



## LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN BREEZES INTO ACTION..!

PREPARATIONS FOR THE Guild's Easter 2006 Playhouse show, *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde, are at gale force. Rehearsals are in full swing, lines are in full cram and tickets are already being sold... From the original set of Auditions in January, crack teams of crew and cast have been assembled, and we're aiming for a show in the double-figure end of the Beaufort scale.

And for the first time in a Guild show (and possibly setting a new trend), we have a director's "blog" (i.e. web-log, or on-line diary for those still counting on abacuses). If you tune into <http://www.oxfordtheatreguild.blogspot.com/> you can catch up of the weekly progress of the show...

So don't forget to mark 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April in your diary, and get set to be blown away by the Fan!

Also with this issue, you'll find some posters and flyers – please use them and work and at home if you can to publicise the show wherever possible, and help towards its success... bring friends and family to sample the feast of Wildean wit! And if you can use more posters or flyers, let publicity manager Felicity Peacock know (details on back page)... THANKS!



**LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN** by Oscar Wilde  
directed by Peter Mottley

**OP**  
OXFORD PLAYHOUSE  
BOX OFFICE 01865 305305  
[www.oxfordplayhouse.com](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com)

**Tue 11 - Sat 15 April** at 7.30 pm  
Friday at 8 pm  
Saturday matinee at 2.30 pm  
(No Thurs matinee)  
Tickets £14, £11, £9

www.oxfordtheatreguild.com  
Registered charity no. 294299

Poster by Mark Brome ➤

SEE INSIDE FOR REVIEWS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND ALL THE LATEST PERFORMANCES NEWS...

## Review Record

Sherlock Holmes and the Limehouse Horror by Philip Pullman, directed by Jackie Keirs, 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2005, The Old Fire Station Theatre, Oxford.

WHAT THE PAPERS (BOTH REAL AND VIRTUAL)  
SAID...

### The Daily Information

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE LIMEHOUSE HORROR is a somewhat short, slightly silly play by well known children's novelist Phillip Pullman. The story is based on (or rather, inspired by) a throwaway line in The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire, in which Holmes refers to 'the giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not yet prepared!' the Limehouse Horror tells that very story.



↑ Adrian Porter, Warwick Yolks, Alice Fearn (photo by Mark Brome)

The play is performed by the Oxford Theatre Guild, Oxford's largest company of non-professional players. It is perhaps the large pool of potential actors which allows this production to do so well in its casting. There is not a single cast member who does not look every inch the part. Warwick Yolks' portly Dr Watson, and Sheila McKean's terrifying domestic Mrs Hudson are particularly choice picks. Similar attention to detail has clearly been paid to the sets, with a fabulous recreation of 221B Baker Street in the Old Fire Station Studio Theatre.

The sets, however, do lead to one slight problem. The Baker Street set is fabulously designed – complete in every detail, right down to the wing chairs by the fire-place, Holmes' desk, and even his violin. However actually setting up and taking down this set takes about a quarter of an hour, and as a result what is essentially a one-act play winds up having two intervals, each one taking approximately fifteen minutes. These



↑ Roger Dalrymple, David Thurston, Gareth Morris (photo by Mark Brome)

breaks have a rather strange effect on the play, giving it an almost episodic feel. A scene ends, there is a ripple of applause, and then you chat amongst yourselves for a bit while the next part is set up.

The play is essentially a charming piece of light entertainment – almost pantomime-like at times. Joseph Adams is fabulously over the top as the villainous Julius Reichenbach, swishing about the stage in eveningwear and purring at people. Indeed he is so utterly dastardly that the audience began to spontaneously boo and hiss at his devilish schemes. It is a work of gentle parody, its tongue never far from its cheek, in which all the great Holmesian devices are lovingly combined into a single tale full of disguises, deductions and duplicity.

All in all it's a decent little play. It has a fine cast, a silly plot, and pretty much everything you could want from an evening's family entertainment. It is a little short, particularly given that there's around half an hour given over to interval in a production that runs a little under ninety minutes. Ticket prices are between eight and twelve pounds, which is on the high end for the OFS, and some audience members may want a little more for their money.

**Dan Hemmens**



↑ Warwick Yolks, Adrian Porter (photo by Mark Brome)



↑ Joseph Adams, Alan Bailey (photo by Mark Brome)

## The Oxford Times

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES? Written by famed Oxford author Philip Pullman? Well, not exactly new, although the title has been freshly minted. Pullman's play was first performed in 1985 at the Polka Children's Theatre, Wimbledon, under the title *Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Sumatran Rat*, the original idea coming from one of Conan Doyle's own stories, *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*.

How does the great detective polish up in 2005? In this Oxford Theatre Guild production, Holmes (Adrian Porter,) looks comparatively young - perhaps that's why he doesn't seem quite as sure of himself (or, dare one say, as patronisingly smug) as is usually the case. Warwick Yolks, on the other hand, provides a traditional, portly, and reliable Dr Watson - when a mysterious young lady (Alice Fearn) arrives at 221B Baker Street and promptly faints, Watson is quickly on hand with a medicinal brandy. Without giving the story away, all sorts of other colourful characters appear through clouds of appropriately melodramatic fog,



↑ Sheila McKean (photo by Mark Brome)

among them the evil Julius Reichenbach (Joseph Adams), and a robust Colonel (David Thurston).

So far, so good. But this production has a problem. Director Jackie Keirs seems uncertain whether she is dealing with a mystery thriller, or a glorious parody of the Sherlock Holmes oeuvre. While matters improve in the second half, the cast often seem ill at ease, and the timing is sometimes so slow that it creates neither tension nor humour. At least Holmes acquires some of his customary poise by the end: "Genius, yes, madam," he announces, "But luck? Do not put my successes down to luck, madam." *Giles Woodforde*

### Crew:

Director	Jackie Keirs
Assistant director	Kate Belcher
Production manager	Felicity Peacock
Stage manager	Gareth Morris
Set design	David Long
Set construction	David Long, Brian Plater, Ray Dennehy, Gareth Morris with Steve Wright, Felicity Peacock, Roberta Catizone
Lights	David Long, Matt Boulton
Lighting assistant	Greg Cebula
Props	Joanna Matthews, Steve Whitaker
Costumes	Sue Tibbles, Felicity Peacock, Diana Kilburn, Helen Wilcox
Masks	Antonia Parnaby
Sound effects	Bill Moulford
Sound operators	Georgina Ferry, Greg Cebula, Michelle Jordan
Publicity co-ordinator	Felicity Peacock
Poster and programme design, photography	Mark Brome

### Cast:

Sherlock Holmes	Adrian Porter
Doctor Watson	Warwick Yolks
Mrs Hudson	Sheila McKean
Miss Murray / Kate Moriarty	Alice Fearn
Colonel Moran / Giant Rat	David Thurston
Inspector Lestrade	Roger Dalrymple
Sir Henry Murray	Alan Bailey
Reichenbach / Professor Moriarty	Joseph Adams
Lockett	Graham Cook
Police Constable	Gareth Morris

## Work in Progress

April 2006



Lady Windermere's Fan by Oscar Wilde, to be directed by Peter Mottley, 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2006, The Playhouse, Oxford.

The Director writes:

"THE USUAL PROBLEMS – including one I'm certainly not complaining about.

"A cast of 14 – and well over 50 auditionees, of whom virtually all were worthy of a place on the Playhouse stage. Exhausting, but very encouraging.

"And this in itself brought another problem in its wake: having to turn down first-rate actors simply because they were up against someone who was first-rate-plus. But what director wouldn't kill for a problem like that?

"Plus the knock-on effect. Good actors are in demand, and the LWF cast is no exception. So my early rehearsals have been a little bit sketchy as actors worked through their commitments to other productions.

"But now we're well under way, and things are looking very good indeed. An unbelievably strong cast, comprising a mix of familiar faces and exciting new ones; a high level of commitment (some scenes are already almost book-free); and a highly-organised Production Team which is beaver away on everything from props to publicity.

"The piece itself is a joy to work with: by turns hilarious, intense, witty and moving, and with so many opportunities to draw out subtleties from the text.

"The audience are going to love it. And we're loving it already." Peter Mottley

### Crew:

Director	Peter Mottley
Production managers	Ray Dennehy Michelle Jordan
Stage manager	Gareth Morris
Assistant stage managers	Liz Taylor Diana Kilburn
Technical director	David Long
Set design	Peter Ledwith
Lighting	David Long
Costumes	Helen Wilcox Jaie Tomkinson

### Props

Diana Kilburn  
Joanna Matthews  
Kay Richardson  
Felicity Peacock  
Mark Brome

### Publicity co-ordinator

Poster design and photography

### Programme compilation

Bill Moulford

### Cast:

Lady Windermere	Felicity McCormack
The Duchess of Berwick	Barbara Denton
Lady Agatha Carlisle	Grace Mountain
Lady Plymdale	Polly Mountain
Lady Jedburgh	Alex Reid
Mrs Erlynne	Clare Denton
Rosalie	Liz Taylor
Lord Windermere	Ross Brooks
Lord Darlington	Jon Crowley
Lord Augustus Lorton	Colin Burnie
Mr Dumby	Alistair Nunn
Mr Cecil Graham	Simon Vail
Mr Hopper	Alex Rogers
Parker	Bob Cambrey

## Summer 2006 production

The Tempest by William Shakespeare, to be directed by Colin Macnee, 18th to 29th July 2006, Trinity College Gardens, Oxford.

A mature work by a mature playwright, The Tempest offers an allegory of the mind's eye, combined with themes of truth and reconciliation, self-discovery and self-acceptance. Magic, music, political plotting and back-stabbing, young love, and a typical Shakespearean vein of comedy are woven into the rich fabric of the play. And here's the legendary cut-out and keep audition notice:

**The Tempest**

by William Shakespeare

Auditions 20th, 24th and 27th  
April at 7:30 p.m.

The hall of the United Reformed  
Church, Banbury Road,  
Summertown

Rehearsals will take place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (8:00 pm to 10:00 pm) and Sunday af-

ternoons (2:00 pm to 5:00 pm) during May, June and July. Among other highlights will be use of a specially-constructed multi-level stage, and matinees on both Saturdays... Watch this space for more news!

#### CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Boatswain; 30s–50s

Alonso, King of Naples, who overthrew Prospero as Duke of Milan and replaced him with Antonio; 40s–60s

Antonio, Prospero's brother, the usurping Duke of Milan; 30s–40s

Gonzalo, a councillor; 60s

Sebastian, Alonso's brother, with whom Antonio plots Alonso's murder; 30s–50s

Prospero, a magician / the rightful Duke of Milan; 40s–50s. He dwells on an isolated island of the mind, removed from the world of politics. The tempest of the title is a cathartic emotional storm leading to his acceptance of all parts of his nature: ape and angel, beast and spirit. He resolves internal and external conflicts. With Ariel's help he overcomes his rage, foregoes revenge and forgives his enemies. He gives up the life of the imagination to return to the mundane, and he reconciles himself to inevitable loss, not least of his daughter to marriage, and to mortality. These universal themes also have a specific resonance with what we understand to be a great watershed in Shakespeare's life at the time of writing this the last play he completed alone.

Miranda, Prospero's daughter; teens–20s

Ariel, 'an airy spirit', female; teens–20s. The empathic creative imagination with which Prospero conjures magic. (Physical fitness of at least average standard will be necessary. Experience of dancing in performance will be an advantage. A good singing voice will be an asset but is not essential.)

Caliban, a primitive 'monster', male; any age (but physical fitness of at least average standard will be necessary). 'The beast within', motivated solely by instinctive desires, unconstrained by culture or socialisation, incapable of empathy and hence of deception, neither evil nor noble, teased and frustrated by intimations of what it means to be fully human

Ferdinand, Alonso's son, who will become the lover of Miranda; 20s–30s

Trinculo/a, a jester, male or female; any age

Stephano, a drunken butler; 40s–60s

#### Autumn and Christmas 2006 productions

It's time to get ideas in for the two end-of year performances. This year, we're hoping to be at the O'Reilly theatre in Keble College in the first week of November, and in the Old Fire Station from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> December 2006. We've already had great offers, but there's always room for more. The deadline is Easter Monday (17<sup>th</sup> April 2006), so if you're a potential director with a hot idea burning a hole in your metaphorical pocket, why not contact us? Details on back page!

## Committee News

Training directors news: training for potential directors is still on the agenda, although Lady Windermere's Fan and The Tempest have been taking up a lot of attention recently. If you'd like to get into directing and find out more about what we're up to, drop a line to Gareth Morris (details on back page)...

AGM news: it's fast approaching, the annual political rally that set's the Guild's path for the next year. This time, the bun-fight at the OK Corral will be held on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at the Summer-town URC, with a 7:30 pm start. Refreshments will be provided (especially since they proved such a draw last year!) Remember that it's your Guild, so if you have any questions or opinions or complaints or nominations for committee, bring 'em along – the more in this case, the quite definitely merrier...

Festivals news: the call for short plays (up to 50 minutes) has gone out for the big three amateur theatre festivals – Henley-on-Thames (in the Kenton Theatre), Abingdon (in the Unicorn Theatre) and Wallingford (in the Corn Exchange). There's not a lot of time to get applications in, but if you're interested in fielding a short play, do get in touch with the committee as soon as possible. Note that we will provide finances to cover rights and festival entrance fees; a more detailed budget can be discussed as part of the planning stage...

## Guild People

Jocelyn Pulley (née Mottley), who played Alithea in the Guild's The Country Wife at the Playhouse in 1995, has given birth to a daughter, Daisy (a sister to Sam).

The recent RSC production of The Canterbury Tales at the Swan, Stratford, is adapted from Chaucer's original by Mike Poulton (in, according to The Times, an "admirable adaptation"). Mike directed

the Guild's Merry Wives the last time around in 1987, and also appeared in a number of shows, including *The Comedy of Errors*. Many Guild members also worked with him in the *Henry V* Company at the Unicorn in Abingdon.

A celebration was held in October last year in honour of Gerard Gould, whose tireless work with drama school hopefuls has resulted in many people entering the profession, and whose gigantic Guild direction portfolio has given so many a chance to shine on-stage. Organised by Nick Rawlinson and held at the Playhouse, past and present members gathered to surprise Gerard with an evening of readings and performances. Among those presenting were Deborah Morris, Daniel Bennett, Nigel Cooke, Meg Davies, Ben Forster, Cate Fowler, Hal Fowler, Jonathan Gunning, Peter Malin, Darren Ormandy, Martyn Read, Geoff Goodall, and Nick himself. As would perhaps befit the scale and surprise nature of the event, Gerard was allegedly described as "gobsmacked"...



↑ *The gathering*, and ↓ *the Man of Honour ...* (photos by David Fisher)



C.S. Lewis: *Beyond Narnia*, which was screened at 9pm on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January on BBC2, starred a large number of Guild (and ex-Guild) luminaries, lighting up the screen and providing stalwart support work. Among those taking part were Judith Fantozzi, Frazz Jarvis, Alex Reid, Alan Bailey and Catherine Lemmon – Catherine even got a credit in the *Radio Times* as Mrs Lewis! Alan writes of his experiences:

"I was thrilled to have the chance to appear in this drama documentary, and attended a full day's filming with Norman Stone, the director, and his team; in fact from 11 o'clock in the morning to 10.30 at night. As you can imagine, a lot of filming took place in this time and I was doubtful that I would appear in the final cut. Norman offered me the part of the hospital chaplain who tended to the spiritual needs of Mrs Lewis at the time of her death. There was no script offered, but he asked me to use appropriate words to comfort her. Much to my surprise, I was delighted to find that I had been included in the finished production."

## Future Attractions

### WORKSHOP ROUND-UP

WOULD YOU LIKE TO EXPAND YOUR theatrical skills? The WOT Committee is currently planning workshops throughout 2006. We usually schedule 8 workshops during the year, avoiding the summer and Christmas periods. The present WOT Committee members are:

- Kate Belcher - Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group, OTG
- Susi Dalton – Northmoor Players, Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group
- Terry Gallagher – Banbury Cross Players
- Sue Haffenden – Charlbury ADS
- Julie Kedward – Old Gaol Theatre Company
- Elizabeth Kirkham – St Peters Players, OTG
- Sheila McKean – Domino Players, OTG
- Felicity Peacock – OTG

All one-day WOT workshops now cost £15 for OTG or ODN members (concessions £12). Booking forms are emailed to all OTG members on our email list about 5 to 6 weeks before each workshop: if you require a posted copy, please contact Felicity.

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March: *Preparing for a Role* – to be led by Darren Ormandy (former Guild member), to take place at the URC Hall, Marston Rd, Oxford from 10 am to 4 pm. A booking form has been included with this issue of Guild News.

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April: *Acting for the Stage and the Small Screen*. This workshop, led by Stephen North, an actor who also lectures about camera techniques, will be of interest to those who are involved in or want to get involved in TV and films, as well as stage performance. It will take place at the European School Culham, using appropriate equipment.

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May: From Page to Stage: a practical workshop for directors and actors on Ibsen's Hedda Gabler. Postponed from November 2005, this workshop will be led by Sue Haffenden, a drama teacher and experienced director, at Chadlington Village Hall. This being Ibsen's anniversary year, it's a good time to get to grips with one of his most well-known plays.

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October: Use Your Voice: Choral singing workshop. Led by Anita Daulne of Zapmama, an Afro-European Group – no experience is necessary for this unusual and exciting workshop. To be held at St Margaret's Institute, Polstead Road, Oxford.

Further workshops for 2006 are being considered and the possibility of a Masterclass on Shakespeare with Creation Theatre is still being pursued... Watch out for further details in Guild News and via Guild emails. Any suggestions or offers for future workshops will be gratefully received by Felicity on behalf of the WOT Committee!

Booking forms for each workshop will be circulated with Guild News, or can be obtained direct from Felicity. If you have an idea for a workshop that you'd like to lead or participate in or a topic that a workshop might cover, please do contact Felicity.

If you're not on the Guild e-mailing list and would like to receive notification by email of events, requests for actors from other groups, or special offers, etc, please e-mail Felicity (details on the back page) and ask to be added to the email list. If you currently receive such emails and would prefer not to, please let Felicity know and your name will immediately be removed from the list.

EXTRA WORKSHOPS: the alliance with the Oxford Playhouse continues, from time to time generating special offers for members to attend the educational workshops or other events run by the Playhouse. These are often given at short notice, and therefore e-mailed to members.

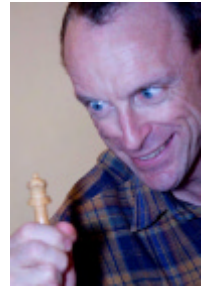
#### **A REMINDER OF GUILD GRANTS TO MEMBERS FOR WORKSHOPS**

If you want to improve your skills in a particular technical area, you can apply for a grant to cover the cost of the workshop fee. It would be particularly useful to extend the number of members able to help with lighting, sound or make-up, so if you are interested please contact Felicity Peacock, our Workshops Rep (details on the back page).

**WOT is supported by OTG and ODN**

#### **IMMINENT PRODUCTIONS**

The Communicators: A Game of Chess by Dominic Bullock, Old Fire Station Theatre, George Street, Oxford, 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at 7:30 pm. An evening of sketches and a short play – new and very funny writing! Come and see your editor wearing a toothbrush moustache... Tickets from the OFS, 01865 297170.



Old Gaol Theatre Company: Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov, translated by Michael Frayn, Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon, 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March 2006 at 7:30 pm.

ODT Productions: A Woman of no Importance by Oscar Wilde, Old Fire Station Theatre, Oxford, 28<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April at 7.30 pm, with a Saturday matinee at 2.30 pm. Ticketline 01865 297170.

Pressgang: Outlying Islands by David Greig, Oxford Brookes Drama Studio, Headington Hill campus, 28<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April at 7:30 pm. Tickets £7.50 / £5; Ticketline 07815 138760.

Abingdon Drama Club: Macbeth by William Shakespeare, Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon, 29<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm. Presented as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Abingdon Arts Festival.

Sinodun Players: Mrs Warren's Profession by George Bernard Shaw, Corn Exchange Theatre, Wallingford, 29<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm. Box office 01491 825000.

Oxford Operatic Society: Half a Sixpence by David Heneker and Beverly Cross, The Amey Theatre, Abingdon School, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm. Tickets £8.50 to £12; Ticketline 01235 834383.

Banbury Cross Players: Abandonment, by Kate Atkinson, The Mill, Spiceball Park, Banbury, 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Box office 01295 279002.

Studio Theatre Club: Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare, Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon, 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> June 2006 at 7:30 pm, with a Saturday matinee at 2.30 pm. Tickets £7.00 / £6.00 from 01865 559655 or tickets@studiotheatreclub.com.

Oxford Theatre Guild: Lady Windermere's Fan, by Oscar Wilde, Oxford Playhouse, 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2006, 7:30 pm (8:00 pm Friday) with Saturday matinee at 2:30 pm. Ticketline 01865 305305.

Class ACT: Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune by Terrence McNally, The Old Fire Station Theatre, Oxford, 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm. Tickets from the OFS, 01865 297170. From the team that brought you Truth or Dare at the O'Reilly Theatre last November!

Oxford Theatre Guild: Three-Ring AGM by the Committee, URC Summertown, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm – ONE NIGHT ONLY! Tickets free...

Kingston Bagpuize Drama Group: Cash on Delivery, by Michael Cooney, Southmoor Village Hall, 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at 7:30 pm. Ticketline 01865 820605.

Faringdon Dramatic Society: The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov, translated by Stephen Mulrine, Faringdon Junior School, 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 7:30 pm. Tickets £7 / £5; box office 01367 244351.

Didcot Phoenix Drama Group: The Merry Wives of Windsor by William Shakespeare, Didcot Civic Hall, 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Tickets £6 / £4.

Sinodun Players: Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward, Corn Exchange Theatre, Wallingford, 27<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July 2006. Box office 01491 825000.

Oxford Theatre Guild: The Tempest, by William Shakespeare, Trinity College Gardens, Oxford, 18<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

Banbury Cross Players: Sex, Drugs, Rick 'n' Noel, by David Tristram, The Mill, Spiceball Park, Banbury, 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2006. Box office 01295 279002.

Sinodun Players: The Homecoming by Harold Pinter, Corn Exchange Theatre, Wallingford, 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2006. Box office 01491 825000.

## THE GUILD COMMITTEE, 2005 - 2006

Chair: David Long, e-mail david.long@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Vice-chair: Gareth Morris, e-mail gareth.morris@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Secretary: Felicity Peacock, e-mail felicity.peacock@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Treasurer, membership secretary and newsletter editor: Bill Moulford, e-mail bill.moulford@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Web master / archivist: Steve Whitaker, e-mail steve.whitaker@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Minutes secretary / hall bookings: Diana Kilburn, email diana.kilburn@oxford-theatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Estelle Buckridge, e-mail estelle.buckridge@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Cathy Oakes, e-mail cathy.oakes@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Kevin Elliott, e-mail kevin.elliott@oxfordtheatreguild.com

Non-portfolio: Colin Macnee, e-mail colin.macnee@oxfordtheatreguild.com

It's stand-pipe time...! Apparently there's no water, which is as good an excuse as any not to wash the car, and it's as dry as the great drought of 1976, which I merely remember as being great for playing outside. But what memories do you have of that crazy decade, when snow fell on a regular basis (and hung about for a bit), and the summers were always incomprehensibly long? And what theatrical stuff were you getting up to then? Is this a blatant attempt to get you to write in and tell me about it, thus filling Guild News acreage, Churchill? "Ho, yus yus yus yus." (Shakes canine jowls)...

See you next issue!

*The Oxford Theatre Guild* is a registered charity, number 294056. *Guild News* is published sometimes. It would have to happen sooner or later of course, that a certain teenage magic-user (and bible-belt bête-noir), who has made his progenitor so rich that Croesus has been seen skulking about to spot her for a few quid, would make his slightly over-cooked presence known in *Guild News*. Last issue, those of you with memories that border on the elephantine will recall the Dan Brown inspired puzzle regarding the meaning to existence stashed away in a London underground station. The answer was, of course, **Potter's Bar**, and the item in the blue sports bag was an original vinyl album by 70s glam-rockers **Wizard**. Those of you who didn't get it may curse the beta-version of the new fictoware I've been trying out – StoryHash v1.01. The idea is, with the correct settings, the damn thing will cough up an idea so irresistible to publishers that the argument over rights will escalate to the point of civil war. (It's quite amusing to watch it bicker with the Literary Agent Module with which it was bundled). The right settings are easier to talk about than find, of course – last week it was responsible for the Potter-flavoured crypto-thriller with 70s affectation; this week, it churned out a much more obvious fusion with Mr Potter, this time choosing 70s animal-wrangling nightmare *On the Riverbank*. (It seems rather keen on the 70s for some reason). So now I find myself the dubious possessor of a pdf outline concerning the adventures of Harif Otter, whose nemesis Mort the Vole regularly tries to do away with Harif and his friends Rob Stoatily and Heronomy Badger, while unpleasant teacher Septimus Shrike and headmaster Owlus Grumbleboar obfuscate the proceedings in the name of education and vendettas. And how the software turns this into eight hundred pages is beyond me. \*Sigh\*.

What *will* it come up with next, I wonder...