, then buy the Art Theatre which gave it a much envied permanent home.

In our comparison with today`s events we will do well to remember that this period was the golden post war era for amateur stage. With show, audiences, and cast in abundance, a 1961 programme for Desert Song shows the Society with approximately 250 assorted subscribers, a cast of 50, a committee of 15 and a ladies committee of 10.

With this support the enthusiasm generated was such that we were able to present two musicals and three drama productions in the same year.

The enthusiasm continued throughout the 60`s, 70`s and some of the 80`s. The drama productions ceased in 65, but two full musicals continued 1983 with the addition of a pantomime at first by the fund raising committee, now well established as Friends of the Art Theatre. The musical productions were reduced to one in 1984 signalling a general decline in all aspects of enthusiasm for the amateur stage not only at New Mills but generally throughout all Societies. Compare a recent Membership list with the one of 1961 and it shows seventy percent drop. Most playing members now are mobile going to wherever they want to play and production support in all areas is thin on the ground.

So what of our Societies position today; the good news is that we own our own Theatre and are masters of our own destiny. The bad news is that at present the long term prospects look very fragile. We will probably, within the next five years, require to make major structural alterations to the building. The Foyer will need to be made accessible for the disabled with toilets provided and at the same time more space in the bar area needs to be created.

At the rear of the Theatre the dressing room roof requires replacement at which time it would be wise to create more usable space. At present for this work we do not have a specific cost but let us say a figure of **£100,000.00**.

Our present sources of income have absolutely no chance of funding this kind of project. The A.O.D.S. productions must be supported but it will get more expensive and probably move to a loss situation.

'Friends' will probably remain profitable due to the younger cast and audience appeal, but even with a few Theatre hires thrown in the revenue will probably only fund basic maintenance needs. Ever without these major expenses, indications are that we are on a slow downward financial spiral, which unless we address it will result in reaching a point of no return.

### **SO WHAT CAN WE DO TO SURVIVE**

First it is essential that we do not race into a situation that creates wholesale disruption to the society and 'Friends'. The present production pattern should be allowed to continue for the benefit of members and because that is what we have the society for.

Our first priority should be to raise the profile of the Theatre with emphasis on membership and conservation theme, making as wide a public as possible. New Mills is now the home of many new residents from other areas, they will not know of the Theatre, or recognise it from the outside. Unfortunately New Mills has no particularly locally orientated newspaper hence we need to reach these people in other ways. If we advertise via a web site, information brochure, exhibitions in public areas, and what ever press exposure we can get, this hopefully will bring in people with some specialist expertise which will be useful in our efforts plus increasing general membership.

At the same time as we can canvas the public we need to contact councils and grant awarding. Organisations who might provide us with financial assistance. There are specialist grants for providing disabled facilities and towards community assets etc., and we should hope to raise substantial funding in these ways.

In this respect I think it will be wise for us to change the present constitution and become a registered charity. This will allow access to more funding and enable us to avoid paying V.A.T.

The third essential at this stage is to get the planning and costing for the proposed alterations underway enabling us to make some public announcement of the proposals. These will also be essential in any applications for funding.

## S.S.U.

### 80<sup>th</sup>. ANNUAL DINNER

Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Thank you to those who returned their ballot forms – the result was interesting! It was hard for us to make a decision as there was such a wide scatter of choices both of venue and type of event – every alternative we offered got at least one vote! However Disley Golf Club did just gain the most votes so we are going back again this year. As to the type of event – we got the general impression that most people were prepared to pay a bit more for a more interesting meal and possibly have some form of entertainment during the evening.

We are keeping all your suggestions in mind but at this stage all we are offering is the date and menu – please fill in the details as usual and post it with your cheque. As to the rest of the evening we have a few ideas and will work on these in the next few months. Sufficient at this stage to say `Trust us – we are the S.S.U.!'`

Joan & Judy

## ME AND MY GIRL

The January newsletter contained information about our Autumn Production of:-

### **Me and My Girl at the Art Theatre**

**From Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2002.**

We are very pleased to tell you that our Production Team will be Dianne Aspinall as Director with David Chapman as Musical Director, and Carolyn Dent as Choreographer.

Dianne is a very accomplished player herself and our regular audiences will be well aware of her productions for the society for several years now. David joined us last year and we are happy that he has agreed to take up the baton with us again. A very talented musician in his own right, David has an excellent rapport with the cast and brings out the very best in them. Carolyn, a newcomer to the society's ranks, is by no means a newcomer to the theatre. She runs a very popular and successful dance school in the town and regularly uses the theatre for her own productions and presentation evenings.

Although we believe we have a production team second to none, they can only work with the players who are in the show. The Auditions for Me and My Girl took place over a full day one Sunday, and a Tuesday evening. They were very well attended with some excellent auditions. It was a delight to see the effort which people had made to portray the different characters. Me and My Girl is now fully cast and a lot of hard and exciting months lie ahead before we can present what we are confident will be a top quality production, at the Art Theatre in November

Wilfred Gould

## A View from the Vicarage

I'm good marketing value!' I said, after the head teacher of Buxworth School had announced to the entire school at assembly that if they wanted to see Miss Edgerton again next week, they should get tickets for 'The Wizard of Oz' at New Mills Theatre. Swapping clerical collar for straw-stuffed felt hat, they would see me in a somewhat different guise.

I grew up in a family where father and mother played their parts in N.O.D.A. for well over 30 years. Seeing their roles in everything from performance, to props, make-up, wardrobe, production and committee, I lived and breathed amateur theatre. After a (too long) break in the last few years, it has been a joy to tread the boards again.

None of my early 'training' has been wasted. Voice projection is pretty important in church (though what I do there is not an act) and at community events of all kinds. The Stage Manager himself (and part-time coffin bearer for the local funeral director) was once heard to remark, as he listened to me bellowing through the teeth of a gale at a blustery cemetery burial, that he would remember not to have me 'miked up' quite so high next time I was on stage.

Variety is a key element of my life as a minister, and I'm used to changing gear, or mood often. Even so, it has felt a little bizarre at times to run from a wedding to a Panto performance; from a Christmas carol event or an ecumenical business meeting to learning lines as a scarecrow; from leading a training evening or a funeral to a dance rehearsal.

As Vicar of Hayfield, Chinley and Buxworth communities, the circle of people I know or who know me, is large. From my perspective it's a great help to know some of them can see me in a different light. Conversation after one baptism began easily as one family member said 'You looked as if you were enjoying yourself on stage last week'. Another (slightly stunned) member of a congregation related that her granddaughter had given her a big nudge during one performance and said 'Look, it's the Vicar!'

As a Christian, I believe that whatever ability I've got is God-given, something to enjoy for myself and to share with others. 'I came to bring life in all its fullness' is a phrase recorded in the Bible as spoken by Jesus. Acting out the highs or lows of reality or fantasy is, for me, just one element of expressing and sharing that life.

Hilary Edgerton – 27.2.02

Not content with 'Vicaring' and treading the Boards, Hilary is off to Nepal at the end of October as part of a trek to raise money for one of her favourite charities 'Martin House' which provides support for young people with short life expectancy. If anyone feels they can help, all contributions will be gratefully received by Hilary at 8, Bluebell Close, Hayfield.

## **NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF THE ART THEATRE**

I am delighted to be able to report on the success of our Show for 2002 – The Wizard of Oz. Those of you who were privileged to see it will, I am sure, agree it was a great success and for those of you who missed this annual event please make a note in your diary not to miss our 2003 production which will be given the first two weekends of February 2003.

Two weeks after our final night and members of our production Committee were busy reading scripts and discussing the merits of different Pantos. We have decided on a John Morley script of **Goldilocks and the Three Bears**. The script is based on a circus theme and should prove popular with our audiences.

Again we have our talented production team of Cheryl Howarth as Director, Beryl Gresty as Choreographer and Caroline Hawkins as Musical Director. A wealth of experience to produce another success I am sure you will agree.

**Registration night will be on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July from 7.30 – 8.15 p.m.  
for the dancing teams and the Three Bears**

We are again having a registration night as it saves the time consuming work of taking names on audition day. There will be no registrations taken after this night. It will of course be possible for friends or relatives to register on your behalf.

**Dancing auditions will be on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July.**

If you would like any further details on Goldilocks please phone me, Moira Whiteford, on 0161 427 5317.

## **SITUATIONS VACANT**

### **Society Treasurer**

Due to the decision by Jean Cordin to take a well earned break, by not seeking re-election at the coming A.G.M., We find ourselves for the first time in twenty-one years looking for a new society treasurer. Is there a volunteer out there willing to take the job on? Attendance expected at one committee meeting on second Tuesday of each month required plus ability to balance the books of course. Advice on our procedure would I am sure be available from Jean Cordin . All the natives are friendly, any offers??

### **Production Secretary.**

We are also in serious need of a Production Secretary to assist in the smooth preparation of our Annual Production. A busy job especially at audition time, (already completed for this year) then intermittently busy up to production time. Not too demanding for someone with Secretarial ability. Knowledge of how the shows work an advantage but not essential. You will soon learn. Any offers??

# **THE CASE OF THE VANISHING TEDDY**

(LOOSELY BASED ON 'THE TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC)!

If you go down to the Art today  
You`d better go in disguise,  
`Cos sitting on the raffle shelf  
A Teddy was the First Prize.  
But suddenly the Bear had gone  
Taken by a light-fingered one.  
Indeed, it seemed the Teddy Bear and been Ni-cked

Of went Derek, Wilf and Jim,  
Three likely sleuths in their Black Suits in search of him.  
Upstairs, Downstairs, in the Loo,  
The Ted seemed gone for good and consternation grew.  
Suddenly the word went round  
Row L in the stalls is where the Ted`s been found.  
At Ten-O-Clock the time will come when they`ll have to show the Ted.  
And that`s the time when the thieves get theirs!

If you go down to the Art today  
You`re in for a big surprise,  
`Cos it seems the chairman gave the Ted  
To someone who`d won the prize.  
Now Colin Brown is all at sea,  
Being hunted by the Black-Suited Three,  
Who`ll show him where the Teddy Bears stuff their picnic!

Wilfred Gould.

## **OBITURIES**

### **MARTIN BEDDOWS**

All of us at N.M.A.O.D.S., and his many friends and colleagues, were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Martin Beddows, aged 27. A loyal society member he passed away, after a long illness, on 21<sup>st</sup> January this year. Martin took to the stage at a very early age with the then Kinder Youth Theatre from where he joined the New Mills Society as soon as his age allowed. He took part in both A.O.D.S. and F.O.A.T. productions, and as an enthusiastic member of the S.S.U. committee was involved in the societies social activities.

Unfortunately much of Martins adult life was overshadowed by his illness and the periods of debilitating treatment he endured, but this did not reduce his appetite for enjoying himself, and his determination to succeed was never more evident than when he took part in our production of `Barnum`. He had a great capacity for laughter and was equally happy giving and receiving a practical joke. If you asked about his health he always gave a positive prediction, and his spirit and fortitude in the face of adversity was an inspiration to many of us around him.

Sadly and collectively we have lost a friend, and the Society a member who would have helped ensure its future. Martin will be sadly missed by us all but remembered for years to come for the pleasure of his company. The New Mills A.O.D.S. and everyone associated with it extend their sincere sympathy to Brian, Margaret, Claire and Rob, and to Lydia, Martins fiancée whom he was to have married later in the year.

Colin Brown.

### **FRED HOWARD**

Many of the older society members were saddened to learn of the death on March 5<sup>th</sup> of Fred Howard a society member when the society returned to the Art Theatre after the war.

Fred, an excellent tenor, took the male lead in the inaugural post war production `No No Nanette` and played also in the 1954 production of Wild Violets. He participated in local choral singing and found a lifelong pleasure in musical events. In his brighter moments he played an excellent dame in local Sunday School pantomime. The committee and society extend there sincere sympathy to Mildred, Martin, Lynne and family on their sad loss.

Colin Brown.

### **AMY BOWERS**

Amy was the landlady of the Rock Tavern where on many occasions members of the cast were made welcome after rehearsals.

Over the years since retiring from the duties of `Mine Host` she always kept in touch with the ongoing events at the theatre, remaining a valued member until the end.

We heard of her death in May and wish to extend our condolences to her family at time difficult time.

Terry Barber

