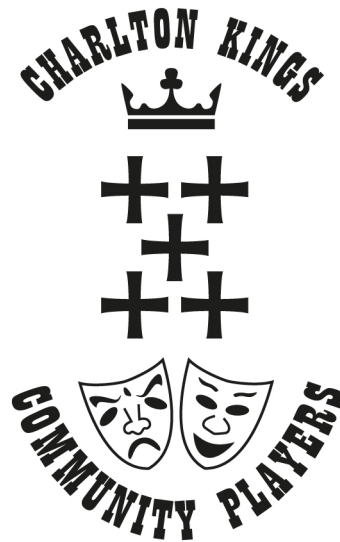
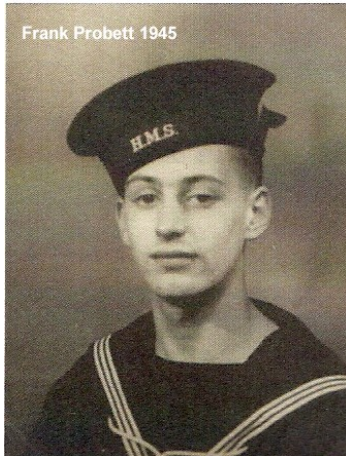


Obituaries for active members of the Players

Frank Probett, Gilbert Biberian, Beryl Middleton,
Harriet Wright, Val Flippance, Gwilym Davies,
Keith Norcott, Janet Freeman, Tony Poulter,
Sue Ramshaw, Jill Muir, Colin Roffe, Kate Alger,
Fiona Mead, Tim Masling, Ann Cross,
Derek Pearce, Michelle Grainger, Yvonne Brawn,
Margaret 'Maggie' Scrivens, Sue Dyson,
Alison Luna and Ken Venus



Frank Probett - An appreciation



© Frank Probett

Frank Probett and his family moved to Cheltenham in 1965, and he joined the Charlton Kings Choral Society in 1977. He has been a singer and performer throughout his life.

Frank's story is best told in his own words from those recorded by Trish Burns in *'The Copper's Kid'*. These were reproduced, with his permission, in a Book of Stories researched in 2016 to create a script for *'Some Sunny Day'*, a production put on by the Charlton Kings Community Players in 2017.

WW2 begins and becoming an evacuee

"My mother, brother and I were listening to the radio at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday 3rd September 1939. Our father was on duty at Bow Street Police station at the time. The national anthem was played and the Prime Minister, Mr. Chamberlain, announced that we were at war with Germany. My first reaction was to burst into tears, mother said nothing and my younger brother was unaware of the meaning of the words that were spoken. A short time later the air raid siren sounded. Mother went outside and put in place the blackout boards we had already prepared because of flying glass and told us to sit under the table! Thankfully the all clear was sounded within a short space of time"

"I continued to go to school when teaching facilities were available – many of the children had already been evacuated. Days went by without anything much happening."

"Life began to change and the heavy bombing started after the occupation of Holland and the Fall of France. At first it was mostly intermittent and not necessarily every night. I remember standing on a railway bridge with other children in 1940 watching the soldiers returning from Dunkirk. They threw us chocolate and oranges from the train windows."

"My memories of life in London was of gas masks, ID cards and of course ration books. People supported others in these hard times. Where we lived became somewhat 'fluid' as people were evacuated, their houses destroyed and trying to find other accommodation. I watched 'dogfights' between our RAF and the Luftwaffe and saw falling shells, landmines sent down on parachutes and other shrapnel. We would collect bits of shrapnel from the shells of the mobile anti-aircraft guns."

"When the Blitz began father in his wisdom decided to send mother, myself and my brother to his sister in Ashstead, Surrey. My brother and I were able to attend school as the Dulwich Hamlet school had been evacuated there. Shortly after our stay began we were uprooted one night because the area was hit by a parachute landmine. It took out a large section of the close, but the only casualty in our household was Uncle Ben who was hit in the face with his bedside alarm clock!"

“We then rented other accommodation in Ashstead. I sat and passed the “Trade Scholarship “ which meant I became an evacuee as the Technical School was evacuated to Budleigh Salterton. In the meantime our house in London was hit by an unexploded bomb. and had to be emptied. Fortunately a house was found nearby and my mother and my brother returned to London.”

“I was evacuated to Budleigh Salterton, Devon, in 1941. I lodged, along with another evacuee, with a widow (Mrs Nuthall) whose husband (a Major) died in France in 1940. The next year was probably one of the happiest years of my life – this was a large, fine comfortable house and my guardian was a lady for whom I developed a great fondness and respect. We kept in touch and visited her well into the 1960s. Sadly in 1942 she felt unable to look after me as she had lost her household staff. There were apparently six servants, a butler and others before the war, but this era of gracious living was now over. I was placed with an elderly couple who were remote. I returned to London and my own family.”

“Budleigh Salterton was a little remote from the action but one night the house acquired a hole in the roof and an unexploded incendiary bomb was found resting on a girder in the roof space directly above my room. There had been a big German raid on Exeter that night.”

“When I returned to London I started work, first for a short time in a munitions factory and then a great change as I succeeded in getting a job at Broadcasting House as a Post Boy. This was a very interesting position and the means of meeting all kinds of people. I volunteered to join the Navy in January 1945 at the age of 17. I reported to HMS Royal Arthur initially for training and then HMS Gosling followed by RAF Hednesford. VE and VJ both happened. I was demobbed on 8 June 1947. The same year I took some holiday and went to Budleigh Salterton to visit Mrs. Nuthall.

Doodlebugs and ‘bombed out’

“We had an Anderson shelter in the garden in which we slept every night. Bombing raids by 1944 no longer consisted of aeroplanes dropping bombs but of V-1’s which became known as ‘doodlebugs’. These were small unmanned planes with wings and engine and could be directed at targets. They sounded like a noisy aeroplane so you could hear them coming. When they reached their target the engine would cut out. This plane then became a deadly device and would fall to earth in a dive. It was effectively ‘a flying bomb’.”

“In 1944 the family had such a visit from a V-I. It was morning and our father had just made tea in the house and brought it to everyone in the shelter. A short time afterwards the drone of a plane was heard and it was overhead. There was a very loud noise and blast with the door of our shelter blowing inwards. When we looked out our house was reduced to rubble. This particular V-I demolished 14 houses in our row, 10 opposite us and others behind us. Four people lost their lives. Two people were in an Anderson shelter which took a direct hit. One family had sheltered under the stairs and were dug out by the ARP wardens – they had taken a whistle with them and were able to attract attention as their house had fallen on top of them. We lost everything and we reported to the Town Hall as being bombed out so we could be allocated blankets, clothing coupons, money and provided with food. Another house was rented and we had to make do with very little. The

main hall of our old house was still standing and our coats were hanging on the hooks but were in tatters!”

“Our father worked at Bow Street Police station from 1939 until 1954. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, walked the streets of London regularly during the nightly air raids and it was required he was accompanied by a policeman. This was a duty performed by our father on several occasions. He also guarded one famous prisoner. This was the ‘gentleman’ known as Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce), who broadcast wartime propaganda from Germany.”

Sandra & Tony Jeans

The complete book of stories for the production ‘Some Sunny Day’ is available from the Charlton Kings Community Players on request.

The script was developed based on stories and articles written by members of the Charlton Kings Community Players and supporters, and other collected anecdotes. The stories and articles are published separately as a storybook with the relevant acknowledgements and permissions, and are not for commercial sale.



The story

It is the spring of 1947. The War ended nearly two years ago and the boys and girls have been finally demobbed. The country has just been through the bad winter of 1946-47. The Village (Charlton St. Mary's) wants a celebration show in early summer so a Committee has been set up. They want to outdo the neighbouring village of Little Binding! We will be eavesdropping on the Committee as they work on the show and remember what they've been through.

Published in BBC Music Magazine May 2023

Gilbert Biberian

Gilbert Biberian Born 1944 *Guitarist, composer*

Another 1960s trailblazer, Biberian was an innovative performer and champion of new guitar repertoire. A composer himself, he studied with Elisabeth Lutyens and Hans Keller and in 1969 founded The Omega Players, one of the UK's first professional guitar ensembles. Born in Istanbul, Biberian enjoyed studies in France with guitarists Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya, and also at Trinity College of Music. His own compositions were a significant addition to the guitar repertoire.

to the artistic life of the local community in Cheltenham, specifically by mounting recitals of guitar music by himself with his friends and colleagues. For several years at the beginning of the century, he ran a guitar festival and summer school in Charlton Kings, the community in Cheltenham where he lived. He encouraged appreciation of the classical guitar in a variety of musical settings and the young people who attended the summer school benefited from contact with fine players of the instrument. Gilbert also supported a local community theatre group by composing and playing a piece for a major production, reflecting a great generosity of spirit. We were privileged to have such a fine artist in our community. In later years a stroke prevented his playing and now he will be missed by all those who knew him.

Tony Jeans, Cheltenham

Local hero

Thank you for including an obituary in your *Farewell to...* page for the guitarist Gilbert Biberian (April). Gilbert made a notable contribution

E202652-5



■ **FINE TUNED:** Gilbert Biberian, artistic director of the guitar festival, with Melanie Armitstead

Festival was on song

MADAM - The recent Charlton Kings International Guitar Festival was a great artistic event which deserved much better support from people in Cheltenham

(Echo, July 25).

Gilbert Biberian and his friends have created an excellent addition to the range of festivals we have in the town and they deserve our thanks and congratulations.

The associated guitar summer school is also to be highly applauded and the standard reached by the students was outstanding.

The student concert on the last

Saturday of the event made for a great end to the festival.

There is such a range of music available for the guitar that there is something for everyone in the week of the festival and I hope the people of Cheltenham will sample the rich fare which will be on offer next year.

*Tony Jeans
Cheltenham.*

mail your letter to editor@glosecho.co.uk or fax 01242 271803

Beryl Middleton



© family of Beryl Middleton
This photograph was
published in the
programme for the show
'Some Sunny Day' (2017)

'Some Sunny Day' – performed by the Community Players in February 2017 – was based on the wartime experience of Charlton Kings villagers in WW2. Beryl Middleton, whose death we are sad to be recording in this issue, was one of those villagers who shared their experiences of the war.

Beryl was a Wren who served in Bletchley Park, code breaking messages from the Japanese who were based in Berlin. The messages described what the Germans were planning to do to combat the invasion along the French coast. She remembered the uniform – 'white shirts and separate collars rather stiff-starched'. She recalled the celebrations for VE Day and VJ Day and saw the King and Queen on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, having hitched to London to join in the celebrations of VE Day in Leicester Square.

Not only was Beryl a contributor to **'Some Sunny Day'** though. She was a supporter of the Players from the start, taking part in special events in the Residential Homes and at Harvest Suppers in the village, and performing in **'Whose birthday did you say?'** as an Egyptologist.

Beryl was one of a dwindling generation whose recollections of WW2 are so important as a record of that time and we are very grateful that she shared her memories with us. She will be missed by all who knew her.

Jane Jones (Chair CKCP)



© family of Harriet Wright
This photograph was published in the
programme for the show 'Some Sunny Day'
(2017)

Harriet Wright

It is with great sadness we record the passing of Harriet. She came to local shows and was so pleased to feature in the Players' community-led production of **'Some Sunny Day'**. It was a great privilege to have not only one but two former serving members from the WRNS as part of the show. Thus this tribute not only reflects their support of the Players, but also the important rôle that they played in the drama of those times.

For Harriet it was being stationed and operating from what was a most dangerous part of the world. The station was part of the

Scapa Flow complex, the main home base for the Royal Navy in WW2. ***“The worst journey in the world”*** is how Winston Churchill is quoted as describing the Allied convoys to Russian from 1941 to 1945.

We spent many hours with Harriet, listening to what she had to tell us and looking at all her memorabilia of those times.

Harriet was an invited guest at the service for WW2 veterans at Westminster Abbey commemorating the 70th anniversary of VE Day and was part of the parade.

Tony & Sandra Jeans

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2022)**

Val Flippance

Many members of The Players will have heard of the death of Val Flippance with great sorrow. Involved in the production side of the Players, Val gave production support backstage in such notable productions as **'Oliver'**, **'A Midsummer Night's Dream'** and **'Murder in the Cathedral'**.

I will never forget working with Val on the props for **'Oliver'** – her kindness, interest in other people (she never failed to ask after my daughter, Helen, whenever I saw her) and her resilience in the face of many years of ill health are a rôle model many of us would find hard to live up to. Our thoughts are with her husband, Chris, and the rest of her family in this difficult time for them.

Jane Jones

Val contributed a significant amount of information which enabled the Players to put together the publications of the history. For those who were involved in the Players in the 1990s, you may remember she was a co-producer with Cynthia Birks in **'A Kaleidoscope of Romance'** (1997) and **'A Lovely Day Tomorrow'** (1999) working with the young people's groups (*'The Company'* and *'Blitz'*).

Sandra Jeans

Gwilym Davies 1946-2022



In June 2022 the Players lost Gwilym Davies, one of their best and most longstanding musicians and actors. Gwilym died at the age of 76 after a brave struggle against a heart infection, which he was unable to shake off because of a lowered immune system after his kidney transplant.

Gwilym brought to the Players a lifetime of expertise and experience in the folk music world. My most vivid memory is of performing alongside him on so many occasions in **Green Willow**, **Puzzlejug** and **Waytes and Measures**, where he often took the lead: on melodeon, playing the intro and setting the tempo for country dancing; soloing and harmonizing in his folk-inspired unique baritone; or suddenly enriching a medieval piece by his English bagpipe. In company with Gloucestershire Morris, and Happenstance Border Morris, I'll miss his expertise on the whole range of Morris tunes and their many variants – and even more his post-Morris singing and playing in dozens of Gloucestershire pubs over 50 years.



Though he could play from music, Gwilym rarely did so - almost all of his playing and singing was from his prodigious memory of folk music and song. This superb musical memory was a great asset in the folk collection which was his life's work. Gwilym started song collecting in his early twenties, recording source singers. His first publication was '**A Hampshire Collection**' (1974) which he co-authored with his wife Carol. Since then, Gwilym's song collecting activities expanded to include Devon, Gloucestershire, Shropshire and the Eastern USA, where he spent some time on secondment in the early 2000s.



Over time he created a significant archive of field recordings of source singers, including previously undocumented songs and many other songs formerly only recorded in manuscript. Throughout the latter part of the C20th Gwilym got to know the traveller community, from whom he recorded songs and tunes. He delved deeper than just the songs, collecting also from step dancers and musicians.

'Let Us Remember' 2014 (British soldier '*The Rose of No man's land*', French soldier '*La Chanson de Craonne*'). **'Players Please!' from Kaleidoscope of Romance 2002**

In the early C21st Gwilym donated his original field recordings of over 1000 songs to the British Sound Library, and he considered how to make the material more widely available. Following a pilot project and consequent Heritage Lottery Funding, a partnership was set up with Gloucestershire Archives and in 2016 the *Single Gloucester* project was born. With Carol as project manager, this delivered the GlosTrad archive (www.glostrad.com) – a large multi-media website containing over 1400 items collected in the county of Gloucestershire.

Gwilym first joined the Players in 1995, taking several parts in *'Oh What A Lovely War'* and singing solos *'Adieu La Vie'* and *'Goodby-ee'*, plus the *'Roses of Picardy'* as a duet with Margaret Walker. In *'A Kaleidoscope of Romance'* (1997) he sang three solos, and several duets with Carol. In *'Oliver'* (2006), he sang *'Who will Buy'*.

In *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'* (2008) he choreographed, played and sang for a stick dance by the mechanicals (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOQnC8UiqHE>). This is on the CKCP YouTube channel.

'The Rose of No Man's Land' and *'La Chanson de Craonne'* were performed as solos in *'Let Us Remember'* (2014) and Gwilym joined the CK Community Singers for *'My Fair Lady'* (2010) and *'Some Sunny Day'* (2017).

Carol and Gwilym, as lead members of **'Puzzlejug'**, have participated since 2000 in all 21 annual performances of **'Let Us Be Merry'**, the Players' Christmas Show. I am sure Puzzlejug will be there again this year, but perhaps there will be an empty chair, and a silent melodeon.

A great family man, Gwilym delighted with Carol in their children Mary-Ann and Robin, and four grand-children. They, and we, will miss a friendly, cheerful, warm and uniquely talented character, who has deeply touched our lives.
Geoff Ramshaw



A video is available of Gwilym, and members of the cast of *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*, performing **'Umpsey the Gumpsey'**.



'Let Us Be Merry' 2000



'Let Us Be Merry' 2017

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2022)**

A tribute to Keith Norcott

It is with great sadness we record the passing of Keith. He and his wife Elvina were regular attenders at various Players' productions, particularly the Christmas shows. His book **'Chalk on my shoes – Memoirs of a Chilterns childhood'** contributed to the stories researched and published for the Players' production, in 2017, of **'Some Sunny Day'**.

His dialogue recalling his childhood experiences in air raid shelters was built into the actual script of the production. Keith and Elvina came to one of the performances and were introduced to the audience.



Photographs above show members of the Players using Keith's recorded script from his book and local children volunteered to portray the experience of those who spent nights in air raid shelters all over the country during WW2. Keith said he found watching this a quite moving experience to relive this traumatic time.

Sandra & Tony Jeans

Copies of Keith's book published by
The Book Castle, ISBN 978-1-903747-68-1, may be found on-line.

Janet Freeman



It was with great sadness that we heard of the death of Janet Freeman. Janet has been a supporter of The Players for many years, as a participant, a member of the Front of House Team for many productions, and an audience member with her husband Ted. Her last performance was as Veronica in Tony Jeans' short play **'Veronica's Veil'** performed as part of the Walk of Witness at Easter 2018.

Janet was also a member of the Charlton Kings Junior School Open the Book Team, delivering Christian stories every Wednesday during the school assembly. She often had to play kings because of her height! She also participated in the WWII History workshops put on by The Players following **'Some Sunny Day'**, her excellent teaching skills being very useful in controlling groups of excited children playing 1940s games.

Janet was a kind, reliable and loyal person who will be greatly missed by all who knew her, and our thoughts are with her family.

Jane Jones

At a Service held in St. Andrew's Church, Montpellier, on 11th February 2022, a presentation of a bible reading as an OTB story was dedicated to both the memory of Janet Freeman (St. Mary's, Charlton Kings) and Kate Alger (St. Andrew's). They were both valued members of the CKJS OtB team.

Sandra Jeans

Janet will be sorely missed as a member of the OtB group visiting CK Junior School. The calm confidence of a former teacher was clearly seen in her fruitful interactions with the children and we all learned so much from her. Rest in peace Janet, we remember you with love and gratitude. *Lynne Glover*



Tony Poulter – a tribute



We are very sorry to hear of the death of our beloved friend Tony Poulter after a long illness. Tony had had a long career as a police officer and after his retirement he delighted in his family and his music. A member of the group 'Puzzlejug' since 1989, Tony took part in our recordings and in many of the 'Let us be Merry' Christmas concerts with his strong expressive singing. He was a warm caring friendly man, very loyal to his friends, and an adoring and adored father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He will be greatly missed.

Gwilym Davies



LUBM 2017 – Puzzlejug – Gwilym, Geoff, Carol, Tony



LUBM 2000 – Puzzlejug – Gwilym, Geoff, Tony

Tony was part of the very first performance of **'Let Us Be Merry'** in 2000. This was in Charlton Kings Junior School. This long-established Christmas Show has now been running for over twenty years, attracting regular supporters and bringing good cheer to people far and wide. It was so good that the Players were even able to provide digital versions during the on-going pandemic. Also it has responded to the need to recognise that an aging population needs a choice and that it is important to produce both live and digital shows. For those who do not know, the show name **'Let Us Be Merry'** originates from the carol **'A Virgin Unspotted'** which is regularly sung by Puzzlejug and is part of their CD recordings..

*'So let us be merry, put sorrow away
Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, was born on this day.'*

Sandra Jeans

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2021)**

Sue Ramshaw



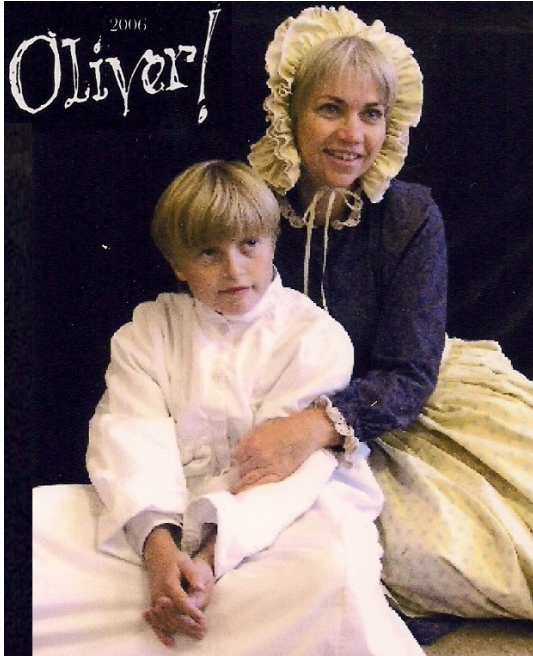
It is with great sadness that we record the death of Sue Ramshaw in August this year. Sue supported the Players through performance and Front of House. Her last appearance for the Players was with a small group who entertained the Baptist Church Lunch Club before Covid struck in 2020.

Sue also sang with **Puzzlejug** members in Hailes Church in their recording for LUBM 2020 digital production. Sue had a beautiful soprano singing voice.

She will be greatly missed and our thoughts go to Geoff and his family at this time.

Jane Jones

Jill Muir – A Tribute



Faith, fun and fellowship, the founding aims of the Players, were given perfect expression in Jill's enthusiasm, engagement with others and firm underlying convictions. Her lovely smile carried us with her, sure that every challenge was within reach. The work she did with the Players is well remembered, often many years after the performances.

Thankfully, her archiving ability has meant that records have been kept of most of the early productions, stretching back to her own Charlton Kings debut in **'From Pharaoh to Freedom'** in 1986, 6 years before The Players was formed. After Jo & Tom were born, Jill returned to the stage in 1994 as the gentle Susanna in **'The Vigil'** surprising everyone with the occasional feisty moment. Then, the suspicious Baroness in **'The Sound of Music'**, who was so memorably relieved on hearing that Maria wanted to become a nun!

Contrasting characterisations were her specialty, from the bossy young Margaret in **'Edward'**, to the warm and comforting Mrs Bedwin in **'Oliver'**. The family element of the Players was also well represented when she appeared with a sparring Jo & Tom in **'Whose Birthday'**. But the character (a very small part) most firmly etched in many minds was the blousy usherette in **'Oh What a Lovely War'** – 'Chocolates, vanilla ices, bonbons!'

We all have our own special memories. Her off-stage skills were also well used, from writing to directing and as part of the make-up team for the larger productions. When she spotted a need, she was always there. It was lovely that she found renewed happiness with Peter; their move to Tredington took her away from Charlton Kings, but she kept in touch and was still very much part of the Players. More recently, she spoke of her own beliefs when talking of her two college subjects, drama & divinity. She said, *'When I put them together, I rise up on wings like eagles.'* Indeed she did, and for what feels like all too brief a period, she took us with her.

Rest in peace Jill, we shall miss you, but the memories you've left us feel like guiding stars.

Lynne Glover

Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(April 2020)

Colin Roffe 1955 - 2019



Colin's death in June 2019 after a relatively short but extremely pernicious illness came as a great shock to his many friends, including those in the Players, in 'Puzzlejug' and in Gloucestershire Morris Men.

He had been a long standing member and contributor to the Charlton Kings Community Players through 'Puzzlejug' for nearly two decades. He first performed as part of the **'Let Us Be Merry'** Christmas Show in 2004 and joined many subsequent performances, memorably coaching the audience into singing *'Turmut Hoer'* in 2013! He was one of the many individual 'stars' in **'Some Sunny Day'** with his memorable performance of *'Leaning on a Lampost'* and then *'Wish me Luck as you Wave me Goodbye'*. He had found the perfect pinstripe suit to wear with a flat cap and then walked off with a kit bag and put on a sailor's 'pork pie' ratings hat. When told he could be promoted to officer rank for the closing chorus, he said he actually was quite happy being a rating!

Colin was Squire of the Gloucestershire Morris Men for six seasons, over his many years of Morris dancing. A uniquely talented man in so many fields, he was a superb dancer, a great singer and a master of many musical instruments, from mandolin, guitar, banjo, ukulele, to mouth organ and melodeon.

A very highly regarded IT genius in his field of expertise, Colin is very sadly missed by all who have known him personally for so many years. He was well loved by all who knew him, as a kind, clever, generous man, a good and faithful friend, and a wonderful husband and father.

Sandra Jeans
Tony Poulter

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2019)**

Kate Alger



Kate in 1940s costume selling programmes for 'Some Sunny Day'

It is with great sadness we write of the loss of Kate who died at the end of November 2018. Kate (with her husband Bob) were loyal supporters of Players' productions and in recent years was involved with a variety of activities for the Players.

Kate was often part of the Front of House teams including our 2017 WW2 commemoration production '*Some Sunny Day*'; she was part of the team delivering the WW2 History Workshops and a leading member of the '*Open the Book*' team at Charlton Kings Junior School. At Easter 2018, in our '*Walk of Witness*' Street theatre, Kate was one of the 'Women of Jerusalem'. This was one of her last engagements with the Players before she became ill.

Kate was a strong and determined person who made a significant contribution to everything with which she was involved. Her son-in-law, Andrew Wise, provided a poetic eulogy for her funeral including these lines.

"An amazing lady who walked tall, was loved and respected by all."

Sandra and Tony Jeans

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(November 2018)**

Fiona Mead

We are very sad at the death of Fiona Mead. The Mead family has been part of the Charlton Kings Community Players from the very beginning.

Fiona shared her home, for choir rehearsals, and her family: Keith our Director of Music and Richard with his involvement with acting, music, lighting and sound.

She supported our shows and plays and was background support for Keith in his commitment to The Players through the many varied and ambitious productions we have undertaken over the years.

At the Memorial Service held on 9th November in the Charlton Kings Baptist Church, Richard spoke of the book she researched and wrote, ***'Pigs, Peas, and Poetry – How a Gloucestershire Village School gained International Recognition'***.

It was through that book that Fiona put together a number of smaller stories for a Players publication of local stories from WW2 and the 40s. This provided material for the script which was developed for the production ***'Some Sunny Day'***, performed in 2017. The stories described boosting food production, blackout arrangements, air raid shelters, gas mask practice, helping on farms, fund raising for the war effort, the important taking-in of evacuees with the V1 and V2 threats and that most important activity in communities – *'the local pig and poultry clubs'* so essential to survival and good health at a time of war.

Fiona was a volunteer at the Gloucestershire Archives and came across the story of Maisemore school, the achievements of the headmaster and the children when undertaking some particular research on the village school's logbooks.

Sylvia Fry and Sandra Jeans

'Pigs, Peas, and Poetry – How a Gloucestershire Village School gained International Recognition' is published by Amberley Publishing, Stroud (2011).
ISBN 978-1-4456-0455-8

The book is out of stock on the Publishers web site, but copies may be found through Amazon.

Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(May 2017)

Tim Masling



Tim on stage during 'Let Us Remember' (2014)
and with Debbie in 'The Rivals' (2013)

It is with great sadness that I write about Tim who was such a character and who will be greatly missed by the Players. Tim was involved with the Players in a variety of disguises – taking roles in productions including '**Let Us Be Merry**' (notably as a gorilla), '**Let Us Remember**', '**The Rivals**', '**Ghost Train**' and '**Murdered to Death**'. His roles usually had a comic element, which he played to the full – who will forget his portrayal of the Frenchman Pierre Marceau in his last performance, with his exaggerated French accent, or his sinister Station Master with his hurricane lamp in Ghost Train.

Tim was also able to learn his lines with great ease – enabling him to develop his character and movement around the stage while the rest of us were still at the stage of juggling books and forgetting our lines.

Tim did not only perform with the Players, but he also supported Debbie, his wife, as she took on the arduous role of Chairman of the Players, and he was always there to help when staging was being moved, erected or dismantled. He also masterminded some really enjoyable quizzes which raised valuable funds for the Players to buy new lighting and sound equipment.

His sense of humour, comedy and ebullient personality were the outward appearances of a sensitive and thoughtful man. He will be greatly missed, and not only by Debbie and his children, but also by the wider community, including the Charlton Kings Community Players. I am so grateful to have known and worked with him.

Jane Jones

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(March 2016)**

Ann Cross

The 'Players' have sadly lost one of their foundation stones... Ann Cross, who recently passed away was a member of our first 'Players' Committee in 1992 and as Secretary was responsible for recording all the vital early decisions. June Pearce, our first properly constituted Chair, well remembers file upon files of Ann's distinctive – and very legible – handwriting!

I was reminded only last week that Ann was also Secretary of the Charlton Kings Churches Committee from its beginnings - I opened another 'down-sized' file and there was that handwriting again! The link between those two initiatives was historically significant.

But she also relaxed from her Committee responsibilities in a pioneering way; she played the first Angel – Gabriel no less! – in our very first production, 'Rock Nativity'. She had a splendid singing voice and I'm sure would have acted again if it had not been for the indelible memories of that silver foil costume!

However she was a memorable member of the Chorus, from Salzberg to Ascot, and a regular at 'Let Us Be Merry'. I am sure she was a great support for George in the galaxy of character parts in which he has excelled. Ann could always be relied upon to maintain the standards that she helped create nearly twenty-five years ago; she will be sorely missed.

Peter Grainger



Ann (centre) singing in 'Let Us Remember' (2014)

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(March 2016)**

Derek Pearce - 1930 – 2015

Derek was with Charlton Kings Community Players (CKCP) from the beginning. He set up the administration of our funds as our first treasurer: coping with scraps of paper; odd membership money coming in at all times of the year; liaison with schools, churches and caretakers; finding appropriate insurances; and handling and banking the ticket money.

He was revered by our accountant for his professional keeping of accounts.
A very popular service he gave us was the supplying of ice-cream for our performances.

He surprised many people when he agreed to take the part of 'the gardener' in 'The Vigil'. He did very well and enjoyed it but said 'never again'.

With June he was a supporter of outings, gatherings and of everything the Players did. We are grateful that he was one of us. We miss him.

Sylvia Fry



Derek as he appeared in 'The Vigil' (1994) as the gardener

**Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(September 2015)**

Michelle Grainger

My main memory of Michelle will be her warm and inviting smile and her ready welcome to her and Peter's home and her enthusiastic support she gave to the Players. I shall never forget those early meetings at "Kings House" where we were able to set up the Players and the wonderful reception and hosting Michelle offered us. If anyone epitomised the 'faith, fun and fellowship' which the Players aimed to provide it was Michelle.

Thank you Michelle for that.

With her exquisite voice one wonders why she never 'strutted the stage'. Apparently this was because of two setbacks: one whilst playing Elizabeth Bennett in an extract from "Pride and Prejudice" in Herefordshire and it was the high notes in "Who Will Buy" that finished her dramatic career! These are just light-hearted memories - Peter thinks she was glad of an excuse not to appear again.

However, her total support of Peter whilst he was all consumed with the directing of so many wonderful productions can only be admired. She never complained or groaned about Peter being out night after night with rehearsals, backstage meetings and his living and breathing every aspect of the particular production he was on.



Michelle 'at home'

Behind the scenes Peter says that Michelle was never anything less than supportive with good suggestions and ideas which he could use. Her displays in the Library and elsewhere concerning the plays were excellent, and who could forget those wonderful big stones for the set of "Whose Birthday", which she managed to make to look like loaves! Michelle did quite a lot of 'touching up' for specific bits of set in her time as well as artistic displays.

As well as her time spent on the Players Michelle was very much involved in the ecumenical movement of the local churches where she was able to encourage them to come together. In this way Michelle had important contacts with all the Churches within Charlton Kings which was immensely useful in the setting up of the Players.

Michelle will be missed in many ways by many people but I think it is the Players who will miss her not being there when a new production is performed.

Martyn Fry

Published in the Commemorative Programme for *'Let Us Remember'*
(October 2014)

Yvonne Brawn

It was a huge shock to hear of Yvonne's sudden and unexpected death in early July. Always very active in the Community Players, at St Mary's Church and in the wider community she is sorely missed and will still be looked for in all the expected places for a long time.

Until retirement, she was a teacher at St Edward's Senior School and this background gave her an empathy with young people and a straightforward directness that made her a joy to work with. She never sought a leading role in productions but strengthened and brought character to the crowd scenes in the larger musical dramas, notably and most recently in *'My Fair Lady'*. She was also memorably involved in *'The Sound of Music'*, *'Whose Birthday Did You Say?'* and many of the Christmas productions, *'Let Us Be Merry'*.

The Players will miss her willingness to take part, not only on stage or as a singer, but also in front of house – in fact, where ever she was needed. Yvonne enjoyed it all so much and will be missed so much but would be first to say *'The show must go on.'* It is fitting that this tribute should rest in the programme for a production held in the hall of the school where she spent so much of her time and into which she put so much of her life.

David Brawn, Viv Garland and Lynne Glover



'My Fair Lady' (2010) The 'notorious' Ascot scene where *'Eliza Doolittle'* reverts to her original character as she urges the horse *'Dover'* on to win in no uncertain terms! Yvonne registers her shock (2nd from left)

Published in the Commemorative Programme for *'Let Us Remember'*
(October 2014)

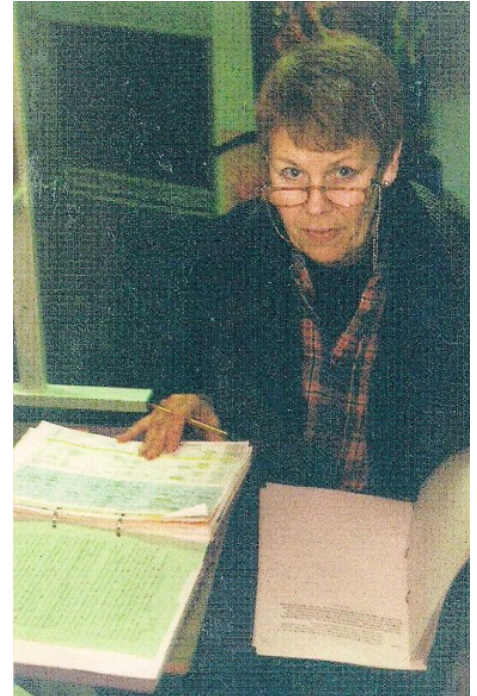
Margaret 'Maggie' Scrivens

We were very sad to hear that our dear friend Maggie passed away at home in Bourton-on-the-Water on 20th March, after a prolonged illness. Maggie was involved with all the Players major productions from the early Nineties as costume maker, designer and dresser. Her creativity in costume design shone through in all our major productions. She had the wonderful gift of creating the right style and colour for an individual and, if in doubt, would research information for accuracy – she was meticulous. Maggie had the ability to produce something from nothing.

An example of her skill was our production of *'Oh What a Lovely War'* in 1995. We had great difficulty in hiring uniforms, caps and hats for the soldiers but Maggie came to the rescue. She arrived for a rehearsal with a case full of fabrics and by the end of the evening had hand made three French soldiers caps with appropriate trimmings. All this work completed in a quiet and unflappable manner.

I visited Maggie at home when she was confined to bed and she accepted her illness with great dignity. She was the epitome of love and kindness and will be greatly missed.

June Pearce



Maggie consulting costume catalogues

**Press release to the Gloucestershire Echo (November 2009)
Summary published in the Charlton Kings Players Newsletter
(November 2009)**

Sue Dyson - An Appreciation

We were very sad to read in the 'Echo' last week of the circumstances of Sue Dyson's sudden death. Sue was well-known as a writer and singer, but Charlton Kings Community Players would like to recognise her talents in a less well-known role, as an amateur actress.

No-one who saw - and particularly, heard - Sue as the Abbess in our production of 'The Sound of Music' in 1998 will ever forget the range and beauty of her '*Climb Every Mountain*'. She was the consummate abbess, caring but firm, smiling but concerned.

Although she never talked with us about her life as a fiction writer, she wrote an insightful wartime sketch, '*A Lovely Day Tomorrow*' for our Double Bill in 1999, and was then prepared to play the role of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the play I wrote for the new millennium, '*Whose Birthday Did You Say?*' Her warmth and sincerity shone through that gentle performance, and included her singing of two lovely original songs by Malcolm Dunbar.

Despite all the pressures of her life Sue found the time to run a Singing Workshop for us, and, because of her debilitating illness, we lost touch with her. Then memorably she returned unexpectedly to sing with Helen Wright in the entertainment part of our AGM last year. With Musical Direction in mind we invited her to join our 'Directors' Workshops' last Autumn; she replied at once with real enthusiasm and characteristic modesty, "*I would love to have a go...if you think I'm up to it... it would be lovely to see you all again.*"

But her relentless illness took her once more into hospital and she was unable to be with us. We heard no more until the shocking news of her sudden death, and then the tragedy recounted in the 'Echo'. Those who knew her in local drama will be grateful for the experience of working with such a lovely person, but mourn with deep sadness the manner of her departing. We remain frustrated with the thought of 'What might have been...'

Peter Grainger



'The Sound of Music' (1998)
Sue Dyson as the Mother
Abbess

Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(February 2004)



Alison as Judith in *'Hay Fever'* (2001)

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2004

ALISON LUNA

A deafening 'QUI-ET is how many past members of the Players will remember Alison Luna, and those memories go back to 1984 when Alison began her amateur career as Stage Manager. We knew she had been a professional Stage Manager once upon a time and could imagine her at the Everyman. But it was many years later that we realised what illustrious circles she had moved in, when she received a note of good wishes from Albert Finney for her role as Judith Bliss in our 2001 production of 'Hay Fever' - they had apparently worked together years ago on a tour of Scotland.

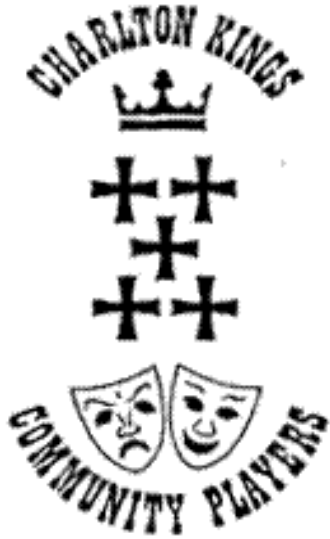
Alison was involved in all our productions from the beginning, and was a founder of our first 'committee' in 1992 - she later admitted it was not really her scene! As Stage Manager she laid down and maintained the high standards of organisation and efficiency that became a feature of the Players backstage. But it was much more than that; she was an enthusiastic member of the group who created 'House upon the Rock' for St Mary's Octocentennial, a long-term committee member and latterly our Treasurer. She was always keen to help young Stage Managers to develop their skills backstage, and some will remember with a smile the diminutive (at that time!) Phil Bevan dashing around the stage with his trusty microphone.

But in 1994 we persuaded her to appear on the stage as the Prosecuting Counsel in 'The Vigil', a challenging part even for an experienced actor, but Martyn still talks about their duel on stage and who really won! My favourite memory is her playing the icy 'Tempter' in 'Whose Birthday?' (it was the very first scene written) and despite not feeling well enough to appear on stage, she had the courage to have her lines specially recorded at the University for 'Players Please'. She also insisted on sharing the prompting for that anniversary production, another backstage role she had miraculously managed to carry out as S.M.! But she always said that one of her happiest moments was to play Judith in 'Hay Fever', and it was wonderful that she was able to have such a triumph before her illness began to take hold.

So we all owe Alison so much, not only for all she did, but for the qualities she brought to the development of the Players and so many friendships that were built on its foundations. She insured we never took easy options and yet was realistic about the challenges. She cared deeply about the group and despite being confined to bed, always wanted to be involved and to know how things were going. As director, you knew once she'd agreed to be Stage Manager your job was half done; as an actress she was always professional, talented and totally reliable. Having her there in the centre of the village, even when confined to bed, was strangely re-assuring. Alison, thank you.

Peter Grainger

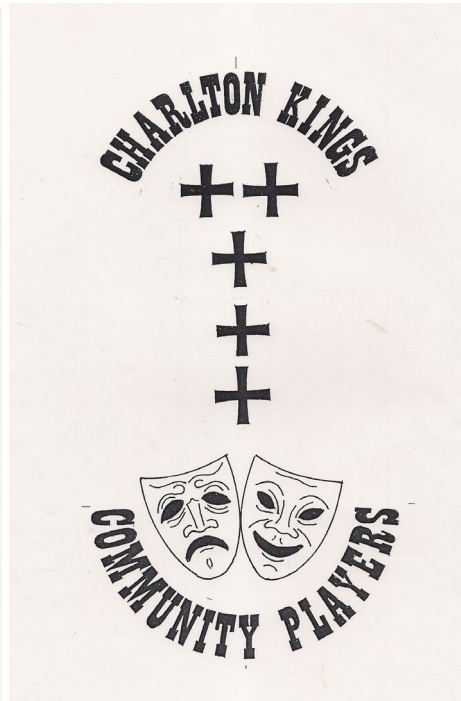
Published in Charlton Kings Community Players Newsletter
(April 1997)



Ken Venus

Now that the Community Players sweatshirts have been established so successfully in the group, it seems right to remember Ken, who played such an important part in the design of the logo. His sudden death last January came as a tremendous shock to his friends and has caused an enormous sense of loss to all who knew him.

He was a lovely man, gentle, kind, modest and endlessly willing to put himself to great trouble for all who asked his help. His skills as an artist will long be remembered in Charlton Kings. God bless you Ken, we will miss you.



Some of Ken's original thoughts